Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter know, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Michael Hatch 4/18/2011

Vicente Ferrer and the Kings' Jews: Reassessing the Modern Image of a Medieval Dominican

by

Michael Hatch

Dr. Michelle Armstrong-Partida
Adviser

Department of History

Dr. Michelle Armstrong-Partida

Adviser

Dr. Yanna Yannakakis

Committee Member

Dr. José Luis Boigues

Committee Member

4/18/2011

Vicente Ferrer and the Kings' Jews: Reassessing the Modern Image of a Medieval Dominican

By

Michael Hatch

Dr. Michelle Armstrong-Partida

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of History

2011

Abstract

Vicente Ferrer and the Kings' Jews: Reassessing the Modern Image of a Medieval Dominican
By Michael Hatch

In recent years, the historiography of the persecution of late-medieval Iberian Jewry has shifted towards an emphasis on local economic, social, and political pressures, rather than a teleological understanding of persecution as a constant. However, Vicente Ferrer, a preacher from Valencia, is singled out as one of the principal figures in the persecution of Jews across Iberia, and this image ignores the influence that communal pressures had on the Jewish experience. Historians emphasize too much the impact of Ferrer's preaching, and this investigation aims, with an emphasis on sermons delivered in Castile from 1411-12, to more accurately interpret Ferrer's impact on Iberian Jewish communities.

Vicente Ferrer and the Kings' Jews: Reassessing the Modern Image of a Medieval Dominican

By

Michael Hatch

Dr. Michelle Armstrong-Partida

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of History

2011

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, without the help and support of Dr. Michelle Armstrong-Partida, this project would never have come to fruition. She endured all of the computer malfunctions, last minute drafts, and lack of primary source availability and offered invaluable advice and counsel. Also, Dr. Judith Miller's support and guidance in the fledgling stages of this investigations proved extremely helpful and useful. Of course, I must thank Drs. Yanna Yannakakis and Jose Luis Boigues for agreeing to serve on my committee, and providing wonderful insight into how to improve my writing, historical interpretation, and methodological applications. My family and friends, without whom I would not have been able to undertake this project, although not experts in the field of late-medieval Iberian history, helped me to begin and to end this project, and no matter how it finished, were proud of me. Last, but certainly not least, I must sincerely and heartily thank the history department and Emory University for three of the most informative, edifying, and enjoyable years of my life.

Table of Contents

Introduction

> *Almost every place Ferrer preached about the dangers of Jews and Judaism to Christians and of the need to isolate the Jews who still refused baptism, he incited local Christians to maltreat the Jews in some way.*[1]

The above quotation, taken from Mark Meyerson's, *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain*, mirrors almost exactly the image of Vicente Ferrer promulgated famously by the celebrated historian of Iberian Jewry, Yitzhak Baer. Writing in the early- to mid-twentieth century, Baer asserted that Ferrer, "según su propio testimonio, detestaba los derramientos de sangre y la coacción religiosa, pero en la práctica… sus palabras… hacían que de nuevo se inflamara el fanatismo de los cristianos y el odio hacia los judíos."[2] The function of this investigation is to offer up to the reader a different perspective of Ferrer's itinerant preaching campaigns from 1408-1416, with a particular focus on the sermons he delivered in Castile from early 1411 to mid-1412. Today, Ferrer's name and legacy are highly polarized, depending on one's beliefs. He is either the image of late-medieval anti-Semitism, or the Saint with the tongue of flame and the gift of tongues, whose spiritual gifts guided countless souls to paradise. Ferrer's Castilian campaign, which he began at the tender age of sixty, has entered the imagination of historians tracing back to Jose Amador de los Ríos and Yitzhak Baer and still informs historians' conception of him today. This investigation of his sermons will provide insight into Ferrer's goals, his lasting impact on Jewish communities, and will provide a new lens through which to view Ferrer's place in the history of the Sephardim.

In recent years, the historiography of the relationships between medieval, Iberian Christians and Jews has shifted away from the "Golden Age"/decline dichotomy towards a more

---

[1] Mark Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 61.
[2] Yitzhak Baer, *Historia de los judíos en la España cristiana*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Altalena, 1981), 439.

localized and nuanced discussion of individual relationships dependent upon various social political and economic pressures. Despite this shift, debate surrounding the influence and ramifications of Vicente Ferrer's sermons has remained much the same as in the late-nineteenth century. Modern Iberian historians of the Jewish experience draw heavily on the work of Yitzhak Baer when glossing over Ferrer's impact, the illustrious historian of Iberian Jewry, especially his seminal work *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*. In this two volume opus, Baer asserts that, although Ferrer claimed that he abhorred the shedding of Jewish blood, he inflamed tensions between Jews and Christians to the point of violence.[3] The image of Ferrer in the minds of historians has remained much the same, as one can see, for example, in Mark Meyerson's 2004 monograph when he inscribes Ferrer within a triumvirate of men who plunged the safety of the Jewish community of Morvedre into uncertainty.[4]

The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of modern historiographical currents and methodologies, and to apply them to the study of the Dominican Vicente Ferrer and his sermons given in Castile from 1411-12. First and foremost, the evolution of the historiography of the relationships between late-medieval Iberian Jews and Christians must be outlined in order to demonstrate the progression of scholarship. Doing so will provide an understanding of the methodological precepts that will be applied to the interpretation of Vicente Ferrer's sermons and their impact on Jewish communities. The two most important precepts that this examination will highlight are those of localized historical inquiry and individualized history. Local histories, such as Mark Meyerson's *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain*, focus primarily on one municipality as a microhistorical lens to understand the relationships between Jews and Christians in the wider Iberian Peninsula. This approach is

[3] Ibid.
[4] Meyerson, 59-63 and 67.

relevant to the assessment of Vicente Ferrer's sermons because, as will be shown, his emphasis, message, and rhetoric varied based on the community to which he preached. Despite traveling through only one kingdom (Castile) during his 1411-12 campaign, he approached communities differently, based on both the lectionary (the name given to the collection of Biblical passages appointed to be read each day throughout the course of the year), but more importantly for this study, the religious composition of his audience.

The second historiographical precept, individualized history, should not be confused with a biography, but is in fact a method of social historians. With such an approach, the historian aims to understand the social, political, and economic pressures and relationships within a community by means of interpretation, typically of the actions of individuals within the community. Jonathan Ray's *The Sephardic Frontier* is an excellent example of this sort of history that analyzes the multiplicity of ways that members of the Jewish communities in the mid-thirteenth century frontier lands interacted with one another and with Christians and Muslims. Ray emphasizes Jewish agency within the *Reconquista* and *repoblación* contexts by illustrating that individual Jews manipulated the legal and political systems of which they were part in order to establish a sense of prosperity and security as best as possible. Ray points to several examples of royal legislation (*fueros*), which "protected" minority religious populations from forced conversion, while on the other hand strengthened royal authority over Jews. Within the confines of such legislation, Jews acted with individual interests at heart when participating in socially and legally constructed forums such as royal and municipal courts or the frontier economy.[5] Ray's method proves useful in the analysis of Ferrer's sermons if one views them as individual pieces or snapshots of rhetoric, which varied dependent on location and consequently,

[5] Jonathan Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier: The Reconquista and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 76-82, 104.

local social, economic, and political pressures. One cannot construct an accurate image of Ferrer, or convincingly argue his impact on Jewish communities, without first understanding that the communities themselves varied greatly in size, level of autonomy, and each had a unique relationship with its local Christian milieu.

One important question remains: why sermons? Sermons figure prominently in the investigation of the historiography of Vicente Ferrer because, after 1399, identified himself primarily as a preacher rather than a lecturer or professor, and restricted his "external missions" to the years 1408-19.[6] Furthermore, when scholars discuss the impact of Ferrer on Jewish-Christian relations on the Iberian Peninsula, the first and foremost topic under scrutiny is the effect that his preaching had on his listeners and their surroundings. His sermons and their delivery were not only a turning point for Iberian preaching, but also for Iberian politics and society. Ferrer's sermons were unique among his Iberian contemporaries because of both their delivery and his rhetoric, two characteristics that will be described in greater detail. Owing to his political and social connections, Ferrer's sermons acted as political catalysts when he preached in front of influential members of Iberian society. Therefore, in order to more fully grasp his impact on the complex web of relationships between Christians and Jews in medieval Iberia, it is vitally important to understand what Ferrer said and to whom he spoke. The aim of this investigation is two-fold: first and foremost, to situate Vicente Ferrer and his sermons in their historical and social contexts; second, to establish a more complex portrait of Ferrer and his sermons in the mind of the modern reader. The latter will incorporate discussion of the violence and forced conversions that swept across the Iberian Peninsula in 1391, as well as a focus on Ferrer's 1411-

[6] Robin Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims, and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 259, n. 8. "External mission," signifies a concerted attempt to preach to non-Christians, particularly with the aim of conversion.

12 itinerant preaching campaign in the Kingdom of Castile. This examination is not an apology for the Dominican, but simply an attempt to rectify a lacuna in the real role of Vicente Ferrer and to continue the natural progression of late-medieval Spanish historiography towards the more nuanced and away from the generalized.

As a point of introduction to the investigation, one must begin with a brief summary of the story of Ferrer's life. Born to William Ferrer and Constance Miguel in Valencia in 1350, he entered the Dominican Order of Friars Preacher in 1367 at the age of seventeen, and took his vows after a one-year probation period.[7] From Valencia, he was sent to Tarragona to study philosophy and theology until his appointment as lecturer of philosophy at the University in Lleida. After three years, he was sent to Barcelona to the *studium hebraicum* established by the Dominicans in the thirteenth century. From Barcelona, he was sent to the University of Toulouse in 1377, then to Valencia in 1379, where he was elected Prior of Valencia and preached Lenten sermons from 1381 until 1390. He remained in the Kingdom of Valencia until the accession of Pedro de Luna to the papal seat at Avignon in 1395, taking the name Benedict XIII.[8] The Avignon pope requested that Ferrer appear at the papal court, where he remained for three to four years. While there, he served as personal chaplain and confessor to the Benedict XIII, and he also attempted to provide solutions to the Western Schism, which divided the Catholic Church in 1378. After recovering from a serious illness that very nearly killed him, he decided to leave the papal court and return to Aragon proper, where he began his mission of itinerant preaching. Far from his only commitment, he continued throughout the remainder of his time in the Iberian

[7] Fr. Stanislaus Hogan, O.P, "Saint Vincent Ferrer, O.P.," in *The Friar Saints Series*, ed. Fr. Bede Jarrett, O.P. and C.M. Anthony (Longmans, Green, and Co.: London, 1911), 6.
[8] The biographical information above is taken from Hogan, 5-15, and there is no reason to doubt its veracity. For further reading, see Rev. Fr. André Pradel, *St. Vincent Ferrer of the Order of Friars Preacher: His Life, Spiritual Teaching, and Practical Devotion*, trans. Rev. Fr. T.A. Dixon (Whitefish: Kessinger, 2007), ch. 1.

kingdoms to advise kings, queens, and a multitude of municipal leaders. Beginning in January of 1411, Ferrer set out on a preaching campaign that would take him on a winding path through the crown of Castile, spending time in Murcia, Lorca, Toledo, Jumilla, Illescas, Ocaña, and many other towns in the south and center of the peninsula. It is the sermons delivered on this campaign that are the focus of this investigation. The structure of his sermons is similar to that proposed by Francesc Eiximenis, a Franciscan from Barcelona, however Ferrer simplified his message and rhetoric to suit the less educated.[9] The doctrine that he preached was heavily influenced by the Church fathers, especially Thomas Aquinas, who is one of the only non-Biblical men that Ferrer quoted in the Castilian sermons. Sánchez Sánchez also emphasizes that Ferrer implemented a sort of stylistic shift from the "rationalism" of the Majorcan, Ramón Llull (died c. 1315), one of the greatest figures in Iberian preaching. Llull composed a large collection of sermons, the *Summa sermonorum*, which other monks copied and promulgated for their personal edification and use when preaching.[10] Ferrer, however, did not intend to copy his sermons and send them out to monasteries without preaching them himself.

By no means did his itinerant preaching or political intrigues cease with the conclusion of the Castilian campaign. In 1412, Ferrer intervened on behalf of Fernando de Antequera, who claimed the seat on the throne of Aragon, as opposed to the *barcelonés* Jaime de Urgel. The resulting decision, known as the Compromise of Caspe, secured the throne for Fernando de Antequera, who became Fernando I of Aragon, and many contemporaries attributed his

[9] Manuel Ambrosio Sánchez Sánchez, "Vernacular Preaching in Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan," in *The Sermon*, ed. Bevery Mayne Kienzle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 804.
[10] Ibid., 802-4. The author argues that Llull did not preach a single one of these sermons, but rather intended them as models for preachers. He wrote his compendiums with the expressed intention of teaching monks to how to preach.

accession to the political aptitude of Vicente Ferrer.[11] Fray Vicente continued preaching throughout Western Europe until his death in Vannes, France in 1419.

[11] Jesús Ernesto Martínez Ferrando, *San Vicente Ferrer y la casa real de Aragón: Documentación conservada en el Archivo Real de Barcelona*, (Barcelona: Balmesiana, 1955), 54-6.

Historiographical Background

Over the course of the past twenty-five years, historiography of the complex systems of relationships between Christians, Jews and Muslims in Spain shifted progressively farther away from usage of the term *convivencia*, a concept proffered most prominently by Américo Castro in his 1948 *España en su historia: ensayos sobre historia y literatura*.[12] *Convivencia* thus became a buzzword, a catchphrase, and a buttress against what was considered the nationalist (or "Castilianist") history of Spain, as well as an attractive notion for Jewish historians arguing for the concept of the "Golden Age" of Jewish-Christian relations in medieval Europe.[13] Proponents of Spain's nationalist historiography argued that, in the late-fifteenth century, the expulsion of the Jews was necessary in order to secure religious homogeneity and facilitate unification under *los reyes católicos*. *Convivencia* as an accurate description of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim experience, however, has incurred serious setbacks despite historians trying to alter the implications in Castro's original meaning. The term has become closely associated with the so-called "Golden Age" of Jewish culture in medieval Iberia, which is one half of the dichotomy now largely rejected by historians such as David Nirenberg and Mark Meyerson.[14]

Rather than a seemingly facile and binary explanation of Jewish-Christian relationships in the Middle Ages or the *longue durée* teleology, historians now favor a much more complex, localized understanding of interfaith interactions.[15] *Longue durée* is a theory in historical writing that gives priority to long-term historical structures over specific events as causation for certain

---

[12] Citation found in Maya Soifer, "Beyond *convivencia*: critical reflections on the historiography of interfaith relations in Christian Spain," Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies 1, no. 1 (January 2009): 19-20.
[13] Soifer, 20.
[14] See David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4-6 and Meyerson, *Jewish Renaissance*, 1-4.
[15] Nirenberg, *Communities*, 4-5.

phenomena.[16] With respect to Jewish history, the *longue durée* is often applied to the persecution of Jews in Europe, especially in the Middle Ages. Typically, historians who ascribe to this school of thought view the expulsions as a culmination of centuries-long, interconnected persecutorial practices in Christendom.[17] The relationships between Christians and Jews, however, depended heavily on a variety of social, economic, and political factors that differed between kingdoms, regions, and towns. Nirenberg's thesis in *Communities of Violence* emphasizes that violent outbursts in the mid-fourteenth century, far from demarcating the decline of the "Golden Age," instead were necessary to the perpetuation of communal bonds between Christians, Jews, and Muslims.[18] Therefore, he argues, "structures are transformed by the actions and choices of people working in them... [and therefore] more readily explains change over time."[19] Jonathan Ray, in his study of the frontier between Christian- and Muslim-ruled Iberia, argues that the Jews who inhabited the frontier of Christendom and were charged with repopulating newly conquered lands did not couch their identity solely or even primarily in their religious affiliation. Indeed the greatest "peril" facing Jewish communities was "the independence and factionalism of their own members."[20] Ray makes a point to maintain the argument for a localized history, even to the point of creating an individualized social history, remarking that the Jews acted out of the desire for personal gain and self-preservation rather than going out of their way to remain "loyal" to the Jewish community. Ray and Meyerson emphasize the intra-religious conflicts that arose between

---

[16] See Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 64-76. Braudel characterizes *longue durée* as "the endless, inexhaustible history of structures and groups of structures… This great structure travels through vast tracts of time without changing; if it deteriorates during the long journey, it simply restores itself as it goes along and regains its health, and in the final analysis its characteristics alter only very slowly."

[17] For a concise and useful outline of the historical thought to the contrary, see Jonathan Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish Christian Relations in the Middle Ages,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[18] Nirenberg, *Communities*, 7.

[19] Ibid., 6.

[20] Ray, 177.

members of Jewish communities both along the frontier and in the municipality of Morvedre (modern Sagunto), respectively.[21]

Mark Meyerson, David Nirenberg, and Jonathan Ray each provide related, but uniquely important models for the study of Vicente Ferrer. Mark Meyerson emphasizes the importance of localization (local social, economic, and political pressures on both Christian and Jewish populations) in the study of the "Jewish experience" in late-medieval Iberia. David Nirenberg argues convincingly against *longue durée* teleological understandings of persecution as a process with an inevitable terminus. Jonathan Ray analyzes the role of the individual in Jewish communities, assigning to them significant agency with which they carved out a niche within both the Jewish community and the wider frontier community. Utilizing each of these methods, taking into account local pressures, immediate causal factors, and viewing Ferrer as an individual rather than the figurehead or embodiment of anti-Jewish sentiment, the interpretation of his sermons will more clearly illustrate his impact on Iberian Jewish communities. Due to his status as an important political and religious figure, a man who had the ear of popes and monarchs, a clear understanding of his role at this moment in history is integral to demystifying the complex socio-religious and political relationships between the Christians and Jews of Castilian towns and cities.

An awareness of the modern historiography of medieval Iberian Jewry is important to this investigation because applying the methods that are now the norm for historians will more clearly assess Vicente Ferrer's impact by providing a new lens through which to view his missionary activities; one that more clearly includes the historical, socio-religious, and political

[21] Ray, *Sephardic Frontier*, 136, and Meyerson, *Jewish Renaissance*, chs. 5 and 6 deal primarily with intra-religious political intrigues, social conflicts (respectively), and feuds within the *aljama* of Morvedre.

environments of his sermons. Jonathan Ray, in *The Sephardic Frontier*, emphasizes individualization on the Iberian Frontier following the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212. That is, Ray argues that Jews did not base their actions on the consequences or benefits that they would have for the Jewish community as a whole. Rather, they acted out of self-preservation, whether by manipulation of juridical devices or reaching to Christians when conflict arose with other Jews.[22] As Ray states in his introduction, he presents Jews "as individuals whose relationship to the Jewish community was but one of many aspects of their identity."[23] The example of *The Sephardic Frontier* illustrates a historiographical shift towards microhistory, towards the study of the individual rather than the community as a bloc. Similarly, Mark Meyerson's *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain* follows the story of one Jewish community in Morvedre following the violence of 1391 that swept through Iberia. Meyerson concludes that the Jewish "renaissance" in Morvedre was met by the Christian communities nearby (especially Valencia) with nonchalance. A Jewish "renaissance" was mundane, ordinary to Christian leaders, implying that perhaps other Jewish communities experienced a similar phenomenon.[24] Thus, through a local history of the Morvedre Jewry, much like what Ray later wrote on the individual history of Jews on the frontier, Meyerson subverts the long-held methodology called *longue durée*, which sought to explain intolerance towards Jews as a linear historical phenomenon. Iberian Jews experienced intolerance in varying forms, be they increased tax burdens, maximum interest rates on loans, or outright violence.

Modern historians now understand that persecution, in its multiplicity of manifestations, differed based on location, royal and municipal sentiment towards Jews. Certain monarchs, such

[22] Ibid., 136-44.
[23] Ibid., 7.
[24] Meyerson, 240.

as Fernando I of Aragon and Queen Catherine of Castile took hard lines against the Jewish communities in their realms.[25] In 1412, Catherine, acting as co-regent of Castile with her brother-in-law Fernando de Antequera (the future Fernando I of Aragon), drastically reduced the autonomy and, if one may go so far as to say, the liberties of Castilian Jews. The twenty-four ordinances decreed that Muslims and Jews must live apart from Christians, they were not allowed to sell food or drink to Christians, and they could not live or travel freely in Valladolid.[26] However, Norman Roth argues that the Ordinances were rarely if ever enforced outside of Valladolid, and that Baer grossly overreached in his classification of the Ordinances as a watershed moment in the history of Iberian Jewish autonomy.[27] Roth notes that Jews continued to "act as government officials" and even, despite the explicit language of the Ordinances, remained in all of the occupations listed by the regents.[28] Furthermore, in 1408 very similar restrictions were placed on Muslims in Castile due to the declaration of war against the Nasrid Sultanate of Granada, demonstrating that the co-regents exhibited a propensity for restraining autonomy of religious minorities before the appearance of Ferrer.[29] Moreover, in the years

---

[25] See Meyerson, 58-64 for Fernando I of Aragon and Jose Amador de los Rios, *Historia social, política y religiosa de los judíos de España y Portugal*, (Madrid: Aguilar, 1960), 965-70 in which one finds a transcription of the Ordinances of Valladolid from 1412.

[26] Amador de los Rios, 966ff. "Primeramente que de aquí adelante todos los judíos é moros é moras de los mis Regnos é Sennoríos sean é vivan apartados de los christianos… Otrosí: Que ninguno nin algunos judíos nin moros nin moras non tengan en sus barrios ó límites ó moradas plazas, nin mercados para vender nin comprar cosas algunas de comer é de veber á cristianos… Otrosí: Que ningund judío nin judía nin moro nin mora non se vayan á Valladolid."

[27] Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 49-50.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ana Echevarria, "Catalina of Lancaster, the Castilian Monarchy, and Coexistence," in *Medieval Spain: Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence: Studies in Honor of Angus Mackay*, ed. Roger Collins and Anthony Goodman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 98-9.

following 1412, many of the discriminatory edicts were "abolished by the Spanish kings who tried to restore the former status of the Jews."[30]

Although contemporary historians generally disagree with the lachrymose school of Jewish historiography and the *longue durée* teleology of persecution in the Iberian Peninsula, many still use the specter of Vicente Ferrer in much the same tradition of Yitzhak Baer: as a fan to the flames of religious tensions and intolerance. That is not to say that, when incorporating the work of other scholars, one should ascribe to either all of the tenets and methodologies or none of them. Simply put, after examination and interpretation of Ferrer's sermons in Castile, a kingdom notorious in Iberia for its enthusiastic legislation against and violent persecution of Jews, one can determine that the historical figure of Ferrer was much more nuanced than the perpetrator of anti-Semitism. Ferrer is often mentioned in the same sections as Ferrán Martínez, the archdeacon of Ecija in whose preaching one finds particularly vicious vitriol directed at Jews which provoked violence in Seville in the years preceding the 1391 pogroms.[31] However, Ferrer's fanatic missionizing to the Jews of the Iberian kingdoms was a function of his eschatology, which fueled his desire to convert Jews rather than eliminate them. Iconography and depictions of Vicente Ferrer often portray him with a scroll which reads "Timete Deum" (Fear God), a phrase from Revelation 14:6-7 which emphasizes the imminence of the end-times.[32] This Bible verse "came to be exclusively associated with Ferrer… after proclaiming to

---

[30] Stephen Sharot, "Jewish Millenarianism: A Short Comparison of Medieval Communities," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 3 (July 1980): 412.
[31] For historiography on Ferrán Martínez see Teofilo Ruiz, *Spain's Centuries of Crisis: 1300-1474*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 158-9 and Philippe Wolff, "The 1391 Pogrom in Spain: Social Crisis or Not?," *Past & Present* 50 (February 1971): 8
[32] "Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." See Mark J. Zucker, "Problems in Dominican Iconography: The Case of St. Vincent Ferrer," *Artibus et Historiae* 13, no. 25 (1992): 181-93 for discussion of Ferrer's iconography and portrayal.

his audience [in Salamanca] that he was the angel of the Book of Revelation."[33] Ferrer's most remarkable quality, in the eyes of his Christian contemporaries in the Mediterranean world, was his eschatological fervor in concert with passionate preaching in which he declared the impending apocalypse, an event that would result in the conversion of all remaining non-believers.

[33] Ibid., 181.

Historical Milieu

In the early thirteenth century, following the Fourth Lateran Council and the foundation of the Order of Friars Preacher in 1215, Dominicans and other mendicant orders were swept up in the zeal to protect Christians from heresy. Robin Vose, in *Dominicans, Muslims, and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*, argues that, far from proselytizing with the aim of conversion, Dominicans in the Crown of Aragon desired to disseminate organized Catholic doctrine among Christian followers.[34] According to Vose, the impact of men such as Ramón Penyafort, Pablo Christiani, and Ramón Marti, three clerics from the Iberian Peninsula who actively sought the conversion of Jews and Muslims in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, has "distorted the historical goals and activities of the medieval Dominican Order."[35] Even in the medieval Crown of Aragon, a place with very large Muslim and Jewish populations and in close proximity to Muslim ruled lands, the primary goal of the "Dogs of God" (*domini canes*) was the protection of the faithful by rooting out heresy, not the conversion of nonbelievers. Vose makes a compelling argument against the concept of early Dominicans as missionaries to Jews and Muslims, rather he concludes that the papacy used the Order as a tool to ensure orthodoxy throughout Western Christendom.[36] Even the Disputation of Barcelona (1263), the debate betwixt the Jew-turned-Dominican Pablo Christiani and the famed rabbi Moses ben Nachman (Nachmanides) about Jewish and Christian messianic beliefs, was initiated and carried out "for the chief benefit of

---

[34] Vose, 3-6.
[35] Ibid., 5.
[36] Ibid., 58-9. In the concluding paragraphs of the first chapter, Vose remarks that for a brief window in the mid-thirteenth century, proselytism to the unbelievers was advocated by Dominicans, particularly Humbert of Romans, however tepidly. "Their efforts," he states, "would be more profitably expended, however, in a defensive posture as pastors and moral guides among Christians living in regions where non-Christian religious beliefs proliferated."

Christians."[37] In sum, despite outliers such as Pablo Christiani, the Order of Friars Preacher, though conscious of the importance of converting Jews, remained primarily concerned with "bridling or muzzling" teaching that posed a threat to Christians.[38]

As the fourteenth century progressed, in order to secure orthodoxy in the Iberian Peninsula, the mendicant orders as well as the Church clerics needed to address one of the most pressing questions facing Iberian Christendom: "judaizing," or the act of reverting back to Jewish practices after baptism. Following a large number of forced conversions in the summer of 1391, judaizing became a grave threat to Christians across the Spanish kingdoms. Many *conversos* simply fled Christian kingdoms for the Maghrib, reestablished connections with North African Arab and Jewish merchants, and continued practicing Judaism.[39] The result was both an enlargement of the Jewish diaspora in the Maghrib and the expansion of the economy of towns that retained economic connections with judaizing *conversos*. During the 1391 pogroms, however, several thousand Jews were killed and the Jewish quarters in the larger cities of the peninsula were devastated.[40] The Jewish population in Valencia, for example, following 1391 was eliminated due to conversion, murder, and flight to other Aragonese municipalities.[41]

The massacres and forced conversions that swept through towns across the Spanish kingdoms in the summer of 1391 weighed heavily on the consciousness of the peninsula's monarchs. This was due in large part to the status of Jews in Kingdom of Castile and the Crown of Aragon as vassals of the royal treasury. Monarchs saw Jews as valuable, taxable assets.

---

[37] Ibid., 152.
[38] Ibid., 127-9.
[39] Meyerson, 113-7.
[40] Roth, 372-6 deals exclusively with the determination of exact numbers of converts and deaths during the summer of 1391. He concludes that "we have no reliable figures" for the number of *conversos* created by these forced conversions.
[41] Meyerson, 83.

Examples of royal exploitation of Jewish capital and property abound throughout the Western European high Middle Ages.[42] Whether to fund the Crusades (in the case of the French and English monarchs) or to shore up finances in the midst of dynastic conflict (in the case of Pedro I of Castile and Henry of Trastamara[43]), royalty relied heavily on Jewish capital. Because of their importance to the royal treasuries, the role of collecting taxes imposed by both Crown and lord, and the role of many Jews as moneylenders, they incurred the wrath of commoners. In the Spanish kingdoms, Jews held many occupations such as weavers and tailors in the years prior to 1391; however, many became fabulously wealthy as moneylenders and doctors.[44] "Christian opinion," however, from the top (Benedict XIII) to the bottom of Christian society failed to distinguish between those Jews who were "harsh in the recovery of debts" and poor Jews, which resulted in the indiscriminate nature of the attacks.[45]

The most critical social consequence of the large number of forced conversions was the establishment of an even larger *converso* community, and in Valencia, the *converso* community effectively replaced the Jewish. As a result, the *ecclesia*, or Christian body religious, expanded rapidly, although the so-called "New Christians" required instruction in the faith and reduced contact with their former coreligionists. Juan I of Aragon "took up a position of clearest possible hostility to the murders and forced conversions," but there was little that the monarch could do to overturn the sacrament of baptism, which would have required the consent of the Church

---

[42] Leonard Glick, *Abraham's Heirs: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 156-60, 211-14, and 221-24. Especially harsh were financial measures taken by Philip II Augustus (r. 1180-1223) in 1181, Richard I of England (r. 1189-99) in 1194, and John Lackland (r. 1199-1216) in 1210.
[43] Ruiz, 157.
[44] Philippe Wolff, "The 1391 Pogrom in Spain: Social Crisis or Not?," *Past & Present* 50 (February 1971): 6.
[45] Ibid., 7-8.

hierarchy.[46] Meyerson argues several Morvedre *conversos* from wealthier families picked up and moved to the Maghrib, where they continued to practice Judaism. This may have been true for affluent Jews from other municipalities.[47] Whether owing to the flight of Jews from Christian kingdoms, conversion, or death, the religious geography that resulted from the 1391 pogroms varied greatly from the years before.

Almost eight years after the massacres and forced conversions of 1391, Vicente Ferrer left his post as confessor and counselor to the Avignon Pope Benedict XIII due to illness brought on, supposedly, by the mental and spiritual anguish of the Western Schism and a renewed his calling to preach. Prior to 1395 and his service to Papa Luna, Ferrer preached at the Cathedral in Valencia from 1381 until 1390 and served as confessor to Queen Yolande of Aragon (d. 1431) from 1390 until his assignment in Avignon.[48] The Dominican, embroiled in papal and royal politics throughout his life, abandoned his professional post at courts in both Avignon and Aragon to begin his itinerant campaign, thereafter participating in political intrigues only obliquely. In Ayllón, for example, it was through a sermon that he implored and convinced the co-regents of Castile to promulgate the Ordinances of Valladolid in 1412. This episode illustrates the influence his sermons could have on listeners, even in political matters, after he dedicated his energies to preaching. According to the *crónica* of Juan II of Castile, Ferrer entered Ayllón and preached at the behest of "la Reyna y el Infante," in which he declared that "en todas las cibdades é villas de sus Reynos mandasen apartar los Judíos é los Moros, porque de su continua

[46] Ibid., 6-7. In Vose, 1-5 one finds the example of Baruch Teutonici, a Jew who was forcibly converted in 1320 and supplicated to the Church to reject his baptism, but the inquisitorial tribunal refused his request.
[47] Meyerson, 113. The supposition that the phenomenon could have been true for other Spanish Jews comes from interpretation of the concluding chapter.
[48] Fr. Stanislaus Hogan, O.P, ch. 3.

conversacion con los Christianos se seguian grandes daños."[49] Similarly, in Toledo on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Ferrer exhorted the "gobernantes" to mandate that "los cristianos no habiten ni vivan con ellos [judíos y sarracenos]."[50] Exhortations such as these have led historians to treat Ferrer as the central figure in legislation directed towards undermining the autonomy of the Jews of Castile. However, Norman Roth argues that, despite the harshness of the language of such legislation, local officials rarely enforced many of the royal ordinances.[51]

[49] Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, "La crónica del serenísimo príncipe don Juan II de Castilla," in *Crónicas de los reyes de Castilla*, ed. D. Cayetano Rosell vol. 68 of *Biblioteca de autores españoles desde la formación del lenguaje hasta nuestros días*, (Madrid: Librería y Casa Editorial Hernando, 1930), 340.
[50] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario de Vicente Ferrer*, ed. Francisco M. Gimeno Blay and Mª Luz Mandingorra Llavata, trans. Francisco Calero Calero (Valencia: Oficina de Publicaciones, 2002), 388. One must, however, question the reliability of *crónicas* because of the deep biases. See Roth, 50 for a specific example of a Jewish chronicle written by Joseph Ibn Sadiq of Arévalo who claims that Ferrer converted 200,00 Jews in 1412 alone. Clearly this number is wildly exaggerated.
[51] Roth, 49-51.

Sermons and Interpretation

> *The sermon, through its role as a moral and didactic bridge between the preacher and manifold audiences, constitutes a mirror of medieval society whose image scholars attempt to clarify as nearly as possible.*[52]

It is important to analyze Christian sermons within the context of medieval Iberian Jewish history because, as in the case of Vicente Ferrer, municipal and clerical authorities often obligated Jews to listen to itinerant preachers a certain number of times per year.[53] Therefore, because the sermon was at the intersection of doctrine and the masses, Ferrer's Castilian sermons offer the opportunity to determine his ambitions and goals for the Jewish population in Castile. As he did not advocate forced conversion or violence toward Jews who refused to convert, the aim of his Castilian campaign was to convert Jews through communication with them, in concert with external pressures of the Christian community around them. This second trend is illustrated in Ferrer's attempts to prompt legislative means to segregate Jews from Christians, the same measures which Baer, Amador de los Rios, and Nirenberg condemn as so damaging to Jewish communities.[54]

The sermon "in a broad sense… is a religious discourse directed to an audience by an individual especially qualified for delivering it."[55] One of the problems one must address when analyzing medieval sermons is the relationship between the oral discourse of the sermon and the written text, often transcribed by a listener. Sánchez Sánchez fleshes out Vicente Ferrer's *modus operandi*, emphasizing the emotion with which Ferrer preached, and the transcriber often drew

---

[52] Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "Conclusion," in *The Sermon*, ed. Bevery Mayne Kienzle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 978.
[53] Meyerson, 63. However, it was not until 1415 that Fernando I implemented Benedict XIII's provisions requiring attendance at sermons, even then, Fernando died only nine months later.
[54] Baer, 439-42. Amador de los Rios, 529-31. David Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain," *Past and Present* 174 (February 2002): 11-14.
[55] Sánchez Sánchez, 761.

symbols or added extra vowels to illustrate the Dominican's colorful oratory.[56] The typical structure of a Vicentine sermon "corresponded [sic] to the one proposed by Francesc Eiximenis," a Catalan, Franciscan priest and prolific writer of theological texts.[57] A multitude of theological and rhetorical treatises on the *artes praedicandi* diffused throughout the monasteries and cathedrals of the Iberian Peninsula, and outlined more or less three types of sermons: the "artistic" sermon, the *collatio*, and the homily.[58] Historians roundly accept that Ferrer delivered his sermons passionately, and in concert with his "rhetorical simplicity, that is, a rhetoric adapted to the people's taste, without complex scholastic reasonings and tiring disquisitions,"[59] it follows then, that they carried potential to affect his listeners. The question remains, however, to what degree did Ferrer, through his sermons, attempt to forcibly alter the religious landscape of Castile.

The primary concern of this section of the investigation is the analysis and interpretation of Vicente Ferrer's sermons in Castile from 1411-12, especially his "artistic" or "university" sermons. The "artistic" sermon style, as utilized by Ferrer and many of his contemporaries on the Iberian Peninsula, revolves around the *thema*, or a biblical quotation (but not necessarily an entire verse or passage of the lectionary). Following the *thema*, Ferrer would describe the basic structure of the sermon, typically an extended metaphor drawn out from the passage that was relevant to his physical, social and sometimes political setting. For example, in a sermon

---

[56] Ibid., 808-11. Professor Sánchez offers as an example an occasion in which Ferrer cried out, "Aai! Eee! Doones!" ("Ay! Ay! Ladies!"), and states that Ferrer "especially cried when denouncing the depravations of his times."
[57] Ibid., 804-5. Eiximenis attained the title of master of theology while at Toulouse in 1374, where he lectured for several years. One should recall that Ferrer was also present in Toulouse from 1377-79. See p. 4.
[58] Sánchez Sánchez, 762-3.
[59] Ibid., 805.

delivered in Ocaña, a town about 70km south of Madrid, on a Sunday in mid-August,[60] Ferrer recited the *thema*: "Qué es lo que oigo de ti? Da cuenta."[61] After praying the *Ave Maria*, Ferrer then declared, "Yo he tomado estas palabras bajo la siguiente interpretación: 'Tú, noble villa de Ocaña, qué cosas o qué pecados oigo de ti.'"[62] He then listed six sins that he perceived to plague the village, and structured the sermon around this list, systematically condemning and attempting to remedy each of the transgressions.[63] Although Ferrer did not always formulate his sermons as such, the reader now has a better understanding of the format of a typical Vincentine sermon. When Ferrer did not choose to follow this exact formula, the variations were slight, for example changing the number of points in his list or omitting the list altogether. In the case of the latter, the basic structure remained the same; he would simply disclose that he intended to sermonize on the *thema* with a certain number of examples, and he would reveal the examples as the sermon progressed.

More unique, however, of Vincentine sermons than those of other preachers in the Iberian Peninsula was the skill with which he simplified doctrine, and adapted it to his audience. Through such straightforwardness, in concert with "establishing a fictitious dialogue with them [the listeners]" and visibly and audibly demonstrating emotions, made Ferrer's sermons

[60] My own calculation, as dates are absent from the *Sermonario*. Ferrer delivered a sermon on the Feast of the Transfiguration, which is generally between 6 August and 16 August, the previous Wednesday.
[61] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 460.
[62] Ibid.
[63] The six sins were: "hechicerías diabolicales, blasfemías divinales, quebrantamientos festivales, corrupciones corporales, manifestas tahurerías, perversas compañias." Ferrer often rhymed his lists. Cf. Pedro Manuel Cátedra, *Sermón, sociedad y literatura en la Edad Media: San Vicente Ferrer en Castilla (1411-1412) estudio bibliográfico, literario y edición de los textos inéditos*, (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1994), 386, for a sermon delivered "camino de Salamanca y Zamora," in which he decried preachers who use poetic mechanisms in their sermons because "por eso convertimos poca gent." Ferrer, speaking as if he were a listener of one such "poetic" sermon says, "'O fi de puta frayre, e qué cadençias tan rrectoricadas ha traídas en este sermón;'" a tangential, yet interesting, contradiction.

particularly convincing.[64] The conversions that resulted (in part[65]) from Ferrer's preaching were of a fundamentally different nature than those following the 1391 pogroms.[66] So-called "New Christians" in the early-fifteenth century often took very harsh anti-Jewish stances, participating in violent acts against Jews and *aljamas,* and openly denigrating Judaism.[67] It is undeniable that Ferrer's sermons, due in large part to their simplicity and his oratorical methods, altered the religious demography of the Spanish kingdoms. Both Christian and Jewish sources attest to such a phenomenon, although they disagree on the number of people Ferrer converted over the course of his itinerant campaigns (1399-1419). The quality of Ferrer as "a figure so unique in medieval peninsular preaching that we could distinguish period before and after his appearance in the pulpit" can perhaps be explained, in fact, by his impact on Jewish communities.[68]

The connotations attached to Vicente Ferrer's name are many, though they center on the same theme: enemy of the Jews, one third of the triumvirate (alongside Pedro de Luna and Fernando I of Aragon[69]) who called for complete segregation and conversion, and even provoked violence against Jews.[70] Benedict XIII promulgated in 1415 a bull that reflected similar concepts as the Ordinances of Valladolid On the whole, the portrait of Ferrer remains imprecise and one-dimensional in comparison to the progress of historiography of the same time period. The aim of the third and final section of this analysis is to illustrate, based on investigation of his sermons given during a preaching campaign in Castile from 1411-2, a more nuanced portrait of Ferrer's sermonizing; one that reflects the same tenets of localization and individualization ascribed to

[64] Ibid., 806-7.
[65] Other factors, such as the Disputation of Tortosa, and the influence of Benedict XIII and Fernando I are relevant factors in the conversions of the early-fifteenth century.
[66] Meyerson, 63.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Sánchez Sánchez, 804.
[69] Meyerson, ch. 2.
[70] Baer, 439.

modern study of medieval Iberia. On several occasions, for example in Lorca during Lent, Ferrer implored the Christian community not to commit violent acts against those Jews who did not wish to convert.[71] Only a few weeks earlier in a different city, one unknown to the editors of the *Sermonario,*[72] Ferrer gave a rather long sermon about the myriad sins of Jews. He touched on the most inflammatory of sins Jews committed, the crucifixion of Jesus and the subsequent rejection of his messianic status. These "sins" were often the most present legitimating factor for violence against Jews, especially during Holy Week riots in which Jewish *aljamas* were stoned and Jews were attacked by men religious.[73] Nirenberg argues that, despite their "quasi-liturgical" nature, of the Holy Week riots across the Crown of Aragon, although perpetrated against Jews and Jewish quarters, were directed towards the officials who protected them.[74] This phenomenon illustrates the ever-present tension between Church and Crown attitudes towards the presence of Jews in Iberian Christendom. It was not until the emergence of Fernando II and Isabel in the latter part of the fifteenth century that the doctrine of witness was, in effect, eliminated from the discourse between Church and Crown through the vehicle of the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian kingdoms in the last decade of the fifteenth century.

By narrowing one's lens and focusing on Ferrer as an individual rather than as the embodiment of a movement (the progression towards the segregation and expulsion of Jews from Iberia), then his impact becomes clearer. On several occasions, Ferrer differentiated

---

[71] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario,* 76-7.
[72] The heading of the sermon only denotes that it was given in the same town as the previous nine sermons, but does not indicate the name of that town, making it extremely difficult to determine the health of the *aljama*. If the *aljama* was thriving, it would have made sense for Ferrer to be somewhat derisive and negative, in order to remind the Jews of their place. Had the *aljama* not been healthy or thriving (which could have been due to several factors) it would make less sense to stoke resentment amongst their Christian neighbors. That being said, the fact remains that it is difficult to determine where the sermon was given, and therefore difficult to determine the size/quality of the *aljama* of the Jews in this particular town.
[73] Nirenberg, 200-2, 207-9.
[74] Ibid, 209-10.

between the Jewish elite and the poorer Jews. Phrases such as "por esta acogida murmuraban maliciosamente contra Jesús los judíos importantes," intermittently appear in his sermons, and he often compared these "judíos importantes" to the Pharisees of the New Testament, which Christ called a "generation of vipers" according to the Gospel of Matthew.[75] It is possible that, through distinguishing elite Jews from those of lower social status, Ferrer attempted to exacerbate intra-religious tensions that undoubtedly existed in Jewish communities across Iberia.[76] Perhaps, showing his keen understanding of the political machinations within *juderías*, he intended to weaken the *aljama* in Yévenes by fomenting rancor against the elites of the village. In Librilla, possibly on Good Friday, Ferrer differentiated between "rabinos y magnates" and "los judíos sencillos," perhaps as a means to sow discord against and undermine those Jews who held either economic or political authority over Christians and "judíos sencillos."[77] Intrareligious discord, in towns such as Morvedre in the fifteenth-century and frontier towns following the *Reconquista*, posed a significant threat to the autonomy of Jewish communities, and it is possible that Ferrer knew and took advantage of this concept. Again, in Toledo on the Feast of Santiago (25 July), Ferrer, within the context of a story describing a disputation between Santiago and various Jews, again referred to "unos judíos importantes" and characterized them as stubborn, argumentative, and insolent.[78]

On other occasions and in different environs, however, he refers to "el pueblo judío" as stubborn and unclean, and it is this charged rhetoric that provokes historians and non-academics to overemphasize his effect on Jewish communities throughout Iberia. Towards the end of his

[75] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 348. Ferrer delivered the sermon on the fourth Sunday after Pentecost in Yévenes (modern-day municipality of Los Yébenes). The Bible verse is Mt 23:33 (KJV)
[76] See Meyerson, ch. 5 for discussion of the nature of politics within the *aljama* of Morvedre. Also, Ray focuses on intra-religious strife on the frontier in the conclusion to *The Sephardic Frontier*.
[77] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 130.
[78] Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 407.

Castilian campaign (some time around 14 January), in Tordesillas, Ferrer boasted that, owing to the separation of Jews from Christians, which he often decried as the most distressing aspect of Iberian social life, "se convierten con frecuencia todos los días en Valladolid."[79] Despite the fact that the co-regents promulgated the Ordinances of Valladolid only days earlier, Ferrer ascribed a wave of conversions to their implementation. In this instance, he appears somewhat overzealous (unsurprisingly) in his acknowledgment of the role played by the ordinances in the conversions, if indeed they occurred as he described. Spreading the news of a large number of conversions, whether true or not, might have induced the Jews of Tordesillas themselves to abandon their religion. Therefore, an image emerges of Ferrer as a pragmatist when it came to selecting his message. He, in the spirit of Machiavelli, tailored his rhetoric and, perhaps, distorted facts depending on his audience to reach his desired end.

Looking back to the events of 1391, historians of the late-medieval Spanish Jewry, perhaps due to relative scarceness of documentation, continue to associate Vicente Ferrer with the violence that swept across Castile and Aragon. One of Baer's historiographical sources, the historian Jose Amador de los Rios, writing in the late-nineteenth century, affirms the role played by "el celo del proselitismo" in promoting violence and forced conversions in that summer, noting especially Ferrán Martínez, archdeacon of Ecija, and Vicente Ferrer. In the same sentence, however, he remarks that Ferrer's preaching (among other stimuli, for example the writings of Gerónimo de Santa Fe, a *converso* who became an outspoken opponent of Judaism) excited Christians to attack Jewish communities.[80] Despite the fact that Ferrer, in 1391, was in Valencia preaching during the Lenten cycle (which ended at Easter, months before the violence reached Valencia), Amador de los Rios quite clearly implicates a causal connection between

[79] Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 792.
[80] Amador de los Rios, 529.

Ferrer and the pogroms, even stating that his role in 1391 garnered him the title "Angel del Apocalipsis."[81] This particular fact is patently false. The Dominican earned the title of "Angel of the Apocalypse," in essence, because of the Bible verse with which artists depicted him, Revelation 14:6-7.[82] In that verse, it is the Angel of the Apocalypse who heralds in the end of days, calling out "in a loud voice" that the time of judgment is come. Ferrer became so closely associated with this verse because, as well as sermons aimed at converting Jews, he often preached on the Apocalypse.[83] The frequency of his sermons on apocalyptic *themas* increased with his age, and in the mid-sixteenth century, a small collection of his sermons on the Apocalypse and "los Antechristos" were published in Medina del Campo.[84] The assertion that Ferrer received the title of "Angel del Apocalipsis" due to his role in the violence and mass conversions of 1391 is misguided and hugely overemphasizes his role in the events of that summer.

Rather, more recent scholarship, particularly the work of Philippe Wolff, emphasizes other, non-religious impetuses for the beginning and spread of the violence in 1391 from Castile to Aragon. Wolff's 1971 article points out the importance of factors such as tumults in Italy, France, and the Low Countries in the decade preceding 1391 and the succession crisis in Castile between Pedro I ("el Cruel") and his half-brother Enrique II of Trastámara contributed to the pogroms.[85] The city of Valladolid, for example, rose against Pedro I because he employed Jews

---

[81] Ibid., 466. The historian argues that Ferrer "auxiliado de muy celosos e infatigables sacerdotes, daba a la par cima a la obra de la conversion de los judíos valencianos…"
[82] Zucker, 184-5.
[83] Also, of course, he supposedly declared himself the Angel of the Apocalypse. One simple self-appellation, however, hardly legitimized the title to such an extent that a verse from Revelation became associated exclusively with him.
[84] Vicente Ferrer, "Sermones de Sant Vicente Ferrer en los quales auisa contra los engaños de los dos Antechristos," ed. Vicente de Millis, (Medina del Campo: Vicente de Millis, 1569).
[85] Philippe Wolff, 4-7.

in prominent positions of government, and Enrique "loudly denounced" the practice.[86] Ironically, Enrique continued the practice of using the services of Jews in important positions, even having a Jew "practically run his finances" until 1375. The violence of 1391, Wolff believes, was an outgrowth of the perception that the community was responsible for the sins of its members. Meaning that, regardless of class or status, Jews were attacked, killed, or forcibly converted because of the enmity that Christian artisans and knights felt towards Jews who held prominent positions in the society and the economy. In fact, royal authorities in Aragon even arrested many (around eighty) artisans and several knights, illustrating both that members of several social levels participated in the violence and that the Crown of Aragon saw the attacks on Jews in a unilaterally negative light. The Jews, after all, were royal property or "slaves of the king's chamber."[87] Nirenberg, in his 2011 paper, argues that, "because Jews represented royal power at its most absolute, they could be used to represent that power."[88] In this sense, then, the artisans and knights attacked the Jews of Valencia because of their association with absolute royal power because "Christian subjects learned to contest the claims of sovereigns by attacking 'their' Jews."[89] The primary reason that Nirenberg presents for the lack of punishment, as opposed to the pressure from men religious such as Ferrer who some argue approved of or even partook in the attacks,[90] is "sovereign indecision."[91] That is to say, the back-and-forth bickering between King Joan I of Aragon and his brother, Prince Martín over the proper course of action prevented any significant action being taken for some time, despite the fact that the attacks represented an affront to the king's person. Only after several weeks did the royals determine that justice should

[86] Ibid., 7.
[87] David Nirenberg, "Massacre or Miracle? Sovereign Indecision in Valencia, 1391" (paper presented at a Roundtable at the Newberry Library, Chicago, IL, February 14, 2011), 2.
[88] Ibid., 3.
[89] Ibid., 4.
[90] See Amador de los Ríos 465-7, 484-5.
[91] Ibid., 5-8.

be doled out in the manner of fierce punishments, and it took Joan almost a year to finally visit the city of Valencia.[92]

After diminishing Ferrer's responsibility for violence and his role in forced conversions in 1391 Valencia, looking towards Ferrer's Castilian campaign will illuminate historians' exaggeration of his impact on the Jewish communities of that kingdom. First of all, due to the wide swath of land that he covered from 1411 until his death in 1419, he undoubtedly convinced a number Jews from across Western Europe to convert, most notably rabbi Solomon ha-Levi, who became Pablo de Santa María, Bishop of Burgos. Although Baer emphasizes Ferrer's missionary zeal that led to forced conversions, in fact, Ferrer's sermons illustrate that he believed in the need for consent and even required a catechistic education in the Christian faith in concert with examination into the reasons behind a Jews reasons for converting. Despite Baer's interpretation of Ferrer's missionary zeal, he often impressed upon his listeners the need for consent in conversions.[93] Because of the modern reputation of the Dominican Order,[94] it seems obvious that he would have attempted to convince his Christian listeners to "induce" Jews to convert; however he emphasized that they should do so without violence and with consent. Baer argues that, despite such rhetoric from Ferrer, his charged language whipped up Christians to violence wherever he went.[95] It is difficult to make a convincing argument that Ferrer inflamed tensions to such an extent that they exploded into violent outbursts, despite the fact that he often

---

[92] According to Nirenberg, this was because violence broke out in Barcelona, which prompted King Joan to ride there in order to quell it and prevent its spread.

[93] Baer argues that Ferrer, despite his rhetoric, inflamed religious tensions (to the point of violence) in his sermons. Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 77. In a sermon delivered during Lent in Lorca, Ferrer said "si no quieren [convertirse], que nadie les haga violencia y escándalo sin inducidlos de buenos modos."

[94] Vose, in *Dominicans, Muslims, and Jews*, argues that, contrary to the common perception of the medieval Domincan Order as preachers bent on proselytizing with the aim of conversion, the Order and its members were far more concerned with protecting the spiritual health of Christians.

[95] Baer, 439-41. "Según su propio testimonio, detestaba los derramientos de sangre y la coacción religiosa, pero en la práctica… se inflamaba [sic] el fanatismo de los cristianos y el odio hacia los judíos."

condemned the use of violence and coercion in conversions. José María Millás Vallicrosa argues that Ferrer's missionary zeal underscored, not only his desire for the conversion of Jews, but specifically for the conversion of Jews "sens força injuriosa."[96] In essence, Baer's argument and the use of his embellished use of the specter of Vicente Ferrer hinge on the belief that Ferrer only half-heartedly implored Christians to use "buenos modos" when inducing Jews to receive baptism.

"Buenos modos," in the context of Ferrer's sermon, is quite vague. On other occasions, he used phrases such as "no debemos tratarlos [judíos y sarracenos] mal," [97] or "sens força injuriosa," which are equally unclear. In a sermon that Ferrer delivered in Cieza (about forty kilometers northwest of Murcia), however, Ferrer outlined the process by which a Jew could achieve baptism; the description of which hardly resembles what one might call a forced conversion: "No lo bautizaríamos inmediatamente, sino que primero le preguntaríamos por qué quiere bautizarse y si tiene buena intención."[98] Ferrer's idea of baptism, therefore, requires catechism, or education in the Christian faith, before the Christian community gave a Jew the opportunity to officially join the *ecclesia*. Furthermore, the Dominican implies that baptism and catechism were a communal responsibility when he uses the first person plural ("bautizaríamos," "preguntaríamos," etc.). He also emphasized that the process should not be a hasty one, but rather that the community ensured the genuine nature of the conversion in order to prevent the converts from judaizing, which threatened to undermine the community and the faith.

---

[96] José María Millás Vallicrosa, *En torno a la predicación judaica de San Vicente Ferrer*, (Madrid: Imprenta y Editorial Maestre, 1958), 9.
[97] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 119 in a sermón delivered in Librilla some days before Easter 1411.
[98] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 158.

The opinion of Baer's, although possible, becomes less plausible when one analyzes how and when Ferrer showed disdain for the use of physical intimidation to promote conversion. In the sermon delivered during Lent in Lorca, Ferrer cites biblical precedent (Isaiah 2:4)[99] illustrating the need for peaceful conversion. In the context of the verse, Isaiah proclaimed that "it shall come to pass in the last days… nation shall not lift up sword against nation,"[100] and Ferrer, believing that the Apocalypse was near, would have inferred that the Christian nation promoting violence against the Jewish people negated this prophecy. To him, forced conversions and violence between "nations," or "gentes" in Ferrer's translation from the Latin, counteracted Isaiah's prophecy, which refers, of course, to "the last days." Implicit within a wave of conversions forced upon Jews and non-believers by mortals, came the understanding that it was not "the last days," the belief in which became the most notable aspect of Vicente Ferrer's theology and doctrine.[101] Ferrer's use of Biblical precedent and exegesis in the sermon from Lorca illustrate the emphasis and importance that he placed on non-violent means to convert the Jews of that particular town.

Ferrer's negative perception of physical violence even extended to relationships beyond those between Christians and Jews. Furthermore, Ferrer, in a sermon preached in Lorca several days, possibly weeks claimed that "pecan más gravemente los cristianos que no viven moralmente que los sarracenos y judíos, excepto por ser infieles, y por eso los pecados morales, esto es soberbia, lujuria, avaricia y gula son más graves en los cristianos que en los judíos y en otros infieles."[102] This passage illustrates that Ferrer believed that the implications of an immoral Christian body religious were more detrimental to the health of the community than the presence

[99] "… nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."
[100] Isaiah 2:2-4.
[101] cf. p. 22-3.
[102] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 105.

of Jews or Muslims. Granted, he disapproved of the Jews' rejection of the true Messiah, but he understood that without a healthy Christian community, Jews were less inclined to convert. Also, in Alcaraz,[103] Ferrer preached on the *thema* "Se hizo obediente por nosotros hasta la muerte;" a sermon in which he, again citing Biblical models, declared that his listeners "[deben] hacer y tener paz con ellos" in order to avoid the fires of hell. Vicente Ferrer, on many occasions, treated physical violence very negatively. In another example from Librilla, he declared that Christians should "dejarlos [judíos] en su libre albedrío," and not force them to convert, especially on pain of death.[104] One cannot, however, prove the same level of restraint when investigating the throngs that either preceded Ferrer's arrival to a town or followed him. Amador de los Ríos remarks on the "inmensa muchedumbre que anunciaba por todas partes [de Toledo] su llegada," and the *Crónica de Juán II de Castilla* mentions that "por todos los caminos que iba lo siguian tantas gentes, que era cosa maravillosa."[105] Some extant documentation transcribed by Jesús Martínez Ferrando from the royal archive at Barcelona prior to Ferrer's Castilian campaign describe the peacemaking effects of Ferrer in a violent, factional grudge between two Christian families of Vich (modern Vic, about 70km north of Barcelona), the Salas and the Mallas.[106] They illustrate, however, that Ferrer had a propensity towards non-violent intervention in feuds, albeit feuding between Christians. King Martin of Aragon even ordered that the municipal officials and bishop of Vich "publiquen en los lugares de su jurisdicción los capítulos de la paz convenida entre los partidarios… apaciguados gracias a las predicaciones de fr. Vicente Ferrer."[107]

[103] A town about 250km southwest of Madrid.
[104] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 119.
[105] Amador de los Ríos, 485; Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, *Crónica*, 340.
[106] Martínez Ferrando, *San Vicente Ferrer y la casa real de Aragón*, 36-7, 40-7.
[107] Ibid., 35-8.

Ferrer endeavored to attain his goals in different manners and through different channels. One method he used, in Castile particularly, was to speak directly to the monarchy, imploring their intervention in Jewish-Christian social, economic, and political relations. This endeavor resulted in the Ordinances of Valladolid; twenty-four rules governing the relationships between Christians and non-Christians, which covered many aspects of everyday life in Castile, from requiring that Jews wear identifying badges to barring Jews from occupation as pharmacists or surgeons. In Aragon, according to some transcriptions by Ferrando, Fray Vicente attempted to induce commoners to take action as individual Christians. In the same collection of documents, however, Fernando I in September of 1412, shortly after the conclusion of Ferrer's Castilian campaign, ordered that Christian vendors in Alcañiz resume selling "vituallas y otras cosas a ellos necesarias" to Jews.[108] Apparently, as a result of Ferrer's preaching, they had restricted Jews from purchasing meat and other necessities. It appears that in Castile, the legislation Ferrer helped promulgate was tepidly enforced at the local level. Yet in Aragon, when he convinced commoners to carry out similar precepts as those in the Ordinances of Valladolid,[109] the king simply undermined his authority on the matter. It is not extraordinary to infer from the Aragonese documentation that some Christians in Alcañiz refused to sell food to Jews because of a Vincentine sermon on the dangers of mixing Jewish-prepared food with Christians or Christian-prepared food with Jews. In fact, the document from the King states "vos mandamos como más expressament podemos" that the vendors ignore any similar order given by Ferrer.

[108] Ibid., 56.

[109] Amador de los Ríos, 967-8: "… ni les embien presentes de fogaldres, nin de de espeçias, nin de pan cozido, nin de vino, nin de aves muertas, nin de otras carnes muertas… que sean de comer." This quotation from the Ordinances of Valladolid, promulgated by Queen Catherine of Castile in 1412, expressly forbade Jews giving of foodstuffs as gifts to Christians.

Again, in 1414 two villages, Tamarite de Litera (about 180km west of Barcelona) and Alcolea del Cinca (about 200km west of Barcelona), required the intervention of Fernando I of Aragon. According to the documentation, Christians in these two towns barred Jews from entering their homes because, "según… el maestre Vicente en sus sermons, sus viviendas deben estar separadas de los cristianos."[110] In Ferrer's mind, one of the greatest threats to the health of the Christian body religious was sexual intercourse between either Jews or Muslims and Christians, and in order to reduce the probability of such an encounter, he advocated that Christians and Jews live separately.[111] The Crown of Aragon, unlike the co-regents of Castile during Ferrer's preaching campaign, interceded in its villages and towns in order to protect its property from provisions obtained "subrepticiamente" from Vicente Ferrer that allowed for the restriction of Jewish property ownership. Fernando I even ordered that authorities of surrounding villages provide Jews with "un alojamiento adecuado."[112] Thus historians, more often than not, have failed, when assessing Ferrer's impact on Jewish communities, to include discussion of the external forces that worked against Ferrer's goals, whether Crown or municipal officials. Fernando I of Aragon, one of the men who Mark Meyerson singles out as particularly detrimental to Jewish communities in Aragon, stood in between Ferrer and the forced relocation of Jews in 1414. Taking into account the weighty accusations from Yitzhak Baer and David Nirenberg as to the detrimental effects that Ferrer's campaign had on Jewish communities, the reality was that, whenever they saw Ferrer's aims as an obstacle, external forces refused to acknowledge his authority.

---

[110] Martínez Ferrando, 72-4.
[111] David Nirenberg, "Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (October 2002): 1069-71.
[112] Ibid., "… possint transmutare et collocare habitaciones…"

Fray Vicente, depending on the place in which he preached, proposed varying methods for the conversion of Jews. During one of his sermons, delivered in the west of Castile "en una ciudad castellana con judería floreciente," Ferrer preached on a *thema* taken from II Corinthians 12:7: "Dado es a mí aguijón de la mi carne."[113] In this particular sermon, one finds one of the most remarkable phrases in the entirety of his preaching: "E este dolor corporal fue sienpre nesçesario a los jodíos, que jamás nunca quiseron fazer cosa alguna de bien sinon con mal." He made this statement based on the story from Exodus in which the Jews escaped from captivity in Egypt through the Sea of Reeds, saying that, "los egipçianos mismos los forçavan, diziendo que saliesen fuera del captiverio, ca non querían salir sinon perezosamente..." Ferrer argued that, despite the danger that followed them, Jews in the Old Testament required some external force ("enpuxón") acting on them to prompt action, in this case, passage through the Sea of Reeds. The sea, in his metaphor was baptism, and he believed that "esta propiedat" of stubbornness to approach the baptismal font lingered in the Jews of this particular village. Unlike in Lorca,[114] for example, it appears that Ferrer encouraged Christians to use force, or "dolor corporal," in order to secure conversion. Christians, therefore, according to the Ferrer who preached in a village between Zamora and Salamanca,[115] needed, much like Moses and the Egyptians at the Sea of Reeds, to force Jews to receive baptism. The two examples of Lorca and the previous sermon analysis illustrate that Ferrer made conscious decisions to encourage two different courses of action with respect to conversion: "de buenos modos" or with "dolor corporal nesçesario." This prompts the question, why the difference? Perhaps because the small village in western Castile,

[113] Vicente Ferrer, in Cátedra, "Sermón de los cuatro aguyjones que nos da Ihesú Christo," 379-92. Ferrer delivered the sermon in the second week of February, 1412.
[114] Cf. p. 25.
[115] Zamora is about 65km north of Salamanca, and there are several smaller towns in between the two cities. Unfortunately, Professor Cátedra was unable to determine in which town Ferrer delivered the sermon, only that it was somewhere between these two municipalities.

somewhere between Salamanca and Zamora, was home to "[una] judería floreciente," which could imply flourishing and prosperous community, it is possible that Ferrer, in order to tamp down the pride of Jews who prospered, encouraged Christians to convert them by whatever means necessary. Lorca, however, had already witnessed the conversion of a prominent member of the Jewish community, Joshua ha-Lorki (Gerónimo de Santa Fe, a physician educated in Talmudic studies, but not a rabbi). It is possible that Ferrer did not need to keep the pride of Jews in check by inducing them to conversion or recounting the Biblical sins of the Jewish people. Meyerson recognizes that, by 1415 in Morvedre which for several decades after 1416 remained an exemplar of Jewish autonomy in Iberia, "it was neophytes, not Old Christians incited by Ferrer" who caused inconvenience and harm to some Jews of the community.[116] Perhaps the conversion of Joshua ha-Lorki, who later spearheaded the Christian arguments at the Disputation of Tortosa in 1413, demoralized the Jewish community to such an extent that Ferrer did not find it necessary that he induce Christians to extremes in seeking the conversion of Jews.

There remains one final piece of evidence that demonstrates that historians may have overemphasized the impact of Vicente Ferrer's preaching on Castilian Jewish communities. In the *Sermonario de san Vicente Ferrer*, the editors included a total of 183 sermons in a tome of over 820 pages.[117] Of these 183 sermons, only fifty-seven dealt significantly with Jews or relationships between Jews and Christians, which demonstrates that Ferrer, in his sermons, dealt with a myriad of issues from regulating bordellos to highly sexualized priests to demons in

[116] Meyerson, 63.

[117] The *Sermonario* itself, of course, must be subjected to scrutiny. The transcribers used manuscripts from the Real Colegio de Corpus Christi, Valencia, and although the folios listed the date and location of the majority of the sermons, some of that information is missing from others. It follows that the Real Colegio would include transcriptions of Vincentine sermons owing to the fact that Juan de Ribera, who himself encountered a problem with religious pluralism in "moriscos" founded it in the midst of the Counter-Reformation. A movement which Fray Vicente undoubtedly would have supported with his renowned rigidity to the Dominican Rule. For the examples of the various motifs in Ferrer's sermons see Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 790, 792, and 659-61 respectively.

Lombardy.[118] Also, his moniker "Angel of the Apocalypse" and the biblical passage which many Christians assigned to accompany his image reveal that many of his coreligionists chose to call attention to his eschatological preaching. Perhaps historians have viewed Ferrer's impact on these communities through a rather restrictive lens, emphasizing too heavily his anti-Jewish preaching and excluding (almost entirely) his eschatological preaching from discussion. The implication that modern historians such as Mark Meyerson and David Nirenberg create by focusing only on the image proffered by Baer and Amador de los Ríos belies the nuances in the character of Vicente Ferrer, and therefore magnifies to the point of exaggeration the anti-Jewish sound bytes and the impact they had on Jewish communities. Baer and Amador de los Ríos, both of who wrote extensive histories on the history of Jews in Spain without which the field would be sorely lacking, failed to take into account a point that Angus Mackay made several decades later which outlines "the deteriorating economic conditions which acted as a catalyst for social discontent."[119] The emphasis placed on the religious tensions within Castilian communities prompts the historian to look towards religious figures such as Ferrer, and to highlight religious discourses (specifically sermons) as flashpoints without contextualizing the tensions within the economic and social milieu. It is easy to classify anti-Jewish sermons as communication so inflammatory that it provoked coreligionists to violence against Jews, but as Philippe Wolff,

[118] "Significantly" because on many occasions Ferrer, before pronouncing the *thema* would declare that "será buena material para todos, y también para los judíos y sarracenos," (or something of the like) but would not refer to the members of other religions in the sermon. Rather he would preach on the apocalypse or moral ills (sins of the flesh, typically).
[119] Angus Mackay, "Popular Movements and Pogroms in Fifteenth-Century Castile," *Past and Present* 55 (May, 1972): 35.

Angus Mackay, and David Nirenberg exemplify, one must look beyond the religious tensions that certainly existed to other social, economic, and political factors.[120]

Those sermons in which Ferrer addressed Jews and the public and private relationships between Jews and Christians (both of which he stridently condemned) made up a fraction of his sermons from 1411-12. When one views his Castilian sermons from 1411-12, the campaign takes on a slightly different light than that of a project strictly aimed at conversion and forced segregation. Undoubtedly, Ferrer's sermons influenced some to leave the Jewish faith, including prominent Jews such as the rabbi Solomon ha-Levi (Pablo de Santa María, Bishop of Burgos). One must question, however, the extent to which Ferrer's sermons alone evinced such a response. Some documentation from the Crown of Aragon, compiled by Jesús Martínez Ferrando demonstrates that, on occasion, Ferrer's sermons provoked anti-Jewish activity, and in rare cases violence. Typically, however, these cases resulted in the monarchy intervening to restore order.[121] It is erroneous, to claim, as Baer does, that Ferrer's sermons inflamed tensions to such a degree that he ignited anti-Jewish violence in every town he preached. Historians must, however, take these documents with the proverbial grain of salt. The impact of Ferrer's sermons on Jewish communities in Castile went only as far as the monarchs allowed, and as far as practicable in each given community, as illustrated by the example of the Ordinances of Valladolid. Sermonizing, although a powerful tool in a society dependent on spoken word for the spread of ideas and the communication of doctrine, could only contribute so much to the experience of Jews in Iberia.

---

[120] See Wolff. "1391 Pogroms," and Mackay, "Popular Movements." Although Roth notes some flaws in Mackay's method and usage of tax records to determine the Jewish population in Castile in the decades following the 1391 pogroms, see Roth 50-2 cf. Mackay, 36,39.
[121] Cf. n. 94.

The aged Ferrer, travelling on donkey and accompanied by 150-300 followers, had a great effect on the political, social, and spiritual life of the Spanish Kingdoms. By the time of Ferrer's death in Vannes (about 500km west of Paris), in 1419, however, monarchs reversed or revoked many of the anti-Jewish ordinances and legislation, and therefore the lasting impact of his sermons must be called into question.[122] Indeed, the religious demography of the Iberian Peninsula underwent a drastic change in the years 1391-1419, but attributing as many as 200,000 conversions in Castile alone to Vicente Ferrer's sermons rings hyperbolic, especially given that Ferrer did not always preach to convert.[123] Robin Vose argues that numbers such as these are predicated on the fact that hagiography played a large role in the growth of Ferrer's mythology.[124] Neither Jewish nor Christian sources which attribute conversions to Ferrer are entirely trustworthy or satisfactory because of their nature, many of which are either hagiographical or, in the case of Jewish sources, the opposite. The problem of numbers further illuminates one of the principal problems when attempting to assess the role of Vicente Ferrer: how many Jews did he convert? Unfortunately, the sources do not allow for a precise answer to this question, or even the question of population at the time of Ferrer's travels through Castile. More abundant records begin to emerge with the advent of the Inquisition in the latter half of the fifteenth century. Sheer numbers, however, do not wholly suffice, evidenced by the apparent insecurity of many officials, royal and clerical, which feared "judaizing" *conversos*.

---

[122] Jocelyn Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms: 1250-1516*, vol. 2, *1410-1516: Castilian Hegemony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 148.
[123] Benzion Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain: From the Late XIVth to the Early XVIth Century, According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources* (Philadelphia: Maurice Jacobs, Inc., 1966), 236. Netanyahu relies heavily on Hasdai Crescas' letter to the Jews of Avignon and Abraham Zacuto's calculations to arrive at this number. Cf. Roth, 328-32.
[124] Vose, 258-60.

Indeed, evaluating both the size and indelibility of Ferrer's footprint on Castilian Jewish communities remains a difficult task; therefore, historians must use caution. One can easily fall prey to assigning too much responsibility to Fray Vicente, especially given his pronounced presence in the royal and papal courts, to "Jewish decline." The term "Jewish decline," however, implies a linear progression of Iberian Jewish history, stretching from the so-called "Golden Age" of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to the expulsions in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, with Ferrer's conversionary practices as the turning point. The year 1416, however, marked a significant decline, not for Iberian Jewish communities, but for the itinerant Dominican. Ferrer lost a great deal of political support after the death of Fernando I of Aragon in April of that year, and his wider, papal support again suffered a blow in 1417 when the Catholic Church excommunicated Benedict XIII at the Council of Constance (1414-18), which effectively brought the Western Schism to an end.

Conclusion

There remains no doubt that the political skills and spiritual gifts of Ferrer were in high demand among the political elite of the Iberian Peninsula. He was a brilliant theologian, with an aptitude for resolving conflict, evidenced by his role in the Compromise of Caspe, his work in Vich, and his efforts to resolve the Western Schism. His role in the crisis of 1391 in his home of Valencia extended no further than supposedly offering baptism to Jews who sought refuge from violence. He restricted his "campaigns of external mission," that is preaching to non-Christians, to the years 1408-1416, and even during this time period, he remained embroiled in papal politics and political intrigues.[125] Historiographical focus on his sermons bears little fruit when attempting to understand his impact on Jewish communities, yet many historians elected to emphasize his sermonizing as particularly detrimental to Jewish autonomy and agency. It can be argued that his preaching to Christians elicited a more notable response; promulgating the extensive, yet rather limpidly enforced Ordinances of Valladolid, securing a successor to the throne of Aragon, and constructing the image of the "Angel of the Apocalypse." In the first years of the fifteenth-century, Ferrer, in certain municipalites, posed a "real danger" to the recuperation of Jewish communities through his pursuit of total segregation. In general, from 1400-1445, however, Castile saw partial re-establishment of "the positions of Jews and *conversos* within government and society.[126] Despite being a passionate preacher and apt political mind, it remains difficult to assign a massive impact on the whole of Iberian Jewish communities to Ferrer, primarily because of variegated social and economic climates, which informed local interests and would have determined both the topic of Ferrer's sermon and the impact it had on the

[125] Vose, 259, n. 8.
[126] Mackay, 60-1. He cites Márquez Villanueva and agrees with Philippe Wolff that the conflagrations of 1391 and the mid- and latter-fifteenth century had roots in economic conditions.

community. Thus, the image of Ferrer in Yitzhak Baer, Amador de los Ríos, Mark Meyerson, and David Nirenberg's work exaggerates the influence that the Dominican's sermons had on Castilian Jewry.

One must temper what can be viewed as Ferrer's success, converting Jews and restricting their autonomy in government and society, with two major influences: external forces that worked in accordance with his goals, thereby diluting his individual influence, and royal economic needs. Undoubtedly, Jews converted following Ferrer's preaching campaign and the Disputation of Tortosa; however, one must consider the influence of Gerónimo de Santa Fe, the *converso* who spearheaded the Christian argument at the Disputation of Tortosa, and Fernando I of Aragon in the restriction of Jewish autonomy. Ferrer voiced his support of total segregation, and influenced the co-regents of Castile to implement legislation that required total segregation.[127] In theory, then, his influence on Castilian communities was deeply felt. In practice, however, the Ordinances were difficult to enforce in most cities, towns, and villages outside of Valladolid proper. In several villages and towns, such as Toledo and Ocaña, Ferrer condemned those Christians who continued living next to Jews, perhaps even in the same home. In the sermon, he implored "los gobernantes y los administradores" to prevent Jews and New Christians from interacting.[128] Nirenberg argues that Ferrer admonished Christians for their contact with Jews because of the fear of miscegenation and sexual relations across religious

[127] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 537. In a sermon delivered on a Saturday in Advent (date unknown) in Castile, Ferrer condemned, in the strongest possible language, those Christians who lived with or next to Jews and other infidels: "Si vosotros vivís en este mundo junto a los judíos y los infieles, en el otro, en el infierno moraréis con ellos." This example illustrates a deep-seated anxiety and insecurity about this particular community. One can infer from the passage that Jews and Christians continued living next to one another, otherwise Ferrer would not have taken the time to castigate the community.

[128] Vicente Ferrer, *Sermonario*, 388. Sermon delivered in Toledo on the seventh Sunday of Pentecost, possibly mid- to late-July, 1411. He remained in Toledo for several weeks, preaching at least twenty-eight sermons.

boundaries.[129] Clearly, he feared judaizing on this campaign, and he embodied the almost inherent insecurity of late-medieval Christians with respect to the religion's relationship to its "older brother," Judaism.[130]

To include Ferrer in the discussion of causes and perpetrators of the violence in 1391, without considering the economic pressures that factored into the outbursts, quite honestly, gives him too much credit. Not only did he oppose forced conversions, but, owing to the theory that religious tensions were not the underlying cause, merely a façade masking the true causes, the case for his perpetuation of violence against Jews in Valencia becomes significantly weaker. Christians in Valencia attacked Jews and Jewish communities for varying reasons, arguably the least of which were religious. David Nirenberg argues that the monarchy exacerbated the crisis through their indecision and inaction and Philippe Wolff notably and convincingly argues that social and economic factors led to the pogroms. The violence indeed took a religious turn, but Wolff argues that this was due to the prominent role that many Jews held in government (including *de facto* treasurer of the Crown) and economy (as tax-farmers and moneylenders). Norman Roth believes that, although many thousands of Jews were either killed or forcibly converted, many simply left the larger cities of Seville, Segovia, and Toledo for smaller villages.[131] Mark Meyerson argues in favor of a similar phenomenon, wherein Jews left Valencia for the nearby town of Morvedre, where they experienced a "renaissance," contributing significantly to the economy of the Kingdom of Valencia (and consequently the North African

---

[129] Nirenberg, "Conversion, Sex, and Segregation,"1069-71.
[130] See Mark Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), chs. 3 and 5 deal specifically with the role of Jews in law and economy under Christian rulers, and the problems that Christian leaders faced with the prospect of Jewish roles in Christendom.
[131] Roth, 328-32.

Maghrib) and gaining political and social autonomy.[132] It appears that Ferrer had little interest in the economics of Jewish life, and although he disapproved of Jews holding positions of authority over Christians, in the years following 1415, Jews began to recover some of their former political influence.

Despite having a relatively small amount of concrete evidence concerning Ferrer's role in the conversions and violence, his name often appears in close proximity to discussions of 1391, and historians continue to connect him to the occurrences.[133] In addition, although he travelled in excess of 4,000km over the course of his Castilian campaign (see Appendix A: Rough Sketch of Ferrer's Travels), many still overemphasize the conversionary aims of his mission.[134] Robin Vose attributes much of "the overestimation of St. Vincent's mission" to hagiography, some of which Yitzhak Baer cited in his discussion of Ferrer's activities from 1411 onward, particularly the work of Pierre Henri Fages, O.P., who used Diago as a source. Naturally, one must remain wary of the biases in a history written by a Dominican about a medieval Dominican, especially the relation of events relevant to the history of Jewish communities surrounding the events of 1391 and the early-fifteenth century.

This investigation has aimed both to provide the reader with a brief understanding of contemporary historiographical methodologies with respect to late-medieval Iberian Jewry, and to apply these same precepts to the historical impact of Vicente Ferrer. The study of late-medieval Iberia has, in recent years, increasingly shifted away from the paradigm of "Golden

---

[132] Meyerson, 72-85. 109-37.
[133] Some historians (see especially Vose, 258 n. 3) cite Francisco Diago, *Historia de la vida, milagros, muerte y discípulos del bienaventurado predicador apostólico valenciano San Vicente Ferrer de la Orden de Predicadores* (Valencia: Valencia Librerías, 2001). Diago was a disciple of Ferrer's and he notes a story in which suggests that Jews converted willingly at the Cathedral of Valencia "under St. Vincent's guidance."
[134] See, for example, David Nirenberg, untitled review of *New Men: "Conversos," Christian Theology, and Society in Fifteenth-Century Castile*, by Bruce Rosenstock, *Speculum* 80 no. 1, January, 2005, 315.

Age" and decline, which Nirenberg calls *longue durée*, meaning that the history of the persecution of Jews followed a linear path, from the quasi-utopian *convivencia* to the expulsion. Meyerson, also, argues compellingly against such a construction, showing that Morvedre experienced, according to the teleology of previous historians, retrograde motion. That is to say, Morvedre's Jewish community, in many ways, prospered, notwithstanding the "shadow of Valencia," a city that had no Jewish population after 1391. Historians who write of Ferrer, often describe him as the primary obstacle to other such revivals, implying that, in Castile, he attempted to secure the decline of Iberian Jewry. By assigning him such agency, historians assume that his preaching, although clearly convincing to some Jews, had the capability to perpetuate "Jewish decline," a phenomenon that many believe to be fallacious. Too many other forces (economic, political, and social) were at work in the time that Ferrer preached across Castile for historians to consider him the principal agent responsible for Jewish decline. Furthermore, judging by his sermons delivered on the campaign, previous efforts (i.e. the 1391 pogroms) to reduce Christian-Jewish interaction and Jewish autonomy failed miserably, otherwise, he would not have felt compelled to commit so much energy to such an undertaking.

Turning to Ferrer's rhetoric, one can clearly see that he feared the intermingling of the religions, but not so much so that he supported reactionary violence or forced conversions. Again, looking back to the Lenten sermon in Lorca, Ferrer quite clearly condemns physical threats as a means of compelling baptism. His rhetoric here seems relatively serene and harmless in contrast with a particularly fiery sermon from Toledo, in which he pleaded with city officials to segregate the religious communities for the sake of the city and Christendom. This difference in tone and rhetoric illustrates the method utilized by Jonathan Ray in *The Sephardic Frontier*: the individualization of local, communal pressures in determining a proper course of action. In

his monograph, Ray argues that the Jews of the thirteenth-century frontier made decisions based on their personal economic or socio-political aspirations. Rather than as a monolithic religious bloc who couched their identity first and foremost in religion, Ray argues that Jews acted as unique entities within a diverse frontier community, and even encountered more problems from their coreligionists, rather than Christians or Muslims. Fray Vicente Ferrer, in a similar fashion, tailored his rhetoric to his audience based on geography and local political and economic conditions, often, however, he preached not to convert, but for the health of the Christian community. He gave numerous sermons in Toledo, but a fraction of them dealt directly with the Jewish community, and the same held true for the rest of Castile. Conversion, indeed, was one of his aims, but not the only, and perhaps not even the principal purpose. By examining his sermons on a local basis, one sees that his goal varied depending on the social, spiritual, and geographical environment in which he preached.

The study of Vicente Ferrer is important to the field of Iberian Jewish studies because a fuller understanding of his impact on Jewish communities across the Kingdoms of Iberia will shed light on the complex systems of economic, social, and political relationships between medieval religions. The purpose thus far has been to challenge the prevailing image of Ferrer in the historiography, allowing more room for interpretation of his Castilian sermons and their lasting influence on Jewish communities. On the continuum with which many view Ferrer, from a larger-than-life, grandiose anti-Jewish preacher to the canonized “Angel of the Apocalypse,” the arguments laid out herein are designed to emphasize the middle ground. At certain points, Ferrer preached against the licentiousness of Valencian clergy, at others he convinced Christians to refuse selling food to Jews. The variables, those that altered the rhetoric and aim of his sermons, and therefore the impact he had on communities, were local political, economic, and

social conditions. Vicente Ferrer's name and image are perhaps forever stamped on the history of the Jews in Spain, however, without taking into account the various forces that affected both Ferrer's message and his lasting impact, an accurate representation of Iberian Jewish history can hardly be achieved. In opposition to the sentiment verbalized by Carleton Young in the 1962 film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend," this exploration aimed to deflate the mythology of Vicente Ferrer, and present the clearest possible portrait of the Dominican, his mission, and his lasting impact.

Appendix A: Due to the lack of space on Google Maps, some of the towns Ferrer visited had to be left off of the list. The path, however, is relatively accurate and is meant only to provide a sense of the grandiose undertaking of the sixty-year old Dominican. The distance from Valladolid to Málaga is approximately 700km.

Primary Sources

de Guzmán, Fernán Pérez. “La crónica del serenísimo príncipe don Juan II de Castilla.” In *Crónicas de los reyes de Castilla*, edited by D. Cayetano Rosell vol. 68 of *Biblioteca de autores españoles desde la formación del lenguaje hasta nuestros días*. Madrid: Librería y Casa Editorial Hernando, 1930.

Cátedra, Pedro Manuel. *Sermón, sociedad y literatura en la Edad Media: San Vicente Ferrer en Castilla (1411-1412) estudio bibliográfico, literario y edición de los textos inéditos*. Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1994.

Ferrer, Vicente. *Sermonario de Vicente Ferrer*. Edited by Francisco M. Gimeno Blay and Mª Luz Mandingorra Llavata. Translated by Francisco Calero Calero. Valencia: Oficina de Publicaciones, 2002.

-----. *Sermones de Sant Vicente Ferrer en los quales auisa contra los engaños de los dos Antechristos*. Edited by Vicente de Millis. Medina del Campo: Vicente de Millis, 1569.

Martínez Ferrando, Jesús Ernesto. *San Vicente Ferrer y la casa real de Aragón: Documentación conservada en el Archivo Real de Barcelona.* Barcelona: Balmesiana, 1955.

Bibliography

Amador de los Rios, Jose. *Historia social, política y religiosa de los judíos de España y Portugal*. Madrid: Aguilar, 1960.

Baer, Yitzhak. *Historia de los judíos en la España cristiana*, vol. 2. Madrid: Altalena, 1981).

Braudel, Fernand. *On History*. Translated by Sarah Matthews. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Chabás, Roque. "Estudio sobre los sermones de San Vicente Ferrer, que se conservan manuscritos en la Biblioteca de la Basilica Metropolitana de Valencia." *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos* 8 (1903): 85-102.

Cohen, Mark. *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Contreras, Jaime. "Procesos culturales hegemónicos: de religión y religiosidad en la España del Antiguo Régimen." *Historia Social*, no. 35 (1999): 3-22.

Diago, Francisco. *Historia de la vida, milagros, muerte y discípulos del bienaventurado predicador apostólico valenciano San Vicente Ferrer de la Orden de Predicadores.* Valencia: Valencia Librerías, 2001.

Echevarria, Ana. "Catalina of Lancaster, the Castilian Monarchy, and Coexistence." In *Medieval Spain: Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence: Studies in Honor of Angus Mackay*, edited by Roger Collins and Anthony Goodman, 79-122. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Elukin, Jonathan. *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Ferreiro, Alberto. "Vincent Ferrer's 'Beati Petri Apostoli': Canonical and Apocryphal Sources in Popular Vernacular Preaching." *The Harvard Theological Review* 91, no. 1 (January 1998): 41-57.

Glick, Leonard. *Abraham's Heirs: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999.

Hillgarth, Jocelyn. *The Spanish Kingdoms: 1250-1516*, vol. 2, *1410-1516: Castilian Hegemony.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Hogan, O.P, Fr. Stanislaus. *Saint Vincent Ferrer, O.P.* In *The Friar Saints Series*. Edited by Fr. Bede Jarrett, O.P. and C.M. Anthony. Longmans, Green, and Co.: London, 1911.

Hutton, Edward. *The Cities of Spain*. London: Methuen & Co., 1906.

Kienzle, Beverly Mayne. “Conclusion.” In *The Sermon,* edited by Bevery Mayne Kienzle, 143-74. Turnhout: Brepols, 2000.

Mackay, Angus. “Popular Movements and Pogroms in Fifteenth-Century Castile.” *Past and Present* 55 (May 1972): 33-67.

Meyerson, Mark. *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Millás Vallicrosa, José María. *En torno a la predicación judaica de San Vicente Ferrer*. Madrid: Imprenta y Editorial Maestre, 1958.

Netanyahu, Benzion. *The Marranos of Spain: From the Late XIVth to the Early XVIth Century, According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources.* Philadelphia: Maurice Jacobs, Inc., 1966.

Nirenberg, David. *Communities of Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

-----. “Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain.” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (October 2002): 1065-93.

-----. “Massacre or Miracle? Sovereign Indecision in Valencia, 1391.” Paper presented at a Roundtable at the Newberry Library, Chicago, IL, February 14, 2011.

-----. “Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain.” *Past and Present* 174 (February 2002): 3-41.

-----. Review of *New Men: ”Conversos,” Christian Theology, and Society in Fifteenth-Century Castile*, by Bruce Rosenstock, *Speculum* 80 no. 1, January, 2005.

Pradel, Rev. Fr. André. *St. Vincent Ferrer of the Order of Friars Preacher: His Life, Spiritual Teaching, and Practical Devotion*. Translated by Rev. Fr. T.A. Dixon. Whitefish: Kessinger, 2007.

Ray, Jonathan. *The Sephardic Frontier: The Reconquista and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.

-----. “Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing Our Approach to Medieval ‘Convivencia.’” *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 2. New Series (Winter 2005): 1-18.

Roth, Norman. *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.

Ruiz, Teofilo. *Spain’s Centuries of Crisis: 1300-1474*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Sánchez Sánchez, Manuel Ambrosio. “Vernacular Preaching in Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan.” In *The Sermon*, edited by Beverly Mayne Kienzle,760-858. Turnhout: Brepols, 2000.

Sharot, Stephen. “Jewish Millenarianism: A Short Comparison of Medieval Communities.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 3 (July 1980): 394-415.

Soifer, Maya. “Beyond *convivencia*: critical reflections on the historiography of interfaith relations in Christian Spain.” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2009): 19-35.

Vendrell Gallostra, Francisca. “La actividad proselitista de San Vicente Ferrer durante el reinado de Fernando I de Aragon.” *Sefarad* 13, no. 1 (1953): 87-104.

Vose, Robin. *Dominicans, Muslims, and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Wolff, Philippe. “The 1391 Pogrom in Spain: Social Crisis or Not?” *Past & Present* 50 (February 1971): 4-18.

Zucker, Mark. “Problems in Dominican Iconography: The Case of St. Vincent Ferrer.” *Artibus et Historiae* 13, no. 25 (1992): 181-93.