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Literární prostředky v židovsko-křesťanské polemice
Literary Devices in Jewish-Christian Polemics

Hebrew anti-Christian polemic is a specific literary genre, which evolved in Western Europe at the end of the twelfth century. In my dissertation I classify it on the basis of literary form, tropes applied, and content of polemical argument. I research in particular the application of devices such as sarcasm, satire, irony and parody, which surpass the rigid categorization of polemical methodology developed on the basis of Christian anti-Jewish writings; i.e. biblical exegesis, critique and interpretation of Rabbinic sources, philosophical reasoning, and arguments from history and experience. I deal with the theme of Jesus in Rabbinic literature, the Toldot Jeshu tradition, and the influence of Sefer Nestor ha-komer on later polemical literature. I document the evolution of anti-Christian discourse as reflected in names and various derogatory characteristics used to address a Christian opponent in various Hebrew materials. I further provide examples of what I identify as “dirty” polemics; i.e. polemical arguments exploring areas of carnality. It mainly involves the critique of the Christian doctrine of incarnation and virgin birth, yet also modes of sexual behaviour of the Christians. Next chapter contains a translation and a commentary of the Igeret Al tehi ka-avotekha written by Profiat Duran and the last passage deals with two examples of early modern parodies of Christianity – parodical Jigdal and parodical Haggadah Pilpul al zman zmanim zmaneihem. In all these texts, covering nearly a full scope of the Hebrew polemical literature, yet also other types of Jewish sources, I’m trying to follow how Jews developed specific methods to preserve their identity, and to defend themselves within the threatening Christian milieu. Indeed, many titles of the polemical treatises refer to a military vocabulary; the polemical literature was a true war of words.