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Christian Perceptions of Jewish Economic Activity in the Middle Ages

The most common and long surviving Jewish stereotype elaborated by Christian culture during the Middle Ages is the image of the Jewish usurer. On the double and interconnected subject, the economic activity of the Jews in the Middle Ages and its Christian representation or description, one can read in historical studies or manuals several common places. They are summed up by the idea that usury actually was, still in the high Middle Ages, the more typical economic activity of the European Jews¹. Before analysing that strange encounter between medieval and historiographical stereotypes², I believe it is essential to have in mind the texts regarded as basic by medieval Christian authors when they utilised the word “usury” *usura* to represent Jewish economic activity as a manifestation of greed. In fact, the formation of the Jewish usurious stereotype is deeply rooted in the inner logic and vocabulary of Christian economics. When we read Medieval Latin sources on economic arguments, it is important to understand that these representations of economic activity are in most cases sections of ecclesiastical sources regarding both the real and symbolic representation of Christian society. So they draw on the traditional ecclesiastic language concerning both the earthly and eternal happiness of the Christians. It is well known that medieval Christian authors ignore Jewish economic culture and laws or do not pay attention to them, with the consequence that Christian economic sources represent economic Jewish activities as totally subordinate to the Christian vision of the world³. We cannot however deduce from that Christian misrepresentation that Jewish economic culture and laws did not exist or

¹ On this problem, *G. Todeschini*, *I mercanti e il tempio. La società cristiana e il circolo virtuoso della ricchezza fra medioevo ed età moderna* (Bologna 2002) ch. 6.

² *R. Chazan*, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles 1997).

³ *W. C. Jordan*, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: from Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia 1989); *G. Todeschini*, *La ricchezza degli Ebrei. Mercè e denaro nella riflessione ebraica e nella definizione cristiana dell'usura alla fine del Medioevo* (Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Biblioteca di “Studi Medievali” XV, Spoleto 1989); *J. Shatzmiller*, *Shylock Reconsidered. Jews, Moneylending and Medieval Society* (Berkeley 1990); *A. Sapir Abulafia*, *Theology and the commercial revolution: Guibert of Nogent, St. Anselm and the Jews of northern France, in: Church and city 1000–1500. Essays in honour of Christopher Brooke*, eds. *D. Abulafia, M. Franklin, M. Rubin* (Cambridge 1992) 23–40; *G. Todeschini*, “Usura” ebraica e identità economica cristiana: la discussione medievale, in: *Gli Ebrei in Italia*, *C. Vivanti* ed., (“Annali” Einaudi, 11/2, Torino 1997) 289–318.

that the economic life of medieval Jews simply consisted in a reiteration of stereotyped behaviours like those depicted by the word “usury”. Similarly, when analysing the formation of Christian economic language, it is inappropriate to disregard the theological vocabulary and to separate it from what we, today, conceive as a purely economic vocabulary.

In the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus as in the Psalms, that is the sources common to the Jewish and Christian traditions, the giving and receiving of interest on a loan is forbidden, especially when the borrower is a poor; loan on interest is admitted when the borrower is a stranger, that is a non-Jew (*nokhri*), that is to say a person not subject to Jewish law. While medieval Christian authors did know these texts in the Greek Septuaginta version or in the Latin version ascribed to Jerome – the so-called *Vulgata* – they generally did not know or disregarded the Hebrew Bible as well as the halakhic definitions of usury and contracts offered by the mishnaic and talmudic treatises on damages. Their lack of familiarity with these sources had important consequences. For instance, the word “nokhri”, stranger, which in the Hebrew text indicated the person who could pay interest, in the Septuaginta version became (αλλότριος) *allōtrios*, “alien”, and then, in the *Vulgata*, *alienus*. The last step of this semantic transformation was taken by the *Glossa ordinaria*, the medieval commentary to the Bible (standardised in the twelfth century), which established an equivalence between the word *alienus* and the word *infidelis* or *iniquus*⁴. Through these gradual transformations of meaning, the credit relation between residents and outsiders, or between Christians and Jews, began to implicate an economic antagonism previously inexistent.

Later, when the Church Fathers and the Christian doctors interpreted the Gospels, they found two very different representations of usury. A prohibition of interest for loans seemed to be present in Christ’s words *date mutuum nihil inde sperantes* (“When you make a loan, you must expect nothing or nothing in addition as restitution”)⁵. However, in the celebrated parable of the talents Christ argued explicitly that fructification of wealth produced by the activity of the *trapezites*

⁴ B. Nelson, *The Idea of Usury. From tribal Brotherhood to universal Otherhood* (Philadelphia 1948); *Glossa ad Dt. 23, 20* (Strassburg 1480/81 = Brepols 1992) f. 406: “Sed alieno. Infideli vel iniquo cui pecuniam damus ad usuram, cum pro verbo predicationis exigimus fidem penitentiam et operationem bonam.” See *Ambrosius*, De Tobia 15, 51, in M. Giaccherio, *Ambrosii de Tobia. Saggio introduttivo, traduzione con testo a fronte* (Genova 1965): „Sed forte dicas quia scriptum est: *Alienigenae faenerabis* et non consideras quid euangelium dicat, quod est plenius. Sed hoc interim sequestremus: legis ipsius uerba considera. *Fratri tuo non faenerabis* inquit *ad usuram*; *alienigenam exiges*. Quis erat tunc alienigena nisi Amalech, nisi Amorraeus, nisi hostis ? Ibi, inquit, usuram exige. Cui merito nocere desideras, cui iure inferuntur arma, huic legitime indicuntur usurae. Quem bello non potes facile uincere, de hoc cito te potes centesima uindicare. Ab hoc usuram exige quem non sit crimen occidere. Sine ferro dimicat qui usuram flagitat, sine gladio se de hoste ulciscitur qui fuerit usurarius exactor inimici. Ergo ubi ius belli, ibi etiam ius usurae. Frater autem tuus omnis, fidei primum, deinde Romani iuris est populus: *Narrabo nomen tuum fratribus meis, in medio ecclesiae laudabo te*”; Decretum Gratiani C. XIV q. 3 c. 12, *Friedberg*, ed. 738.

⁵ Lc. 6, 35; S. Piron, *Le devoir de gratitude: émergence et vogue de la notion d’antidora au XIII^e siècle*, in: *Credito e usura fra teologia, diritto e amministrazione. Linguaggi a confronto*, eds. D. Quaglioni, G. Todeschini, G. M. Varanini (Ecole Française de Rome, Rome 2005) 73–101.

(that is to say moneychangers or moneylenders) was an appropriate representation of spiritual life. The sense of this parable was supported by a *logion* of Christ, that is a sentence attributed to Christ by the Christian tradition, which began to be quoted in the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers of the second/third century. This *logion* affirmed the duty for the Christians to be “like expert moneylenders”, that is to be able to separate good from evil like the moneylenders are able to separate the good coins from the devalued ones ⁶.

When historians state that medieval Church forbade without exception any sort of loan on interest and declared the sterility of money, they simplify a structural semantic ambiguity very typical of Christian language and thought on these economic subjects. A glance at the writings of the Church Fathers and at Canon Law as summarized by the monk Gratianus in Bologna around 1140 is sufficient to demonstrate the complexity of the Christian attitude in regard to money affairs and the usefulness of wealth⁷. The semantic ambiguity which characterizes this representation at the end of the Middle Ages was summed up in Erasmus’s exegesis of the parable of the talents in the Gospel according to Matthew. Focusing on the apparent contradiction between this parable and Psalm 15, which strictly forbade usury, Erasmus wrote: “No contradiction here: the Lord loves usury that yield him profit, hates usury that a servant takes to his own self.”⁸

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With these premises in mind, one can easily affirm that the subject of medieval usury⁹ has been and remains the occasion for many disputable historiographical

⁶ A. Resch, *Agrapha. Aussercanonische Evangelienfragmente* (Leipzig 1889, ²1906) n. 87.

⁷ On the semantic ambiguity of early Christian attitude towards money and profit, see M. Herz, *Sacrum commercium. Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Studie zur Theologie der Römischen Liturgiesprache* (Münchener Theologische Studien, II 15, München 1958); R. Bogaert, *Changeurs et banquiers chez les Pères de l’Eglise*, in: *Ancient Society* 4 (1973) 239–270; B. Gordon, *The Economic Problem in Biblical and Patristic Thought* (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* IX, Leiden 1989); G. Todeschini, “Quantum valet?” Alle origini di un’economia della povertà, in: *Bullettino dell’Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo* 98 (1992) 173–234.

⁸ Mt. 25, 24–7 (parable of the talents) and Psalm XV, 1, 5 (condemnation of usury): Erasmus, *Enarratio psalmi XIV Qui est de puritate tabernaculi siue ecclesiae christianae*, in: *Opera omnia* V, 2 *Ordinis quinti tomus secundus*, eds. Ch. Béné, S. Dresden, A. Godin (Amsterdam 1985); see Erasmus, *Opera* (Leiden 1706) vol. 10, c. 306: “Sed hic occurrit scrupulus, cum in Evangelio damnatur servus qui pecuniam sibi creditam non dederat ad usuram, qui convenit ut hic laudetur, qui non dedit ad usuram. Nihil ista pugnant: Dominus amat usuram, quae ipsi Lucrum adfert: odit usuram, quam servus sibi vindicat.”

⁹ T. P. McLaughlin, *The Teaching of the Canonists on Usury* (XII, XIII and XIV Centuries), in: *Medieval Studies* 1 (1939) 81–147; 2 (1940) 1–22; B. Nelson, *The Idea of Usury. From tribal Brotherhood to universal Otherhood* (Philadelphia 1948); J. T. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge/Mass. 1957); O. Langholm, *Economics in Medieval Schools: Wealth, Exchange, Value, Money and Usury according to the Paris Theological Tradition, 1200–1350* (Leiden 1992); H. Siems, *Handel und Wucher im Spiegel frühmittelalterlicher Rechtsquellen* (MGH Schriften 35, Stuttgart 1992).

statements, especially about the role played by the Jews within Christian medieval economy. It is still common to read in textbooks or general histories of the Jews in the Middle Ages that, from the tenth century, usury was the specialized activity of European Jews. This opinion, recently repeated by Kenneth Stow in his book *Alienated Minority*¹⁰, is in each case based on unsubstantiated historical theories regarding the economic role of medieval Jews that are typical of the European historical culture, as can be seen in the studies of Roscher (1875) and Sombart (1911) and the book on the so called “economic revolution of the middle ages” written by Roberto Lopez in the 1970s¹¹. From that point of view medieval Jewish society appears as totally conditioned by the economic and political decisions and idiosyncrasies of the majority, namely by the cultural identity of Christian society. Many economists or historians of economic doctrines have also repeated this widespread *idée reçue*, with the obligatory implication that medieval Jews did not have a specific economic vision, but only a daily economic practice, namely usury, imposed both by external powers and by the Jew’s lack of a specific economic identity. Derek Penslar, for instance, in his book *Shylock’s Children. Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* quotes Stow who in turn quoted Lopez, saying “the Jews’ existence as a dispersed minority, dependent for their economic well-being on external forces in their host societies, discouraged the formation of a comprehensive economic philosophy. Although Rabbinic and Medieval Judaism lacked an economic philosophy, it had identifiable economic sensibilities”¹². A look at the past and current production of studies on Jewish economic reflections and laws is enough to undermine the common place that medieval Rabbinic legitimating medieval Jewish transactions did not possess a specific economic vision. From Boaz Cohen’s accurate comparison between Roman and Jewish economic laws to the more recent analysis of the rabbinic conceptions of market and credit transactions by Aaron Kirschenbaum, Hillel Gamoran, Aaron Levine, Richard Ohrenstein, Abraham Weingort and Haym Soloveitchik, the depth and com-

¹⁰ K. Stow, *Alienated Minority. The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge/Mass. 1992) 215–16.

¹¹ W. Roscher, *Die Juden im Mittelalter betrachtet vom Standpunkte der allgemeinen Handelspolitik*, in: *Zeitschrift für die Gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 31 (1875) 503–526; W. Sombart, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (Leipzig 1911); R. S. Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages* (Englewood Cliffs/N.J. 1971). See T. Oelsner, *W. Roscher’s Theory of the Economic and Social Position of the Jews in the Middle Ages*, in: *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science* 12 (1959) 176–195; F. Raphael, *Judaïsme et capitalisme. Essai sur la controverse entre Max Weber et Werner Sombart* (Paris 1982); G. Todeschini, *Una polemica dimenticata: Sombart e “Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben” nella discussione storiografica (1911–1920)*, in: *Società e storia* 35 (1987) 139–160; N. Zemon Davis, *Religion and Capitalism Once Again? Jewish Merchant Culture in the Seventeenth Century*, in: *Representations* 59 (1997) 56–84; G. Todeschini, *Les historiens juifs en Allemagne et le débat sur l’origine du capitalisme avant 1914*, in: *Écriture de l’histoire et identité juive. L’Europe ashkénaze XIX^e–XX^e siècle*, eds. D. Bechtel, E. Patlagean, J.-C. Szurek, P. Zawadzki (Paris 2003) 209–228.

¹² D. J. Penslar, *Shylock’s Children. Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley 2001) 52.

plexity of Jewish medieval economics becomes totally evident¹³. Indeed, many years ago Jacob Katz was able to recapitulate in his *Tradition and Crisis* the medieval rabbinic conception of credit. He pointed to a distinction “between direct, personal contact and impersonal, economic operations” and to a “progressive rationalization of the economic process in which the traded goods lose their specific character and are considered merely an object for profitable enterprise”¹⁴. Thus one can conclude that medieval Jewish communities possessed an economic vocabulary and an economic language that had been highly conceptualised by their rabbinical leaders. In the words of A. Gross Schaefer, “the Jewish legal system enumerates rituals to demonstrate contract formation”, so that the growth of a “Jewish vocabulary of obligation” is the necessary consequence of the “formal action required under Jewish law ... to reduce the possibility of unintentionally entering into a legally binding agreement”¹⁵.

This well attested existence of a Jewish medieval economic culture is all the more puzzling as almost until the thirteenth century and the rise of Christian banking and commercial companies there is little evidence for usurious practices by Jews beyond simple and direct loans on pledge¹⁶. By contrast, between the tenth and thirteenth century there is clear evidence of Jewish involvement in all sorts of economic relations or contractual forms; many historians, from Kriegel to Shatzmiller¹⁷ have pointed out that this complex Jewish participation in European economic

¹³ B. Cohen, *Jewish and Roman Law* (New York 1966); A. Kirschenbaum, *Jewish and Christian Theories of Usury in the Middle Ages*, in: *Jewish Quarterly Review* 75 (1985) 270–289; H. Gamosan, *Talmudic Usury Laws and Business Loans*, in: *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 7 (1976) 129–142; *Idem*, *The Talmudic Law of Mortgages in View of the Prohibition against Lending on Interest*, in: *Hebrew Union College Annual* 52 (1981) 153–162; *Idem*, *Credit Transactions in Geonic Times in the Light of the Law against Usury*, in: *Jewish Law Annual* 11 (1994) 67 ss.; *Idem*, *Investing for Profit. A Study of Iska up to the Time of Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquieres*, in: *Hebrew Union College Annual* 70–71 (1999–2000) 153 ss.; A. Gross Schaefer, *Contractual Intent: Is the Reasonable Person Standard Sufficient?*, in: *Jewish Law Annual* 11 (1994) 85–100; R. A. Ohrenstein, B. Gordon, *Economic Analysis in Talmudic Literature. Rabbinic Thought in the Light of Modern Economics* (Leiden 1992); A. Levine, *Economics and Jewish Law* (New York 1987); A. Weingort, *Intérêt et crédit dans le droit talmudique* (Paris 1979); *Idem*, *Responsabilité et sanction en droit talmudique et comparé* (Paris 1998); H. Soloveitchik, *Pawnbroking: a study in Ribbit and of the Halakhah in exile*, in: *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 38–9 (1970–71) 203–268; *Idem*, *The Jewish Attitude in the High and Late Middle Ages (1000–1500)*, in: *Credito e usura fra teologia, diritto e amministrazione. Linguaggi a confronto*, eds. D. Quaglioni, G. Todeschini, G. M. Varanini (Ecole Française de Rome, Rome 2005) 115–127; A. Toaff, *Testi ebraici italiani relativi all'usura dalla fine del XV agli esordi del XVII secolo*, ibidem 103–113.

¹⁴ J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis. Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York 1993) 66.

¹⁵ A. Gross Schaefer, *Contractual Intent* 91.

¹⁶ M. Toch, *Jews and Commerce: Modern Fancies and Medieval Realities*, in: *Il ruolo economico delle minoranze in Europa. Secc. XIII–XVIII*, S. Cavaciocchi ed. (Firenze, Atti della XXXI Settimana di Studi, Istituto Francesco Datini, Prato 2000) 43–58.

¹⁷ M. Kriegel, *Les Juifs à la fin du Moyen Age dans l'Europe méditerranéenne* (Paris 1989); J. Shatzmiller, *Shylock Reconsidered*.

life survived until the fifteenth century. In sum, the factual and intellectual complexity of the Jewish economic presence in the Middle Ages, poses a problem about the formation and sense – in the eleventh and twelfth century – of Christian representations of medieval Jews as usurers and of Jewish wealth as completely derived from usurious transactions. This problem concerns, first, Christian economic language, that is the vocabulary and the categories which enabled Christians, *before* and *during* the economic and monetary revolution of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, to speak and write about the economic attitude or economic practice of aliens or strangers. At the same time, when addressing this subject, we are obliged to revise the historiographical canon constantly repeated by economic historians – on the basis of the historiographical sanctification or trivial reading of De Roover, McLaughlin, Noonan and other historians of medieval economic doctrines – declaring the medieval existence of a compact Christian or ecclesiastic “theory” which prohibited any form of money fructification and stated the sterility of money¹⁸. In fact, the common notion of a Jewish monopoly in medieval money transactions is strictly connected with the complementary and also unsupported idea that medieval Christian *magistri* were horrified by the concept of credit, interest and, generally, monetary wealth. It is therefore imperative to define the linguistic relation between the “dramatic transformation” (as Cary Nederman has recently called it) of the European economy after 1100 and the representation of this “revolution” by contemporary theologians, canonists and confessors on the basis of their economic culture and vocabulary. It is very difficult to reduce this theological or canonistic attitude to a “distaste for commerce” as Cary Nederman has called it, somewhat hastily, in a paper published in 2002¹⁹. Similarly, it is impossible to reduce the significance of medieval Christian economics, as Nederman and many others have suggested, to some especially astute medieval thinkers who were able to perceive “systematically and cogently the temporal impact of the technological, commercial and fiscal changes experienced by European society”²⁰. Undeniably, Erasmus’s interpretation quoted earlier was made possible by centuries of Christian thinking on and representations of economic reality in terms which clearly separated the utility and the needs of churches and Church from the utility and needs of individuals, especially when belonging to the laity. In more specific terms, credit dialectics were analysed as regarding *bonum commune* or *bonum particulare*, common or individual good²¹. Especially from the twelfth century, this attitude found

¹⁸ T. P. Mc Laughlin, *The Teaching of the Canonists on Usury*; J. T. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*; R. De Roover, *La pensée économique des Scolastiques* (Montréal, Paris 1971); O. Langholm, *Economics in Medieval Schools*.

¹⁹ C. Nederman, *The virtues of necessity: labour, money and corruption in John of Salisbury’s thought*, in: *Viator* 33 (2002) 55–56.

²⁰ *Ibidem* 67.

²¹ G. Todeschini, *Il prezzo della salvezza. Lessici medievali del pensiero economico* (Roma 1994); M. Kempshall, *The common good in late medieval political thought* (Oxford 1999); P. Von Moos, “Public” et “privé” à la fin du Moyen Âge. Le “bien commun” et la “loi de la conscience”, in: *Studi Medievali* s. 3a, XLI/2 (2000) 505–548.

legal expression in the double canonistic and theological vocabulary of *usura* (usury) and *interesse* (interest), forbidden and alien the former, permitted and rational the latter. The way to this opposition however had been very long, and complicated by the fact that the Christian sources on economy in late Antiquity or high Middle Ages used different linguistic techniques. Actually the well known expositions or moral evaluations of contracts so typical of late medieval confessors and scholastics, made use of economic categories shaped by the patristic and monastic approach to economy; an approach synthesized from the eighth to the twelfth century in systematic collections of canons and, finally, in the *Decretum Gratiani* (1140 c.), which was to be recognized by the late medieval popes as the formal basis of Catholic doctrine and law²². We can subdivide the Christian sources on contracts and economy from the fourth to the eleventh century into three principal linguistic types, that is three basic or logical styles of exposition and demonstration: exegetical or metaphorical, polemical or political, and juridical²³.

The first one, chronologically and semantically antedating the others, which we can define as exegetical or metaphorical, represents economic relations by commenting on the Scriptures and derives from the scriptural vocabulary terms and concepts which will subsequently be semantically modified and adapted to the problems of specific historical realities. The logical centre of this procedure is metaphorical, and in itself based on what Christianity considered its own principal and founding economic metaphor: the exchange between divine perfection and human finitude or mortality, realized by the divine incarnation. The most renowned Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church, Basil of Caesarea, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, commonly described this exchange (greek: *synallagma*; latin: *commercium*) by means of an image of commercial dialectic operating between divine and human and having its result in Salvation²⁴. This central point is the source, in the Patristic writings, of a chain of conceptualisations formulated in the banking and commercial vocabulary, and systematically utilising words and logical connections typical of the market transactions of the late Roman Empire. Credit and usury appear in this context in the form of a double and interconnected verbal representation: a good and virtuous logic of loaning/borrowing even characterised by the exchange between wealth and immaterial values (favour, compassion, protection, patronage) implying right interests, and, on the opposite, usury, that is the selling of real money paid by a concrete amount of coins. In the Ambrosian treatise *De Tobia*²⁵, in the Augustinian exegesis and in other patristic writings it is possible to

²² A. Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (Cambridge 2000); G. Todeschini, *Linguaggi economici ed ecclesiologia fra XI e XII secolo: dai Libelli de lite al Decretum Gratiani*, in: *Medioevo, Mezzogiorno, Mediterraneo. Studi in onore di Mario del Treppo*, G. Rossetti, G. Vitolo eds. (Napoli 2000) 59-87.

²³ G. Todeschini, *Il prezzo della salvezza*.

²⁴ M. Herz, *Sacrum Commercium*; R. Bogaert, *Changeurs et banquiers chez les Pères de l'Eglise*.

²⁵ M. F. Barry, *The Vocabulary of the Moral-Ascetical Works of Saint Ambrose. A Study in Latin Lexicography* (Washington 1926); L. M. Zucker, *S. Ambrosii de Tobia. A Commentary, with an Introduction and Translation* (Washington 1933); M. Giaccherio, *Ambrosii de Tobia. Saggio intro-*

detect some references to the *judaicus populus* as avaricious, and, at the same time, to Judas as vendor of Christ as archetypal representation of the Jews²⁶. Nevertheless it is important to stress that these references in no way have to do with a specific definition of Jews as economic subjects, merchants or usurers. The problem, here, is to describe Jewish resistance to Christian conversion by the economic vocabulary of avarice and unjust acquisition, or of an incapacity for the appropriate use of wealth. Ambrose, for instance, writes that Jews possess a Law, which is *like* a devalued coin: they are attached to this useless and fictitious wealth in consequence of their religious obstinacy²⁷. This exegetical or metaphorical mode of representing economic and credit transactions, separating good investment from unfruitful speculation, is understood by the high medieval monastic written culture as a basic economic categorization²⁸. The long chain of monastic commentaries on Scripture and the treatises on virtues of the high Middle Ages, totally neglected by historians of economic ideas or languages, transmits, on the basis of the patristic economic vocabulary, more than a compact economic doctrine, a linguistic style deeply connecting the notion of fruitfulness to the notion of faith and trust. The church society of the *fideles* must, from this point of view, continually grow and expand its frontiers. Economic morality consists, therefore, in the multiplication of the ecclesiastical patrimony made up both of persons and ecclesiastical goods. A

duttivo, traduzione con testo a fronte (Genova 1965); *M. Mcguire*, *S. Ambrosii De Nabuthae. A Commentary with an Introduction and Translation* (Washington 1927); *V. R. Vasey*, *The Social Ideas in the Works of St. Ambrose. A Study of the De Nabuthae* (Roma 1982); *S. Giet*, *De Saint Basile à Saint Ambroise. La condamnation du prêt à intérêt au IV^e siècle*, in: *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* 33 (1944) 95–128.

²⁶ *B. Blumenkranz*, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der jüdisch-christlichen Beziehungen in den ersten Jahrhunderten* (Basel 1946); *Idem*, *Les auteurs chrétiens latins du Moyen Âge sur les Juifs et le Judaïsme* (Paris 1963); *H. Schreckenberg*, *Die christliche Adversus Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (I–XI Jh.)* (Frankfurt, Bern 1982); *M. S. Taylor*, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity. A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus* (Leiden 1995).

²⁷ *Ambrosius*, *De Tobia* 19, 64: “Vbi coepit populus Iudaeorum non custodire legem, coeperunt aduenae, hoc est ex populo nationum, qui in Iesum dominum crediderunt, interpretationem scripturarum illi uetusto populo faenerare. Faenerauit Timotheus patre Graeco ortus uerbum Iudaeis, cum sacerdotium recepisset, faeneramus hodieque sacerdotes in ecclesia uerbum Iudaeis, qui de synagoga ad ecclesiam transierunt, faeneramus et nouam et uetustam pecuniam, Etenim quam habuerunt iam non habent; *oculos habent et non uident, aures habent et non audiunt, pecuniam habent et non habent, quia usum eius ignorant, pretium eius nesciunt, figuram eius et formam non cognouerunt*. Nam si cognouissent, numquam auctorem eius pecuniae denegassent dicentes: *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos*. Qui quidem accepto regno rediens iussit uocari seruos suos, quibus dedit pecuniam et eos qui faenerassent pecuniam praedicaui, ei autem qui pecuniam tenuit otiosam domini sui respondit: *Sciebas quod ego austerus homo sum: tollo quod non posui et meto quod non seminaui. Et quare non dedisti pecuniam meam ad mensam? Et ego ueniens cum usuris utique exegissem illam*.”

²⁸ *J.M. Clement*, *Lexique des anciennes Règles monastiques occidentales* (Instrumenta Patristica VII B, Steenbrugis 1978); *B. Gordon*, *The Economic Problem in Biblical and Patristic Thought* (Leiden 1989); *G. Todeschini*, *I vocabolari dell'analisi economica fra alto e basso medioevo: dai lessici della disciplina monastica ai lessici antiusurari (X–XIII secolo)*, in: *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 110/3 (1998) 781–833.

keyword of this metaphorical economics is *lucriferare*, that is “to increase the wealth”. The mystical and economic concept of divesting the Church of wealth, *res ecclesiarum*, becomes a synonym for heretical perversity. The climax is reached in the ninth century, during the intense collaboration between the Carolingian emperors and their ecclesiastical officials. In fact, it is at this time that the *dispersio rerum ecclesiarum*, the dispersion of the ecclesiastical wealth, becomes a public crime, in consequence of the emperor’s legislation, which declares the equivalence of fiscal or public and ecclesiastical goods²⁹. Much more than in Justinian’s *Corpus Juris*, it is probably from the time of the Carolingian alliance with the Roman bishop, that metaphorical Christian language regarding the sacred augmentation of ecclesiastical wealth becomes effectively a structured component of the public and bureaucratic economic language.

The second type of Christian sources concerning exchange and wealth dynamics, before the twelfth century, can be described as polemic or political. In fact, the source of the misunderstandings regarding the economic role of the Jews in the Middle Ages and the formation of a Christian stereotype of Jewish usury, derives from the devaluation or ignorance of the role played in the formation of a Western economic language by the high medieval conceptualisations about the inalienability of Church goods. From the first collections of conciliar canons in the seventh century to the rapid development and multiplication of these legal compilations after the first half of the ninth century, we can observe inside the European system of ecclesiastical law an ever-increasing attention to the political institutions or subjects which could be perceived as dangerous for the economic-political organization of the churches. A new galaxy of concepts and related words appears to circumscribe even more accurately the semantics of simony (*simonia*), whose depiction and logical delineation is preceding and conditioning the definition of usury in the successive canonical texts, that is during the so called Juridical Renaissance of the twelfth century. The sense of the notion of simony, or rather the sense of the word *simoniacus*, the individual who commits the crime, is intelligible as the concretisation and unification in political and legal terms of the different economic behaviours generically denoted as *infideles*³⁰. More than the greed of the *simoniaci*, their lack of understanding of the extraordinary economic nature of the material and immaterial things composing the body of the churches makes of them a group of

²⁹ R. Newhauser, Towards *modus in habendo*: Transformations in the Idea of Avarice. The early Penitentials through the Carolingian Reform, in: Zeitschrift der Savigny Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte – Kan. Abt. 106 (1989) 1–22; H. Siems, Handel und Wucher im Spiegel frühmittelalterlicher Rechtsquellen (MGH Schriften 35, Stuttgart 1992); G. Todeschini, Linguaggi teologici e linguaggi amministrativi: le logiche sacre del discorso economico fra VIII e X secolo, in: Quaderni Storici 102/3 (1999) 597–616.

³⁰ B. Szabò-Bechstein, Libertas ecclesiae. Ein Schlüsselbegriff des Investiturstreits und seine Vorgeschichte. 4.–11. Jh. (Studi Gregoriani XII, Roma 1985); G. Todeschini, “Judas mercator pessimus”. Ebrei e simoniaci dall’XI al XIII secolo, in: Zakhon. Rivista di storia degli ebrei in Italia I (1997) 11–23; T. Reuter, Gifts and simony, in: Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power and Gifts in Context, eds. E. Cohen, M. B. de Jong (Leiden 2000) 57–68.

heretics very close to the world of infidels and especially of Jews. Jewish stubbornness, in this context, has nothing to do with usury or a specific illegitimate economic way of conduct; it is, however, the infidelity model to which the heretical deviancy of Simoniacs is compared. The connection between Judas' lack of faith and Judas' greed, that is to say the notion of Judas' untrustworthiness, is obviously and obsessively recounted as exemplification of the mental process which determines the fall of the Simoniac into the abyss of heresy, that is the exit from the even more delimited space of Christian fidelity³¹. Sometimes, at the end of the eleventh century, the antisimoniatic texts begin in fact to tell stories of Jews allied with the Simoniacs. The charge to be inside enemies of the Christian world is therefore deepened by the emphasis on the Simoniacs' involvement with the infidels *par excellence*³².

Before the twelfth century, the Christian West produces a third type of linguistic procedure, which was suitable for denoting and connoting economic discourse. This textuality, definable as juridical or legal, after the sixth century is composed of a more and more solid interplay between Roman and Canon law. On the particular subject of credit and usury, we can now utilise the fundamental book of Harald Siems, *Handel und Wucher im Spiegel frühmittelalterlicher Rechtsquellen*³³. Perhaps, the most important aspect of this very accurate book, often regrettably forgotten by economic historians, is the systematic analysis of the semantic fluctuation or undecided sense of the word-concept "usury" in the western Christian legal sources until the twelfth century. This ambiguity appears, in comparison with Roman and Talmudic Law, as a main Christian characteristic. In Roman law as summed up by the Justinian Code, the word, in the plural form *usurae*, denoted interests legally admitted, but not as a specific contractual form. In the Talmudic

³¹ See, for instance, *Humbertus de Silvacandida*, *Adversus simoniacos libri tres* (MGH, *Libelli de lite* I, 95–253), II 20, 163–4: "Haut secus hos hereticos [scil.: symoniacos] nefandi ambitione commercii dirumpere vincula christianae legis et proicere a se iugum apostolicae disciplinae quaerentes, qui habitat in caelis, irridet et subsannat, ubi impudenter negotiando de Deo nichil inveniunt in manibus suis, nisi quod Iudas et Iudaei in suis, perpetuam scilicet maledictionem et damnationem, qua exemplo Iudae fiunt filii eorum orphani, et uxor vidua, quia sanguis Christi super eos et super filios eorum, ut vindicetur, manet"; on simony from a juridical point of view, see R. M. Freher, *Preventing Crime in the High Middle Ages: The Medieval Lawyers' Search for Deterrence*, in: *Popes, Teachers, and Canon Law in the Middle Ages*, eds. J. R. Sweeney, S. Chodorow (Ithaca, London 1989) 212 ss.

³² See, for instance, *Gaufridus Vindocinensis*, *Libellus II*. Goffridus abbas Rainaldo episcopo Andegavensi non canonice electo laicorum investituram haeresim esse demonstrat, (1116–18), in: MGH. *Libelli de Lite* II, 684: "... illis invititis [the clergy of Angers] et non petentibus arreptus fuistis a vulgo: et quod ibi factum est hoc praesumptuosa et pernitiosa fecit seditio. Quorum iustam reprobationem cum *quidam de genere Iudeorum laicus audisset, qui semper, dum potuit, oppressit ecclesiam* et qui, nullo eum comitante de clero, a latere nostro vos primus arripuerat, turbam vulgi, quam ipse turbaverat, secum adduxit et in medium sancti conventus impudenter prosiluit, clamans: Quis nobis in hoc opere nostro contradicit, eligat unus ex duobus, aut mori statim, aut concedere quod fecimus! Sic grex religiosus abbatum et clericorum, qui ad pastorem electionem convenerat, turbatus est et dispersus ...".

³³ H. Siems, *Handel und Wucher*.

treatises on damages, usury was described as an illicit but clearly defined economic transaction, very different from society contracts as *iska* or from particular forms of economic transgression as *ona'a*³⁴. Thereafter – as Haym Soloveitchik has clearly explained – the rabbinic French and German *responsa* from the eleventh century could describe it “simply [as] a way of earning a living”³⁵. Since, as we saw, the traditional Christian discourse developed a double and conflicting conceptualisation of credit transactions, the legal definition of usury in the works of Christian jurists, until the great codifier Gratianus, is very incongruous, and in most cases, although the illegality of usury is affirmed, a specific definition of the contractual manifestations of usury is absent. The typical definition of usury in the normative and legal Christian sources from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, or from Charlemagne to Gratianus, is: “usury is when more is requested as restitution than has been given” (*usura est ubi amplius requiritur quam datur*)³⁶. Actually, the elusiveness of this definition opened the way to the possibility of differentiating between credit transactions perceived as favourable to increasing churches – as for instance the commerce in rents – and loans and restitutions outside the ecclesiastical public space, by private subjects whose aim, from a clerical perspective, was not to augment institutional wealth, but the private – *carnalis* carnal – prosperity of one’s own familiar group³⁷. The insistence of this canonical definition on the words “request” – “give” (*requiri-dari*), in fact, established that usury, properly said, could happen only when an individual firmly imposed a specific difference between the loaned and returned value. When the credit transaction took place without this precise quantification of interest, so that the gain derived from the repayment in a different type of value (for instance a sum of money was compensated by periodical land rents), the transaction was no longer considered usurious, principally because this difference of value was granted as correct by the institutional subjects (churches, abbeys, landlords) who normally determined it. It is in the period after Gratianus, in the second half of the twelfth century, that what Haym Soloveitchik has defined as “a dramatic change” occurred³⁸. Alternatively, we can say, it is after

³⁴ A. Weingort, *Intérêt et crédit dans le droit talmudique*.

³⁵ H. Soloveitchik, *The Jewish Attitude* 126.

³⁶ *Capitulare Niumagae datum*, (806), n. 11: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Capitularia*, II p. 132; *Decretum Gratiani C. XIV q. 3, c. 4 and 9*, *Friedberg* ed. 735 and 737; *Siems*, *Handel und Wucher* 745 ss.; *Todeschini*, *Linguaggi teologici e linguaggi amministrativi*; *Idem*, *Linguaggi economici ed ecclesiologia*.

³⁷ F. Veraja, *Le origini della controversia teologica sul contratto di censo nel XIII secolo* (Roma 1960); W. Trusen, *Zum Rentenkauf im Spämittelalter* (1971), now in W. Trusen, *Gelehrtes Recht im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Goldbach 1997); J. Kirshner, *Storm over Monte Comune: Genesis of the Moral Controversy over the Public Debt of Florence*, in: *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 53 (1983) 219–276; J. Hernando, *Quaestio disputata de licitudine contractus emptionis et venditionis censualis cum conditione revenditionis. Un tratado sobre la licitud del contrato de compra-venta de rentas personales y redimibles*. Bernat de Puigcercòs, OP (siglo XIV), in: *Acta Mediaevalia Barcelona*, 10 (1989) 9–87; L. Armstrong, *Usury and Public Debt in Early Renaissance Florence: Lorenzo Ridolfi on the Monte Comune* (Toronto 2003).

³⁸ H. Soloveitchik, *The Jewish Attitude* 124–25.

1160 that a firm clarification of Christian opinions about usury is clearly evident in the explicit condemnation of usurious contracts. Usury now appears as an even better defined system of contractual typologies. Haym Soloveitchik points out that this new Christian attention to usury is “the real riddle, not the Jewish position on usury but what came to be the Christian one, the why and the how of this major transformation in the mentalité of Western Europe”³⁹. I suggest that it is possible to solve the puzzle, and at the same time to understand the rapid formation at the end of the twelfth century of the Jewish usurer stereotype, if this change is viewed in the light of the earlier Christian sources, and particularly from the point of view of their semantics of the double significance of credit. As we saw, it is incorrect to state that Christian juridical tradition, as summed up by Gratianus in 1140, was totally unfavourable to credit transactions; on the contrary, the credit economy was perceived as useful when it revealed a specific ecclesiastical or public meaning. As Amos Funkenstein, Anna Sapir Abulafia, Miri Rubin, Jeremy Cohen⁴⁰ and some others have substantiated, is it highly likely that the Christian change of attitude concerning Jews at the end of the twelfth century depended in some measure on the deep doctrinal change which, after the Gregorian Reform and the affirmation of the real eucharistic presence, made Christology the essential reference point for political or religious credibility. To believe the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and to recognize as sacred the power of the ecclesiastics, became the fundament of belonging to the human community. From this point of view, the growing ideological and graphical representation of Jews as semi-human monsters menacing Christian women and children has much to do, as Trachtenberg and recently Sara Lipton and Ruth Mellinkoff⁴¹ demonstrated, with the theological representations of infidels as aliens so typical of the last part of the twelfth century Christian thought. This explanation is mostly correct, but my idea is that it is necessary to emphasize the economic and juridical roots of the new hostile Christian attitude against Jews, paying attention to the way the traditional Christian vocabulary of economics was adapted to the changing economic situation of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As Violante and Duby have pointed out⁴², the accelera-

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ A. Funkenstein, *Changes in the Patterns of Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Twelfth Century*, in: *Zion* 33 (1968) 125–144; *Idem*, *Basic Types of Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Later Middle Ages*, in: *Viator* 2 (1972) 373–382; A. Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in Dispute. Disputational literature and the rise of anti-Judaism in the West (c. 1000–1150)* (Aldershot 1998); *Idem*, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (London, New York 1995); M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi. The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge 1991); J. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews. The Evolution of Medieval Antijudaism* (Ithaca, London 1983).

⁴¹ R. Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Los Angeles 1993); *Idem*, *Antisemitic Hate Signs in Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts from Medieval Germany* (Jerusalem 1999); S. Lipton, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible Moralisée* (Berkeley, Los Angeles 1999).

⁴² G. Duby, *Les chanoines réguliers et la vie économique des XI^e et XII^e siècles*, in: *La vita comune del clero nei secoli XI e XII* (Milano 1962) 72–81; C. Violante, *I vescovi dell’Italia centro-settentrionale e lo sviluppo dell’economia monetaria*, in: *Vescovi e diocesi in Italia nel Medioevo* (sec.

tion and the multiplication of money transactions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was after all not so much the result of a generic new lay enterprise spirit, but on the whole a consequence of the economic rationality of landlords, among whom bishops, abbots and canons were particularly prominent. In France as well as in northern Italy the real problem with this new economic situation was, moreover, that the creation and the increase of markets were accompanied by the multiplication of economic subjects, initially controlled by their lords, but in time even more apt to play the role of entrepreneurs albeit outside the sacred space of political powers. Credit, or the increase of commercial operations founded on delayed payments, was also a consequence of this economic revolution. The general effect was the huge and rapid growth of social and economic relations based on loans and restitutions, but, also, the empowerment of politically unauthorized subjects. In this situation at the middle of the twelfth century, it is possible to detect some new signals of polemic against the wealth of the Jews, though they are not yet systematically designated as usurers. In 1146 Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny in Burgundy, writes to the king Louis VII of France with the aim to authorize him to expropriate the wealth of the French Jews in order to finance a crusade. In this letter can we see the beginning of a Christian trend that Jews as infidels and therefore serfs of the landlords and of the Church cannot possess legitimate wealth of their own. Thus the reasoning of Peter of Cluny that their riches are without doubt illegal and fruit of robbery or commercial tricks. Peter declares that the French Jews are normally partners of Christian sacrilegious thieves, that is of Simoniacs⁴³. In other words, the participation of Jews, infidels and outsiders par excellence, in the new economic reality troubles, among other charismatic leaders, Peter the Venerable of Cluny, himself an important ecclesiastical landlord, because the new economic play seems to authorize them to acquire power over Christian land, that is to become politically significant. In the same years, the same ecclesiastical fear of the acquisition of wealth and, frequently, of ecclesiastical possessions by lay people, determines the textual spreading of the crucial semantic equivalence between *carnalitas* and *usura*. It will thereafter be common, from Bernard of Clairvaux to Peter the Chanter at the end of the century, to utilise the word *judaisare* to define the activity of Christian usurers⁴⁴. As Sara Lipton has adroitly shown in her analysis of the representations of Jews and Synagogue in the *Bibles Moralisées* of the

IX–XIII (Padova 1964) 193–217; *Idem*, Monasteri e canoniche nello sviluppo dell'economia monetaria (secoli XI–XIII), in: Istituzioni monastiche e istituzioni canonicali in Occidente, 1123–1215 (Milano 1980) 369–416; C. Brittain Bouchard, Holy Entrepreneurs. Cistercian, Knights, and Economic Exchange in Twelfth Century Burgundy (Ithaca, London 1991).

⁴³ The letters of Peter the Venerable, I, ed. G. Constable (Cambridge/Mass. 1978) 327–330; Y. Friedman, An Anatomy of Antisemitism: Peter the Venerable's Letter to Louis VII, King of France (1146), in: Bar-Ilan Studies in History (1978) 87–102.

⁴⁴ Dictionary of Mediaeval Latin from British Sources (London 1975) I, s.v. “judaisantes”; *Petrus Cantor*, Verbum abbreviatum. Textus conflatus, ed. M. Boutry (Turnhout 2004) 325; J. W. Baldwin, Masters, Princes and Merchants. The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and his Circle (Princeton 1970).

beginning of the thirteenth century, this semantic equation does not signify that the Christian authors recognize usury as a real and typical Jewish profession, but that the “carnality” traditionally imputed to Jews as logical attribute of their misunderstanding of Scriptures makes them the obvious paradigm of the new Christian economic reality when this reality appears external or dangerous to ecclesiastical economic policy⁴⁵. The point becomes more and more clear when, from the seventies of the twelfth century, the papal power assumes a precise position on the question of the economic and juridical role of the Jews in Christian Europe. Alexander III, Celestine III, and then at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Innocent III, that is from 1160 to 1215, send a series of official letters to many European lords and kings. Their aim is on the one hand to establish that Jews that become possessors of pledged ecclesiastical land must be compelled to pay tithe to the churches, that is to recognize the ecclesiastical jurisdiction as a legitimate fiscal jurisdiction⁴⁶. On the other hand, Jewish witnesses against Christians in economic controversies may not be accepted by Christian tribunals⁴⁷. It is at this moment – the last years of the twelfth century – that the growth of an usurious representation of the economic activity of the Jews becomes gradually observable in some penitential manuals and narrative or hagiographic sources, but also in the pontifical legislation collected and edited by Solomon Grayzel⁴⁸. This stereotyping process can be interpreted as the rhetoric or emotional rendering, and then as the adaptation to a linguistic standard of divulgation, of a more complex situation regarding ecclesiastical territorial power seen as a form of control apparently menaced by the economic initiative of lay individuals. Sara Lipton describes this phenomenon very clearly: “indebtedness entails emotional as well as legal obligation. Power over the clerical debtor is conferred upon the lay creditor, and the superiority of clergy ... is consequently undermined. Moreover, if lay power over the clergy was at all times a cause for concern, when the laymen in question were infidels a disturbing religious dimension came into play.”⁴⁹ The persisting ambiguity of the Christian legal sources on the matter of credit during the development of economic anti-Jewish discourses indicates that representing medieval Jews as usurers and Jewish wealth as completely derived from usurious transactions is, on the whole, a linguistic stereotype signifying the canonistic and theological rejection of the lay economic initiatives when they are perceived as menacing the sacred wealth of the churches. Indeed, the ecclesiastical lawyers of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century developed an even more systematic definition regarding the legitimacy of putting

⁴⁵ S. Lipton, *Images of Intolerance* 34. M. Awerbuch, *Christlich-jüdische Begegnung im Zeitalter der Frühscholastik* (München 1980).

⁴⁶ G. Todeschini, *I mercanti e il tempio* 248 ss.

⁴⁷ W. Pakter, *Medieval canon law and the Jews* (Ebelsbach 1988) 174 ss.

⁴⁸ S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia 1933); J. Gilchrist, *The Canonistic Treatment of Jews in the Latin West in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries*, in: *Zeitschrift der Savigny Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte – Kan. Abt.* 106 (1989) 70–106; A. Linder, *The Jews in the legal sources of the early middle ages* (Detroit, Jerusalem 1997).

⁴⁹ S. Lipton, *Images of Intolerance* 34–38.

on the market the ecclesiastical rents or *decimae* (tithes), that is the right of churches and abbeys to make credit transactions in the form of buying and selling periodical revenues⁵⁰. In the thirteenth century, growing obsession with usury as a dangerous and destructive economic practice and the accompanying detestation of Jewish economic activities systematically represented as the paradigm of the usurious infidelity, will thereafter be perfectly compatible with the Christian development of a market society, but also of a Christian economics promoted and popularised principally in the writing and preaching of the leading intellectual *magistri* active in the Mendicant Orders⁵¹. The fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and the second Council of Lyon in 1274 will promulgate inflexible decrees on usury and usurers⁵². However, a close reading of these norms clearly shows that their aim was an accurate differentiation between the sinful economic practice of individuals even depicted as aliens and strangers or heretics, and the economic trend represented in the same years by Christian merchant companies promoted by the popes to the role of bankers and tax collectors of the Apostolic Chamber⁵³. The Jews, in this situation, play a strange role: as paradigm of infidelity they embody the usurious avarice daily concretised by the indifference of sectors of the Christian market society to the holiness of Church properties; as an actual economic presence, although in business practice very similar to the Christian one, they appear in legal sources as harshly reproached and sometimes condemned for their determination to participate in economic interplay on a basis of juridical parity with Christians. At the same time, as subjects clearly conscious of possessing a specific economic culture sometimes conflicting with the ecclesiastical one, the Jews are presented in many canonistic or theological writings as arrogant and ungrateful guests (*hostes ingrati*) within Christian society⁵⁴. Finally, the Christian representation of Jewish economic activities as basically reducible to usury, and the interrelated idea that Jewish wealth was the result of an extraordinary capacity to manage money, will give rise to the paradoxical notion of a monetary usefulness of the carnal Jews for the spiritual Christians. Then, from the thirteenth century, the greed and avarice traditionally attributed to the Jews was perceived by Christian economic powers as the occasion for an economic strategy controlled by Christian governments. The Jewish economic evil began to appear as an ambiguous component of the sacred common

⁵⁰ G. Constable, *Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the 12th C.* (Cambridge 1964); F. Veraja, *Le origini della controversia teologica sul contratto di censo*.

⁵¹ O. Langholm, *Economics in Medieval Schools*; G. Todeschini, *Ricchezza francescana. Dalla povertà volontaria alla società di mercato* (Bologna 2004).

⁵² T. P. Mc Laughlin, *The Teaching of the Canonists on Usury*; U. Santarelli, *La prohibición de la usura, de canon moral a regla jurídica. Modalidades y éxitos de un "transplante"*, in: *Del Ius mercatorum al derecho mercantil*, C. Petit ed. (Madrid 1997) 237–256.

⁵³ E. D. English, *Enterprise and Liability in Sienese Banking, 1230–1350* (Cambridge/Mass. 1988); *Gli spazi economici della Chiesa nell'Occidente mediterraneo* (Centro italiano di studi di storia e d'arte, Pistoia 1999).

⁵⁴ For instance: S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews* 104, 108; S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the Thirteenth Century*, II, ed. K. R. Stow (Jewish Theological Seminary, New York 1989), 63; W. Pakter, *Medieval canon law and the Jews* 66.

good. In consequence of this evolution of the stereotype, many Italian cities at the end of the Middle Ages could grant a sort of citizenship to the Jews who were willing to play the role of public usurer⁵⁵, thereby consenting to exchange wealth, originated by means of a multitude of economic activities, with a civic identity founded on the usurious specialization which in fact was the last embodiment of an ancient religious stereotype: the *perfidia* or *duritia Judaeorum*⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ Gli ebrei in Italia, I, ed. C. Vivanti (Torino 1996); A. Toaff, *Judaei cives? Gli ebrei nei catasti di Perugia del Trecento*, in: *Zakhor. Rivista di Storia degli Ebrei d'Italia* IV (2000) 11-36.

⁵⁶ B. Blumenkranz, *Perfidia*, in: *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi-Bulletin Du Cange* 22 (1952) 157-70; *Idem*, *Juifs et chrétiens. Patristique et Moyen Age* (London 1977) VII; G. Todeschini, *Franciscan Economics and Jews in the Middle Ages: From a Theological to an Economic Lexicon*, in: *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. S. J. McMichael, S. E. Myers (Leiden, Boston 2004) 99-117.