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Vindicating Converso Religiosity: Alonso de Oropesa on the Pauline Conversion as a Jewish–Christian Transformation

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Abstract

This article offers a fresh reading of Alonso de Oropesa's *Lumen ad revelationem gentium* (1465) and of the pro-converso theology of this Hieronymite friar, through a close reading of a specific and largely neglected section of the treatise. This reading complicates the prevailing scholarly view that the *Lumen* expresses an essentially egalitarian theological vision. The article argues that Oropesa's intensely anti-Jewish stance and emphasis on Pauline spirituality were part of a more layered and ambitious argument—one that sought to establish a genuine continuity between Judaism and Christianity through a creative reinterpretation of Paul and his conversion. Drawing on a highly original reading of the ice-water metaphor from Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* and the letter-spirit binary of II Corinthians 3:6, Oropesa articulated a bold vindication of Jewish heritage as a worthy and enduring component of Christianity's own fabric—preserved, rather than erased, through spiritual transformation. The article further suggests that this theological vision extended beyond the realm of ideas into that of practice, offering a new background for understanding the devotional culture of Hieronymite conversos and its eventual collision with the Inquisition.

Keywords: conversos; Alonso de Oropesa; *Lumen ad revelationem gentium*; converso Paulinism; Jewish–Christian conversions; Iberian spirituality; Hieronymite order; Judaization; pro-converso apologetics

1. Vindicating Converso Religiosity: Alonso de Oropesa on the Pauline Conversion as a Jewish–Christian Transformation

The question of converso religiosity is typically approached through Early Modern lenses, by which Jewishness is considered fundamentally subversive—something to be sublimated, or simply encrypted. Yet this is not how things started. The first expressions of converso religiosity were rooted in an Iberian society open to the possibility that Jewishness had aspects compatible with Christianity, and at times even desirable and admirable. Under this premise, in the decades following the mass conversions of 1391, converso men of letters not only climbed to high-ranking ecclesiastical positions but actively sought to reshape the Christianity they had joined—weaving into it elements of their former Jewish identity and heritage. It was within this socioreligious context that the Peninsula became an extraordinarily vibrant intellectual scene, giving rise to some of the most daring and sophisticated pieces of Christian biblical, philological, and historical scholarship. Some of them—like the works of Pablo de Santa María, Alonso de Madrigal or the remarkable Aragel Bible—anticipated humanist achievements by decades. Recovering the early forms of converso religiosity that developed in that environment is a challenging task. Not only



Academic Editors: Yaakov Ariel and Elma Cornelius

Received: 9 June 2026

Revised: 25 June 2026

Accepted: 15 July 2026

Published: 21 July 2026

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because the vibrant scene that allowed them rapidly disappeared in the second half of the fifteenth century, but also because the inquisitorial and confessional regime that replaced it worked relentlessly to deny that it had ever existed. After all, the very idea that admired icons of Christian devotion and learning had capitalized on Jewish heritage would directly jeopardize the foundations of the inquisitorial order. And so, Pablo de Santa María was dishonestly painted as a zealous proto-inquisitor; the biblical commentaries of Alonso de Madrigal were left to be “rotten” in a storage room until shipped to Venice; and the Arragel Bible simply disappeared for two centuries.¹

Another work that suffered a similar fate, and deserves particular attention, is the *Lumen ad revelationem gentium* (“A Light for the revelation of the Gentiles and for the Glory of God’s People, Israel”) of the Hieronymite friar Alonso de Oropesa. Written between 1449 and 1465, the *Lumen* belongs to the genre of pro-converso apologetics that emerged in the wake of the Toledo rebellion and the rise of the anti-converso party that demanded the ostracization of Jewish converts and their descendants. It is a massive and extraordinarily ambitious work—spanning more than two hundred folios—that no reader can fail to immediately recognize as a product of exceptional erudition and intellectual sophistication. And yet, for all its qualities, it had been practically erased from public memory for more than a century. It was only through fray José de Sigüenza’s *Historia de la orden de San Jerónimo* that the *Lumen* was rescued from complete oblivion at the turn of the seventeenth century (Sigüenza 1907). And it took another four centuries before Américo Castro, who came to know the *Lumen* exclusively through Sigüenza’s selective extracts, brought it to the attention of modern scholarship (Castro 1949). Only in 1979, with the publication of a complete Spanish translation by Luis A. Díaz y Díaz, did the *Lumen* become genuinely accessible to scholars.² Since then, several studies have established Oropesa as a significant figure both in the history of the converso crisis and in the broader history of Iberian thought. Yet the *Lumen* still has much to offer—particularly with regard to the forms of converso religiosity that the inquisitorial regime worked so hard to suppress. In this article, we offer a close reading of a specific section of the *Lumen* that has received little scholarly attention, believing it invites a significant reassessment of the work and its place in the history of the converso crisis and Iberian thought. We argue that in this section Oropesa articulated a bold and distinctive theological vision of Jewish–Christian continuity—one that amounted to nothing less than a vindication of a converso biblical–theological project and particular religiosity.

To do so, we proceed in four steps. We begin with some preliminary remarks on the *Lumen* and its place in the scholarship on converso theology and Iberian religious history. As we point out, much of this scholarship evolved from questions and materials that were already shaped by Early Modern concerns. In the second part, we present the specific legal and theological context of our inquiry: the *non neophytum* decree and its anti-converso applications as addressed in Chapter 50 of the *Lumen*—its longest and most ambitious chapter. As we shall argue, Oropesa seized on this seemingly narrow legal question as a license for something far broader: a comprehensive theological statement about the history and fundamental identity of the Church. The main part of the article then traces how Oropesa wove together arguments about the special status of Jewish converts in Church history with a thoroughgoing reinterpretation of the Pauline model of conversion—one that grounds Jewish–Christian continuity above all in the mastery of Scripture and its transformative potential. In the concluding section, we suggest that this theological vision extended beyond the realm of ideas into that of practice, and may offer crucial background for understanding the devotional culture of Hieronymite conversos that would collide so dramatically with the Inquisition in the decades to come. In attending to these theological, spiritual and devotional dimensions as expressions of a living and creative religious culture, this

article joins a growing body of scholarship that seeks to study converso religiosity on its own terms.

2. Oropesa and the Lumen in Historical Perspective

When the Toledo rebellion broke out in 1449, Alonso de Oropesa was in all likelihood still a young novice. Yet the news of the anti-converso violence and the bold new demands to discriminate against Jewish converts and their descendants could not leave him indifferent. In response, he began preaching on ‘the unity of the faithful, their coexistence, and their equal standing before the law, as well as the charity of Christ’—that is, against the rebels and their demands.³ These sermons would serve as the basis for his extensive book on the subject, the *Lumen ad revelationem gentium*, hereafter the *Lumen*.

In this basic sense, the *Lumen* clearly belongs to the genre of pro-converso apologetics that emerged in the wake of the 1449 rebellion. More specifically, it was often paired with Alfonso de Cartagena’s *Defensorium unitatis Christianae* because both works shared a distinctively ambitious scope: rather than limiting themselves to point-by-point legal or theological refutations of the rebels’ specific claims, they both aimed to anchor their defense of conversos in a sweeping theological and historical vision of the Church’s identity and purpose. Both Cartagena and Oropesa sought to show that the unity of Jews and gentiles within the body of Christ was written into the very history of divine revelation—from the calling of Israel to the coming of Christ and the gathering of the nations into the one Church.

And yet, unlike his fellow apologists, Oropesa did not complete the *Lumen* immediately after the rebellion was crushed. Called to serve as prior of Talavera (1451–1452) and later as General Master of his order (1457), Oropesa was able to finish his work only in 1465. By that point, however, both the socio-religious and political reality surrounding the converso question had dramatically changed. What in 1449 had seemed a local and ultimately failed initiative, by the early 1460s became a sustained, institutionally backed campaign—driven by the Observant Franciscans and their most formidable spokesman, Alonso de Espina. Crucially, Oropesa himself became a central figure in the efforts to contain this campaign.

In the summer of 1461, a group of prominent Observant Franciscans—among them Alonso de Espina—wrote to Oropesa requesting Hieronymite support for a broad inquisition against conversos. Rather than joining their campaign, Oropesa intervened directly with the king and secured a different arrangement: a tribunal operating under Hieronymite and episcopal authority, with the Observants deliberately kept out of the process. Presiding over the Toledo tribunal from October 1461 to April 1462, he brought it to a swift and measured conclusion—but not before using his position as inquisitor to demand that the Franciscans cease their inflammatory preaching against conversos. From the very little that we know about these proceedings, the outcome was notably moderate, with light penalties imposed on both conversos and old Christians alike.⁴

Simultaneously, however, trouble was brewing closer to home, as the first inquisitorial inquiries directed at his own Hieronymite order—and specifically at the monastery of Guadalupe—were also taking place. We know almost nothing about these proceedings, beyond the fact that two lay figures connected to the monastery were tried for blasphemy, among them a scribe who had long worked for the house and was sentenced to life imprisonment. This harsh sentence proved deeply divisive among the Hieronymite leadership—and heading the list of those who expressed their disagreement, as one source records, was none other than Fray Alonso de Oropesa himself.⁵

It was only following these events that Oropesa resumed his work on the *Lumen*, adding its final twelve chapters and completing the work in 1465—around the same time

that Espina was putting the finishing touches on his *Fortalitium fidei*. Evidently, he was completing his work in a very different world than the one in which he had begun it. If to judge by modern scholarship, these developments left a clear imprint on the work itself. The first and most striking observation concerned Oropesa's attitude toward Jews and Judaism. Unlike Cartagena and other pro-converso apologists who had written in the immediate aftermath of 1449, Oropesa's defense of conversos was not grounded in more tolerant or positive sentiments toward Jews and Judaism. On the contrary—as Moshe Orfali demonstrated, the Hieronymite master drew upon some of the most rabid anti-Jewish tropes and authorities, building 'his arguments in favor of the conversos by systematically attacking the Jews.' If anything, his vulgar attacks on Jews reminded Orfali of his ideological rival—Alonso de Espina.⁶ These observations were further developed by Benzion Netanyahu, who considered the *Lumen* a critical source for understanding the historical dynamics leading to the Inquisition.⁷ Netanyahu identified stark differences between Cartagena and Oropesa on several key theological questions: the positive value of the Old Law, whether Israel was elected due to their merits, how virtuous the Jews were as God's people under the Old Law, how sinful they became after Christ's coming, and what portion of Israel would ultimately be saved. In comparison to Cartagena, Oropesa's answers seemed distinctly unfavorable, leading Netanyahu to conclude that Oropesa believed it was fundamentally wrong—both theologically and tactically—to attach the defense of conversos to a defense of the Jews. Instead, the Hieronymite master insisted that 'to the extent that the converso case should be related to the Jews, it should be presented [...] not as its extension but as its direct antithesis.'⁸

Thus, allegedly, the *Lumen* marked a fundamental shift in pro-converso argumentation. Any aspiration—of the kind we find in Cartagena—to draw on the biblical Jewish past for Christian titles and honoraria had faded.⁹ But if Oropesa diminished the pro-Jewish component in his vision of the Church, on what theological grounds did he nevertheless build his case? The answer emerged from another axis of scholarly inquiry into the *Lumen*: its place within the development of spiritual and contemplative trends in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Iberia—inquiry subsumed within the all-encompassing question of 'Erasmianism' or quasi-Protestant movements in the Peninsula. In this context, several scholars suggested (with varying emphases) that Oropesa's attempt to draw a more inclusive theological vision brought him to prioritize the spiritual and interior dimensions of Christianity over its ceremonial and institutional aspects—most notably the centrality of Scripture, the egalitarian dispensation of grace, and Christian unity through the spirit of Christ.

These values were interlinked with two broader currents. First, they resonated with the Hieronymite order's devotional tradition (Castro 1949, pp. 108–12; Sicroff 1981; Olivari 1988, esp. pp. 565–68; Pastore 2024, pp. 20–37). And second, with a distinctly Pauline spirituality: as scholars recognized, Oropesa articulated these ideals through intensive reading in the letters of Paul the Apostle—making him an early herald of Pauline themes that would flourish in sixteenth-century Spain: radical rebirth through the spirit and the mystical understanding of the Church as the body of Christ.¹⁰

The intersection between Oropesa's pro-converso apologetics and his Pauline spirituality thus offered a tangible link between the religious fallouts of the converso crisis and the idiosyncratic history of Iberian devotional, perhaps heterodox, movements—suggesting that in the face of growing institutional pressure and persecution, converso religious energy was funneled through Pauline models toward an interior, spiritual and scriptural religion. As Stefania Pastore, who articulated this narrative most effectively in recent years, concluded: "the path that Oropesa suggested was crucial in the religious and cultural history of Castile: it gave life and energy to an interior, radical form of Christian-

ity. That movement would find enormous success in sixteenth-century Spain through the contributions of the conversos who followed Erasmus and the revolutionary doctrines of Luther.” (Pastore 2024, p. 36; Giordano 2004).

While these scholarly contributions are of great value, it should be noted that they all approached the *Lumen* within a very specific historiographical trajectory—one focused on the question of sixteenth-century Iberian “heterodoxies” and their connection to the Hieronymite order. Moreover, the fundamental source that introduced the *Lumen* into this modern inquiry, Sigüenza’s *Historia*, was itself written under the same late sixteenth-century apologetic concerns, portraying Oropesa and his work through that particular lens and in a very selective way.¹¹ The *Lumen*, in other words, has hardly received the kind of sustained and independent close reading, attentive to its own historical moment, that it demands. This is particularly significant given that the delicate messages of theological works of this kind are often not transparently evident through their generic titles or stock arguments, but embedded within dense layers of intertextuality.¹²

With these considerations in mind, this article offers a close reading of one specific section within Chapter 50 of the *Lumen*—dedicated to the *non neophytum* principle and its anti-converso applications. This section has attracted remarkably little attention in modern scholarship, even though, as we argue, it is critical for understanding the theological vision of the *Lumen*—considerably complicating the picture outlined above.¹³ Far from expressing an egalitarian impulse, it will show that Oropesa’s intensely anti-Jewish stance and emphasis on Pauline spirituality were part of a more layered and ambitious argument that claimed Jewish heritage, upon transformation, to be a worthy and enduring component of Christianity’s own fabric.

3. The Non Neophytum Challenge

The final chapters of the *Lumen* are dedicated to a detailed examination of the specific legal and canonical foundations that the anti-converso camp had marshaled against Jewish converts and their descendants. Chapter 51 deals with the famous *ex iudaeis* canon of the Fourth Council of Toledo (633), which was interpreted as prohibiting those of Jewish descent from holding public office.¹⁴ Chapter 50, by contrast, addresses a principle that has received considerably less attention in modern scholarship, even though it would prove no less consequential in the anti-converso arsenal: the Pauline prohibition of ‘*non neophytum*’ from I Timothy 3:6.

In the third chapter of his first letter to Timothy, Paul sets out a series of instructions and qualifications governing the appointment of leaders in the nascent Christian communities. These instructions, which covered everything from moral conduct to doctrinal competence, became a foundational pillar of ecclesiastical law, eventually codified in Gratian’s *Decretals* as a cluster of clerical regulations (Distinctiones 35–49).¹⁵ Among these, Distinctio 48 reflected Paul’s specific injunction against the appointment of neophytes, enshrined in the canon *Neophytus in episcopum non est ordinandus* (D. 48 c.1)—‘A neophyte must not be ordained as a bishop.’

While the *non neophytum* canon does not feature in the initial wave of anti-converso propaganda that accompanied the Toledo rebellion of 1449, by the time of Espina’s *Fortalium fidei* it had become part of the anti-converso argumentation. It proved particularly useful and effective for several reasons.¹⁶ First, the canon established a general principle that newcomers to the Church faced certain restrictions—a principle that had been conspicuously ignored during the first decades of the fifteenth century. In this narrow but significant sense, it provided the anti-converso camp with a solid legal foothold for their demands. Second, the canon’s vague terminology failed to define clearly who counted as a ‘neophyte’, what positions they were restricted from, or for how long such restric-

tions applied. This ambiguity lent itself to expansive interpretation and proved particularly relevant to the question of religious orders, where the term ‘neophyte’ was also used to designate novices and carried with it additional canonical restrictions in that context. Importantly, Alonso de Espina, who invoked the *non neophytum* sanction as a necessary means to combat the heresy of Judaization, stressed that it also applied to religious orders, since neophytes had no experience in fasting, standing (a vigil) and weeping.¹⁷ Third, the canon was placed among a series of *distinctiones* that addressed explicit vices (to be codified in the legal jargon as ‘irregularities’) that categorically disqualified Christians from holding offices.¹⁸ And finally, the semantic overlap between “conversos” and “neophytes” allowed for a deliberate conflation between the terms—reading the edict simply as ‘no converso’. And so, as Oropesa states at the beginning of the chapter, his adversaries imposed the term neophyte upon all Christians of Jewish descent, ‘and consequently affirmed they were all prohibited by Paul the Apostle from being ordained in the Church’ or holding any ecclesiastical positions or membership in religious orders.¹⁹

To counter these arguments, Oropesa devoted the entirety of Chapter 50 to a comprehensive inquiry into the theoretical and practical meanings of the *non neophytum* principle, breaking the issue into three fundamental questions: who counts as a neophyte, what restrictions apply, and for how long. To answer these questions, Oropesa scrutinized a host of sources, giving special attention to the biblical and historical context in which the principle was first established and subsequently implemented in the ancient Church. Spanning around fifteen folios, this detailed inquiry provides one of the earliest pieces of evidence of how central the *non neophytum* argument had become to the anti-converso campaign.

To be sure, Oropesa rejected the application of the *non neophytum* decree to all conversos on the basis of universal principles. Neophytism, he explains in detail, was a status that marked incapability or incompetence (*non idoneitas*) due to the lack of sufficient knowledge and experience in the doctrines and moral customs (*mores*) of the Church. In the Late Middle Ages, it should be noted, the concept of *idoneus* (and its nominal counterpart, *idoneitas*) had evolved into a technical legal category widely utilized for the regulation, qualification, or disqualification of ecclesiastical appointments. Rather than representing a vague moral ideal, it embodied a measurable parameter of canonical fitness against which a nominee’s legitimacy could be tested via individual examinations (*examinatio idoneitatis*).²⁰ Juan de Torquemada had already invoked this legal framework to claim that *conversos* could not be barred from office if found *idonei* (Torquemada 2023, ch. 15, pp. 173, 177). But Alonso de Oropesa was arguably the first to frame the specific question of neophytism as a mere particular case of *minus idoneus*. By virtue of this pivotal claim, which is consistently advanced throughout the chapter, Oropesa demonstrated that neophytism did not signify a moral vice, a negative quality, or an ontological stain (*macula*) that required cleansing or could be inherited at birth. In canonical terms, it did not constitute an ‘irregularity’. Rather, it was merely a deficit in learning and exercise that was naturally closed after a relatively short period of time.²¹ Thus, Oropesa’s legal conclusion was fundamentally descent-neutral and egalitarian: no person born a Christian, or who had lived as a Christian ‘for some years’, could be regarded as a neophyte, regardless of his prior faith or the faith of his ancestors.²²

Yet notwithstanding this universal legal conclusion, Oropesa evidently transformed this narrow legal question into a vehicle for a far broader theological statement about the history and fundamental identity of the Church. His inquiry into the original terminology and logic of the *non neophytum* canon served, above all, to foreground and celebrate the value of converso Jewish baggage, rather than diminish or render it irrelevant. As he shows, the *non neophyte* principle was originally designed to combat the dangers of pagan/gentile cultures, while it carried no real effect concerning Jews who joined the Church. Through a remarkably critical analysis, Oropesa argues that even semantically, the word

neophyte marked only ‘non-Jews’ when Paul first applied it.²³ The very concept of neophytism, he tells his readers, reflected a Jewish perspective according to which gentiles were foreigners who could only become *proselyti et advene*, as the Bible calls them.²⁴ Jews, by contrast, were not considered neophytes upon repenting and believing in Christ, even if they were grave sinners who initially rejected the gospel—like Paul himself. Thus, the history of the Church reveals that Jews and gentiles underwent very different transformations when they entered the body of Christ in antiquity.

Oropesa did acknowledge that over time the term neophyte came to include Jewish newcomers to the Church as well, and thus he conceded that his historical investigation could not categorically absolve contemporary Jewish converts from the canon’s restrictions.²⁵ Yet, simultaneously, on a broader theological level, Oropesa did not hesitate to press this bold idea further. Namely, that Jewish converts are, by definition, less neophytes than gentile converts—even in his own day. As he repeatedly states throughout the chapter, the impediments that prevent a neophyte from holding offices in the Church are categorically ‘lesser among those who convert to the faith from the Jews and are greater in those who convert from the Gentiles.’²⁶ So that if a Jew and a gentile are baptized together and their faith is equal, ‘those who are from the Jews are better suited for holding the teaching and practices of faith (*doctrinam et disciplinam fidei*) than those from the gentiles.’²⁷ Evidently, something in their Jewish baggage was positive—and as Oropesa returns to this claim in different variations almost a dozen times throughout the chapter, one can easily make the case that it was the leitmotif of the chapter as a whole.

Oropesa laid out the theological foundations for these claims in the opening section of the chapter—one that functions, in effect, as a theological prologue to the legal and historical inquiry that follows. In this “prologue”, as we shall see, Oropesa develops his case through a highly original reading of Paul the Apostle and his conversion—one that recasts the Pauline model as a distinctly Jewish–Christian phenomenon. It is to this argument that we now turn.

4. Paul, the Transformability of Jewishness and Scriptures

The basic prooftext of the theological prologue, with which Oropesa supported his assertion concerning the particular status of Jewish converts, was, not surprisingly, Romans 11.²⁸ Like Pablo de Santa María before him, Oropesa suggested that Paul’s metaphor about the regrafting of the broken branches of Israel did not address only the infant Church or its eschatological future. Rather, it testified to some mysterious mechanism that operated throughout history, allowing the broken branches of Israel—i.e., the Jews—to regain their direct natural connection to the holy root of the tree upon their regrafting—i.e., conversion (Yisraeli 2014). By this reading, Paul’s metaphor presented a prophecy or a divine blueprint for the unique constructive function that Jewish converts were destined to play in the history of the Church. For Pablo de Santa María, this Pauline vision served as proof that learned Jewish converts like himself were destined to actively shape and perhaps even reform the teachings of the Church, especially when it came to the reading of Scriptures. Oropesa, writing in a different apologetic context, now tried to align this general prophetic message with the specific question of the *non neophytum* principle. He did so by paraphrasing (rather than directly quoting, as he had done earlier in the treatise) Nicholas de Lyra’s commentary on Romans 11, adapting Lyra’s terminology to match precisely his own definition of neophytism: the lack of *idoneitas*, or suitability for office. According to this paraphrase, the Apostle ‘confirmed that after their conversion the [Jews] are more suited and able (*sunt habiles et idonei*) to advance in the Church of God in knowledge and teaching, as well as in customs and disciplines (*moribus et disciplina*), than those who converted from the gentiles and recently came to the faith in Christ.’²⁹ Being regrafted to their own natural

tree the Jewish branches were less incompetent and less likely to be tempted by pride (*superbia*—the second impediment of neophytes), than the wild branches of the gentiles. And hence, they were less prone to suffer from the deficits of neophytism.³⁰

But how could Oropesa explain the rationale behind this Jewish–gentile distinction? As scholars repeatedly emphasized, unlike previous pro-converso writers, Oropesa did not invest himself in stressing the positive or proto-Christian qualities of the Jews and Judaism. What then was feeding the competence and humility of these novice Christians of Jewish background?

Oropesa provided an original answer that put the focus on the unique transformative potential of Jewishness—which, he argued, operated much like the natural transformation of ice into water. As he explained, when Jews are hardened in infidelity by their unique blindness, they become frozen solid under thick ice. But when God softens their hearts through ‘inner calling and spiritual unction,’ their icy substance melts into water.³¹ And just as ice causes harm by constricting and freezing the land, while water brings benefit (*proficiet*) by irrigating and softening it, so does the Jewish effect on the Church overturns. As much as the Jews were hostile and harmful to the Church when they were obstinate infidels, they become useful and apt to advance within it (*aptiores ad proficiendum in ea*), once they become believers. The analogy is central for Oropesa’s case, and is therefore reiterated several times:³²

So it is with the Jews: while they remain in the infidelity of their blindness they harm the Church like destructive and the hardest of ice, as was explained above in detail in chapters 23–26 [of the *Lumen*]. But once converted to faith, they can greatly advance in the Church like water flowing from the hardest ice that dissolves.

“Jewishness”, so it seems, has a high reactivity that can account for both destructive and constructive potential. Accordingly, the fact that in its infidel state Jewishness is particularly negative and harmful to the Church does not contradict or undermine the high value it acquires upon its transformation. To the contrary, both extreme outcomes stem from the same essential material—what we might call the H₂O of Jewishness. Therefore, Oropesa can specifically call attention to the previous anti-Jewish chapters of the *Lumen*, stating that they depicted the Jews in their icy phase. Given the transformative mechanism he described, these chapters now support the positive position of converted Jews in the Church. The existence of harmful ice only affirms the positive potential of water, for these are merely different states of aggregation of the same substance.

Naturally, such a bold claim had to be supported by well-established authorities. And indeed, as Oropesa immediately admits, he borrowed the ice-water analogy from Gregory the Great’s *Moralia* on Job 37:10: ‘When God blows, the ice congeals; and in turn the broadest waters pour forth.’³³ Gregory read the contrast between the congealing ice and the pouring water as a metaphor of how God turned Jewish persecutors into preachers of the true faith. And the example he had in mind was that of Paul the Apostle. As Oropesa quotes him:³⁴

Was not Paul ice when he was going to Damascus [...], seeking to freeze the seeds of the Word that had been planted in the hearts of the faithful, lest they rise to the perfection of [good] works? But this ice returned into water, as he poured a flowing stream of holy exhortation upon those whom he previously sought to oppress and persecute, so that the harvest of the elect might spring up all the more abundantly, inasmuch as the rain of God watered it even from the mouth of [their former] persecutor.

The image of harmful ice turning into pouring water brought to Gregory's mind the radical conversion of Paul from a persecutor to a preacher, thus providing Oropesa with a solid foundation. Yet, evidently, Oropesa has injected this patristic source with additional meanings that neither Gregory nor his medieval readers could have imagined. While Gregory indeed read the 'congealing ice' as referring to Jewish infidelity, he was addressing the specific historical episode that followed the coming of Christ. His discussion focused on the spread of faith through God's grace among both Jews and gentiles during the first years of the Church. In this context, the Pauline transformation did not indicate a specific Jewish quality but exemplified the miraculous events through which Christianity spread against all odds.³⁵ Oropesa, however, seized on this metaphor to establish two elements that were entirely absent from the *Moralia*. First, the radical and swift change from ice to water was essentially underlined by a substantive continuity. And secondly, that the ice-water transformation marked a generic Jewish quality and not just the case of the Apostle or the universal potential of conversion. With these adjustments, Oropesa sets the stage for reading Paul's transformation as an archetype for a particular kind of Jewish-Christian conversion.

To further establish the Judeo-Christian character of this Pauline conversion, Oropesa turned to the Apostle's own testimonies about his mission and Jewish background. Most dramatically, he suggested that the Apostle's famous duo of 'letter' and 'spirit', as it appears in the Second Letter to the Corinthians 3:6, corresponded to the ice-water metaphor. Oropesa mapped the 'letter that kills' to the ice on account of their common fatal nature, and the 'spirit that gives life' to the water because of their shared vitalizing power.³⁶ The conflation of these two pairs allowed Oropesa to project the qualities of one onto the other. On the one hand, the distinct Jewish baggage of the 'letter' was extended to the ice. And on the other hand, the substantive continuity of the ice-water transformation was projected onto the letter-spirit, making the case that the substance of the letter was indispensable for Paul's Christian mission to the gentiles. In Oropesa's own words, the ice-water model implied that the spirit does not replace the letter altogether but rather 'spiritualizes the understanding and implementation of what the letter instructs.' Thus, the Pauline binary was not between letter and spirit per se, but between a harmful, frozen letter and a spiritualized, flowing letter. That is, between a Jewish reading of the Old Testament and a Christological reading. By this logic, evidently, the Jewish Scriptures served as the 'raw' letter that could take either of the forms.

As Oropesa knew very well, his reading of II Corinthians 3:6 ran counter to a long tradition that identified the 'letter' with Jewish qualities, against the diametrically opposed Christian 'spirit'. In the context of the unfolding converso crisis, this letter was often mapped to the Jewish flesh and the inherent un-Christianness of the converts. For our purposes, it will suffice to mention that when Marcos García de Mora—one of the leaders of the Toledo rebellion—drafted his public plea for support, he framed the entire conflict between the true (old) Christians and the converso Judaizers (with their corrupt enablers), as a reflection of the Pauline antithesis between letter and spirit.³⁷ No doubt, Oropesa did not engage here with this signature axiom of "anti-Judaism" by chance. On the broadest level, his argument in Chapter 50 aimed to reinterpret a theological and scriptural proof-text of the anti-converso ideology—namely, the presumption that the letter and the spirit, i.e., Jewishness and Christianness, were two complete and mutually exclusive opposites. Instead, he offered to read that very same Pauline text as a model of Jewish-Christian continuity and progression. The transition from Judaism to Christianity indeed required a transformation that on a certain spiritual level could be described as radical. Yet this transformation by no means implied a complete rejection of everything that had defined one's former Jewish identity.

Beyond this larger controversy, Oropesa's reinterpretation of this locus classicus had a very tangible purpose within his case regarding the *non neophytum* allegations. This becomes evident when Oropesa points to the context in which Paul invoked the letter-spirit pair in II Corinthians 3: addressing the source and legitimacy of his ministerial competence. As the Apostle says: 'He has made us competent (*idoneos*) to be ministers of a new testament, not by the letter but by the spirit, for the letter kills but the spirit gives life.' Thus, if we follow Oropesa's reading, it was not merely the spirit that made Paul and the other apostles competent (*idonei*) to serve as ministers and teachers of the Church, but rather the letter in its spiritualized form. The point, of course, was not purely exegetical. For, as we recall, *idoneitas* was a legal term that served Oropesa as the main variable to define the state of neophytism—and now we can clearly see why. It served as a semantic nexus between the practical legal question of the hour (who was a neophyte) and what Oropesa crafted as a theological proof-text for the positive value of the Jewish legacy. If Juan de Torquemada argued in 1450 that a competent (*idoneus*) converso, personally qualified for a position, must not be discriminated against because of his Jewish background, Oropesa now shows—via Paul—that conversos are competent and suited for office precisely *because of their Jewish background*.³⁸

To substantiate this claim, Oropesa proceeds to demonstrate that Paul explicitly identified Jewish scriptural background as a distinct virtue for new ministers. The key passage was Paul's affirmation of Timothy (II 3:15–17): 'because from infancy you have known the holy scriptures which are able to instruct you unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.'³⁹ In Oropesa's words, the Apostle declared here that the 'most useful cause for the advancement of the Church' is 'to know the scriptures of the Old Testament and to be nourished in them **already before conversion**.' For when this Jewish expertise of Scripture is married with faith through grace, the great mysteries of Christ that lead mankind to salvation are revealed.⁴⁰

Paul could not have been clearer as to what makes a Christian believer competent to serve as a minister of the Church. But as Oropesa further stressed, it was not just an instruction to others. The preexistent mastery of the Old Testament also defined Paul's own calling and ability to serve the Church—as attested by the epithet coined to describe his conversion in Acts 9:15: *vas electionis*. Drawing on St. Jerome's letter to Paulinus, Oropesa argues that the reason Paul was named by the Lord *vas electionis* was that he was 'a vessel of Law, and a cabin of the Sacred Scriptures.'⁴¹ Hence, even Paul's most iconic epithet as an instrument of divine providence reflected nothing less than his (particularly Jewish) mastery of Scripture.⁴²

Although Oropesa was drawing on St. Jerome, the identification of *vas electionis* with biblical competence was far from common in the late Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas, for example, composed the entire prologue to his Commentary on Romans as an exposition of this very epithet: why was Paul called *vas electionis*.⁴³ Tellingly, nowhere in his discussion of Paul's unique qualities as a chosen vessel did Aquinas mention the Apostle's proficiency in Scripture—let alone make it a central attribute in his exposition.⁴⁴ This is not to say that medieval theologians were entirely blind to Paul's biblical competence. But "biblicism" was not among the core qualities that defined the Apostle, his miraculous conversion, or his teachings. Paul, it was generally agreed, was a vessel of election through divine grace and revelation alone, not through prior scriptural mastery.

Oropesa's intensive deployment of Paul as both source and model reflects a broader family of hermeneutical perspectives that evolved in the Iberian Peninsula since the early fifteenth century—often termed "converso Paulinisms." As Stuczynski has shown, the Pauline appeal within this tradition did not stem only from his universalism, but also from the recognition that Paul's own teachings and experience prescribed a legitimate space for

a persistent Jewish identity or “residue” within the Church (Stuczynski 2020; Stuczynski 2019; Stuczynski and Yisraeli 2024, p. 8). As we can now see, Oropesa defined much of this residue in terms of biblical competence and apostolic mission—a move that, in many ways, recalls Pablo de Santa María before him, though from distinctly different textual premises.⁴⁵ An heir to that perspective, Oropesa now concludes that what happened to Paul and other Jews at the time of the ancient Church ‘often happens in our times among the same Jewish people’ as they turn from the worst infidels into true Christians and faithful preachers upon their conversion. And as he further stresses, ‘it will continue to happen until the end of the world’, just as predicted in Romans 11 through the image of the olive tree and the regrafting of the natural branches.⁴⁶ It is therefore clear that the unsuitability (*idoneitas*) that defines the state of neophytism is much less prevalent among Jewish converts who were educated in the law and the prophets, and were ‘nourished in the moral teachings pertaining to these matters’. And if such people are ‘truly converted by the Holy Spirit, they can be more easily and abundantly taught in the true faith and in Christian moral customs (*moribus christianis*), enabling others to advance in these same matters.’⁴⁷ These theological truths or mechanisms did not end in antiquity. They were true for the converts in Oropesa’s day just as they were true for Paul. Exactly as Paul had predicted in Romans 11.

5. From Knowledge to Practice: Do Jewish Moral Customs Have Christian Value?

Scriptural erudition is certainly the main Jewish element that Oropesa stresses throughout Chapter 50 of the *Lumen*, yet—as we could already notice—it does not stand alone. Already in his initial proposition, Oropesa speaks of two related but nevertheless distinguishable parameters in which Jewish converts excel their gentile counterparts: *scientia et doctrina* on the one hand, and *moribus et disciplina* on the other—that is, knowledge and doctrine alongside moral customs and disciplined practice. Accordingly, whenever Oropesa states that Jewish converts hold an advantage by virtue of their scriptural education, he immediately complements this conclusion by noting their moral formation as well. Sincere Jewish converts were apt for ‘the true faith’ because they had ‘knowledge of the Law and the prophets’; and they were also ready to embrace ‘Christian moral customs’ because they had been ‘nourished in the moral teachings of the Old Law.’ For the most part, Oropesa does not expand on this issue beyond these brief remarks. But as he draws his *non neophytum* argument to a close, he follows up with a telling quote from Pope Leo the Great to illustrate this point:⁴⁸

For, as blessed Leo writes in the sixth sermon on Fasting:⁴⁹ ‘The teachings of the Law [*doctrina legalis*] provide much support to the ordinances [*sanctionibus*] of the Gospel, and therefore certain things are transferred from the old commandments to the new observance [*observantiam*], as demonstrated by the devotional practices of the Church itself. As our Lord, Jesus Christ said (Matt. 5:17): ‘I did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it.’ And so, while the signs that announced our Savior’s coming have ceased, and the symbols that were fulfilled by the realization of what they prefigured were superseded, those [things of the Law] that were established according to the principle of piety—whether for the rule of conduct or for the pure worship of God—continue among us in the same form they were given, and what was suitable for both testaments remains unaltered.

Thus, if there was any doubt about what Oropesa meant by *doctrina morum* and *mores*, Leo’s words clarify it: not abstract ethical ideals or moral values, but concrete devotional practices and religious observance. Jewish converts were better prepared for Christian life, whether secular or regular, not only because they knew the Scriptures, but also because

they had observed and lived by the Old Law. After all, as Oropesa reminds his readers through Leo, the ceremonies of the Old Law provided the very infrastructure of Church observance. Of course, as Leo himself notes, not all commandments were upheld—but the tone and import of this passage are unmistakable: the precepts of the Old Law were not antithetical to Christianity but of close kinship to it. Being an observant Jew was, if anything, an advantage for embracing a Christian way of life.

The full significance of this reference, however, only becomes apparent when we consider its original context: Leo's sermons on the Fast of the Tenth Month—one of four annual cycles of penitential days known as the Ember Days, or *quattuor tempora*. The Ember Days—which provided occasions for fasting, abstinence, intensified prayer, almsgiving, and the ordination of clergy—became firmly established and widely observed within the Latin Rite by the late Middle Ages. Yet the historical origins of these solemn fasts, codified in the Roman Rite only in late antiquity, remain a matter of scholarly debate to this day; in particular, whether they emerged from Jewish fasts and liturgies (most notably those of Yom Kippur and the Tenth of Tevet), or from pagan agricultural and seasonal traditions.⁵⁰ Pope Leo I, whose sermons for these occasions constitute our earliest substantial source on the Ember Days, attributed them to an apostolic tradition—which is to say, he believed them to be rooted in the Jewish heritage of Jesus' disciples. Consequently, some of his sermons aimed to deflect any potential accusation of Judaizing that the Jewish pedigree of these holy days might invite. To do so, Leo argued for the legitimate transmission and transformation of Jewish practice into Christian worship, emphasizing the theological continuity between the two religions in terms of observance. Leo did state that some modifications were made to the Jewish rites, but the main message of his sermons, as Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra characterized it, was that 'what makes a Jewish practice into a Christian one is its observance by Christians.' (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003a, pp. 272–73; Hayward 2017, p. 249). Evidently, this position was contested already in Leo's own time, and it remained deeply controversial throughout the Middle Ages. While some medieval sources acknowledged the Jewish origins of the Ember Days, other highly authoritative texts rejected this view emphatically.⁵¹ Most notably, an explicit repudiation of any Jewish origins for the Ember Days found its way into canon law itself. In *Distinctio 76* of his *Decretum*, Gratian added a commentary of his own intended to demonstrate that Christians must not accept the Hebrew rationale for these fasts. This argument was later confirmed by the great glossers of the Law, and repeated by many theologians, including Aquinas.⁵²

Oropesa's decision to quote Leo's sermons on the Ember Days was thus well calculated. First, it recovered a patristic voice of indisputable authority that acknowledged the foundational place of Jewish practice in the formation of Christian observance. Second, it boldly implied that Jewish rites distinct from the permanent Moral Law provided the architectural origins of a central Christian devotional cycle. Third, it granted this patristic authority an innovative application; if Leo's words—that some pious practices 'continue among us in the same form they were given [...and] remain unaltered'—are redirected to the personal reality of Jewish conversion, one can deduce that a Jewish convert might legitimately retain certain ancestral customs without compromise. Indeed, Oropesa states this explicitly as he draws his own conclusion from the passage:

From these words of blessed Leo it is clearly evident that, as was said above, those who convert from the Jews to the faith are highly suited and disposed toward the good, both in knowledge and doctrine as well as in customs and the discipline of living [*tam in scientia et doctrina, quam in moribus et vivendi discipline*]. This is especially true for those who previously had knowledge of the Law and the prophets, which bears great witness to the Gospel of Christ and his most holy Law, and also brings much benefit for the moral rules of life and discipline [*regulas morum vite*

et discipline] of Christ's faithful, as has now been made clear from the authority of blessed Leo. For when only Christ has been preached to them, and those things pertaining to faith and sacraments have been understood, believed, and transformed, **all other things remain as they were—serving and greatly assisting both the faith of Christ and the customs and life of his faithful** [*quam ad mores et vitam suorum fidelium*]. Therefore, such converts from Judaism can be profoundly and easily aided in faith and customs [*in fide et moribus*], and once they have become true believers they can also teach and assist others through the doctrine and way of life they led as Jews.⁵³

Oropesa takes Leo's words to confirm that Jews are more disposed and suited for accepting the Christian faith and living according to its demands precisely because they were trained in Jewish rites and observance. In fact, the more observant and learned they were as Jews, the more beneficial and productive they could become for Christian believers at large, advancing both the doctrines and practices of the Church. Oropesa does not go into the specifics of how exactly these converts bring special benefit to the Church and are able to teach others—whether by personal example or by intellectual engagement. But the explanation he then provides as to why this happens is as indicative as it is staggering: when they are truly converted through faith and grace, 'all other things remain as they were' (*cetera omnia manent, prout erant*)—and it is these things that make them great teachers. Not some residue—but all other things.

But what are the things that remain when spirit and faith change? At first, it might have seemed that Oropesa was referring only to some abstract layer of Jewish substance—whether we call it the letter or its H₂O. However, by now it has become evident that as far as Oropesa was concerned, the remaining elements included behavioral aspects as well: Jewish habits and customs that make 'the Jewish way of life'. Given his deliberate reach for Leo's sermon on the Ember Days, it is tempting to suggest that Oropesa had in mind concrete devotional practices such as fasting, prayer and penance.

Since the *non neophytum* principle was being weaponized to purge religious orders of conversos, the logic behind Oropesa's move was clear. If Espina argued that neophytes should not be admitted to religious orders because they had no experience in fasting, praying the vigil, or weeping, the *Lumen* replied that Jewish converts actually possess precisely such experience.⁵⁴ But there was another legal-theological question for which *Lumen*'s insistence that Jewish devotional practices are compatible with—indeed, preparatory for—Christian faith carried crucial implications: the definition of Judaization.

As late as the 1430s, it still seemed plausible to some theologians that conversos could sing Hebrew psalms in public and swear on the Torah as part of their Christian practices, without being considered Judaizers—as long as they were sincere and faithful Christians. According to this approach, the defining factor that turned certain Jewish customs into an act of Judaizing was the interior belief or intention of the convert—or, to use Oropesa's terms, his spiritual transformation.⁵⁵ Of course, other voices disagreed. Yet it is telling that the most sophisticated inquisitorial treatise of the 1480s, the so-called *Censura contra Talmud*, was written precisely to establish this point against those who 'do not judge those who revert to Talmudic rites as heretics, but consider them to be like those who observe certain gentile rites—and hold that the mere observance of such rites is sufficient grounds only for suspicion but not for conviction.'⁵⁶ The *Lumen*, which made conversion all about inner transformation while explicitly extolling Jewish devotional practices, can easily be read as providing the theological grounding for this position. It is not inconceivable, in fact, to read the *Lumen* as a direct pushback against growing accusations of Judaization. The inquisitorial context was already there: Oropesa had presided over a tribunal in Toledo

and protested the results of similar inquiries at Guadalupe.⁵⁷ Oropesa could hardly have been ignorant of the legal implications of his theological position.

To substantiate his claims about the enduring value of Jewish formation—scriptural and behavioral alike—Oropesa turns to lived historical experience. The Iberian kingdoms of recent decades have witnessed many Jewish converts become ‘great teachers, most distinguished in their conduct and way of life’ (*magnos doctores et moribus et vita maxime*) within a remarkably short time. Some have risen to become bishops and prelates—figures of exemplary service to the Church and its faithful, in their conduct and way of life as much as in knowledge and doctrine. Crucially, Oropesa notes, this achievement has no parallel among converts from other nations, including converts from Islam. The only explanation, he insists, is that these converts ‘were nourished in the knowledge of the law and the prophets’ already as Jews.⁵⁸ Oropesa does acknowledge that in the centuries since antiquity, Jewish education had come to include more than Scripture, containing also a ‘deformed’ letter, distorted into anti-Christian content. Yet even this, he concludes, returning to the ice-water metaphor, is no obstacle: upon proper conversion ‘through interior calling and spiritual illumination of faith,’ even this ‘letter, which before was blasphemous,’ becomes spiritual, faithful, true and most useful, as the most abundant waters flow from the ice.⁵⁹

With this, Oropesa concludes what we have called the theological prologue to his *non neophytum* argument, turning to address the more historical and legal dimensions of the question—who exactly counts as a neophyte, what restrictions apply, and for how long. Yet, in many respects, it is this prologue that contains the most consequential arguments: first, as the clearest and most explicit articulation of Oropesa’s theological vision; and second, as a remarkable historical document that may help explain the normative foundations of a distinctly Hieronymite devotional culture—and its fateful collision with the Inquisition.

6. Conclusions: A Converso Theological Vision

Chapter 50 of the *Lumen* and the *non neophytum* controversy evidently served Oropesa as a license for something far more ambitious than a mere refutation of racial discrimination. Launching a comprehensive inquiry into Pauline letters and patristic sources, Oropesa produced a bold theological statement about the history and fundamental identity of the Church: first, by reclaiming its Jewish origins and components, and second, by insisting on their enduring value as a source of scriptural knowledge, theological formation, and ecclesiastical leadership. In that sense, his argument reads not as an appeal for civic equality but as a vindication of a proactive converso biblical–theological project: one in which conversos were not merely “saved souls” but active agents of the Church’s renewal, uniquely positioned to recover some of its Jewish roots and channel them into new Christian meanings. When Oropesa speaks of converts who became ‘great teachers, most distinguished in their conduct and way of life,’ rising to become bishops precisely because they were educated as Jews—it is hard not to read this as a passionate affirmation of the intellectual and spiritual renewal that figures like Pablo de Santa María had pioneered in Castile in the preceding decades.

Of all the elements that supported this vision, none seems more consequential than Oropesa’s treatment of Paul the Apostle. Recasting the Pauline conversion itself—perhaps the single most powerful symbol of Jewish–Christian rupture in the Christian tradition—as a paradigm of a distinctly Jewish–Christian transformation was a masterstroke. By mapping the ice-water metaphor onto the letter-spirit binary, Oropesa effectively rewired the Pauline duality: transforming it from an emblem of Jewish–Christian opposition into a statement of essential continuity, in which the Jewish past was not erased by grace but spiritualized and thus preserved. Paul emerged from Oropesa’s account not as the symbol

of Christianity's break from Judaism, but as the supreme embodiment of its Jewish foundations and their capacity to serve as an inexhaustible spring of knowledge and teaching for the Church.

All of this should prompt us to reconsider what scholars have rightly noted about the *Lumen*: its emphasis on the centrality of Scripture, on the transformative power of grace, and on Pauline spirituality over ceremonial and ritual elements. Chapter 50 allows us to refine our understanding of what Oropesa meant by singling out these elements. Namely, they were not celebrated on account of their universal and egalitarian appeal, but because Oropesa recognized them as distinctly rooted in the experience of those who came to Christianity already formed by the Old Law and its Scriptures—that is, in their Jewish–Christian transformation. This is true, as we have just stressed, of the Pauline conversion, and it is equally true of Pauline spirituality itself. Oropesa's emphasis on spiritual interiority and grace-driven transformation was not a dismissal of devotional practice. It was, rather, a carefully constructed argument for the legitimacy of specific practices—those rooted in Scripture, in the Jewish origins of Christian observance, and in the living tradition that Jewish converts brought with them into the Church. The point was not that grace and spirit rendered all practice irrelevant, but that they transformed certain Jewish practices into spiritually Christian ones.

The *Lumen* is thus an important witness to the bold biblical–theological project that flourished in the Peninsula in the decades following 1391. But if the reading proposed here is correct, the testimony it offers may go well beyond the realm of intellectual history. Chapter 50 of the *Lumen* can also be read as providing the normative foundations for a distinctly Hieronymite devotional culture—one that endorsed, or at least knowingly tolerated, certain scripture-based Jewish devotional customs such as fasting, prayer and penance among the friars. This issue would come to a dramatic head in the late 1480s, as a separate inquisitorial process—the first of its kind—was launched in 1485 to investigate suspicions of an extensive Judaizing network at the monastery of Guadalupe. The scandal proved so unsettling that the Hieronymites became the first religious order to adopt *limpieza de sangre* statutes in the following year. Yet as one reads the scarce evidence about friars who fasted like Jews, while being—by all accounts—devoted Christians, it is hard not to wonder whether they were simply living by the *Lumen*'s code (Sicroff 1965; Beinart 1966; Beinart 1981; Starr-LeBeau 2003, pp. 200–23; Llopis Agelán and García 2019; Herrera Vázquez 2022). Perhaps more than any other reason, this is why the *Lumen* barely survived the inquisitorial age.

Funding: This research was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (grant no. 2079/23).

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ On Pablo's distorted image, see (Yisraeli 2023a); for the convoluted fate of Madrigal's Latin manuscripts (and the myths surrounding them), see (Merino Jerez 2019; López Fonseca and Vila 2022); for the history of the Aragel Bible, see (Girón-Negrón et al. 2026).

- 2 (Oropesa 1979). Three fifteenth-century manuscripts of the *Lumen* have survived, along with one later sixteenth-century copy. The Díaz y Díaz edition presents a Spanish translation based on a critical collation of the three manuscripts known at the time: those of Guadalajara, Milan, and Salamanca. The Latin text underlying this collation is now available in digital form and constitutes the basis for all Latin citations in the present article: (Oropesa n.d.). Since the digital transcription is unpaginated, all Latin citations in this article are accompanied by two references: a page number corresponding to the parallel text in the Díaz y Díaz Spanish translation, and a folio number from a fourth manuscript of the *Lumen*, unknown to Díaz y Díaz: Montreux, Bibliotheca Sefarad, MS J 11 (second half of the fifteenth century), fols. 1r-203v, available digitally at <https://e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bs/Ms-J0011> (no significant variants between this manuscript and the digital transcription were found). On the manuscripts, see Díaz y Díaz's introduction in (Oropesa 1979, pp. 45–48); and, for a more recent assessment, (Pastor Julián Forthcoming). I am grateful to Victoriano Pastor Julián for sharing this study with me prior to publication.
- 3 According to Oropesa's own account in the prologue. (Díaz y Díaz 1979; Oropesa, *Lumen*, pp. 62–65; fols.1r a-7.r a. Almost everything we know about Oropesa comes either from Sigüenza or the *Lumen* itself.
- 4 On this obscure affair, for which Sigüenza is the main source, see Sigüenza, *Historia*, I, caps. XVII–XVIII, pp. 361–69; Díaz y Díaz, *Luz para conocimiento*, pp. 7–12; (Netanyahu 2001); (Pastor Julián Forthcoming); and with particular focus on Espina, (Vidal Doval 2013). A recent important contribution illuminates the tensions between the Toledo tribunal and the Observant Franciscans over the latter's anti-converso preaching campaigns. (Bautista 2022).
- 5 On this affair, see Starr-LeBeau (2003).
- 6 Orfali (1986, 1996); for the quote, see p. 352. We should note that Castro already pointed at this sentiment, Castro (1949, p. 110).
- 7 Netanyahu (2001)'s *The Origins of the Inquisition* is to the present day the most thorough analysis of the *Lumen*; see, pp. 855–96. Netanyahu is particularly interested in the testimony the *Lumen* provides concerning the fabricated accusations of the anti-converso camp and Oropesa's uncompromising refutation of their claims and disingenuous motivations.
- 8 Ibid, p. 896, Netanyahu seems to be convinced that Oropesa's anti-Jewish stance in the first part of the *Lumen* was a deliberate rhetorical strategy designed to strengthen his pro-converso argument and to shield himself from accusations of being a Jew—an interpretation I find more than reasonable.
- 9 In this vein, see also (Kriegel 1997; Evans 1998, pp. 125–27). Further on the contrast between Oropesa and Cartagena, see (Sicroff 1981); and (Maryks 2010, pp. 4–18). Stuczynski extended this comparison in two important directions. First, with regard to the ways in which pro-converso apologists reconciled Jewish lineage with Christian universalism through different forms of Paulinism: while Cartagena insisted on preserving an ethnic residue of Jewish identity within the Christian body, Oropesa moved away from any such ethnic deposit, focusing instead on the spiritualization of Jewish heritage; see (Stuczynski 2020). Second, Stuczynski extended the comparison to the realm of hermeneutics, arguing that Oropesa's lesser commitment to the literal sense of Scripture—or to the double literal sense—distinguished him from other pro-converso apologists; see (Stuczynski 2012, esp. pp. 161–66, 173–76).
- 10 The Pauline perspective that dominates the scholarship on Oropesa emerged, to a large extent, from its dialogue with (Bataillon 1937), which argued that Paulinism—and its particular appeal to conversos—played a central role in shaping the Erasmian movement in Spain. For a broader overview of this idea and further bibliography, see (Stuczynski and Yisraeli 2024). See also (Pastor Julián Forthcoming).
- 11 As noted above, when Américo Castro first framed the modern understanding of the *Lumen*, he knew the work—as he himself states—only through Sigüenza's handful of quotations and assessments. It is worth noting, furthermore, that Albert Sicroff's first treatment of the *Lumen*, within his monumental history of purity-of-blood regulations, was also founded entirely on Sigüenza's account; see (Sicroff 1985, pp. 92–102). Netanyahu was alert to the fundamental biases of Sigüenza's account, noting that he had shaped his presentation of the *Lumen* to conform to the inquisitorial norms of the 1590s (Sigüenza himself was under the scrutiny of the Inquisition before he wrote his *History*); see Netanyahu (2001), *Origins*, pp. 894–95. Olivari, for his part, identified discrepancies between Sigüenza's representation of Oropesa's positions and what Oropesa actually wrote in other contexts—though not with regard to the converso question specifically; see (Olivari 1988, pp. 564–65, 567).
- 12 Even Netanyahu's comprehensive analysis consists largely of a collage of quotations drawn from across the *Lumen* and organized according to his own thematic concerns. While such a synthetic approach is perhaps unavoidable when seeking to provide a panoramic view of a treatise of such scope, it occasionally comes at the cost of the wider implications and contextual meanings of the passages quoted.
- 13 Netanyahu does touch on this chapter and recognizes its significance, noting that Oropesa 'evidently considered the refutation of that argument of vital importance for winning the case against the Marranos' detractors' (p. 886). His discussion, however, focuses on the polemical dimensions of the question, leaving aside the theological issues that are the primary concern of the present article; see Netanyahu (2001), *Origins*, pp. 886–89.
- 14 In Gratian's *Decretals*, C. 17 q. 4 c. 31. On the role of this canon in the converso crisis and further bibliography, see Yisraeli and Israeli (2022, pp. 623–26, 632–35).
- 15 On this cluster of regulations, see Weiler (2004).

- ¹⁶ On the history of this canon in the converso crisis, see Yisraeli and Israeli (2022, pp. 629–39).
- ¹⁷ Espina (1494, book II, consideration vi, fol. 56v). Having established that performing circumcision constitutes heresy and that Christians are obligated to combat heresy by all means, Espina concludes that: ‘Et ideo non immerito prohibentur neophiti ordinari distinctione xlviij cap. quoniam paragrauo i. Et assignatur autem in textu cum glosa duplex causa. Prima ne incidant in superbiam, putantes quod fides christiana multum indiget illis. Secundo quia nondum sunt experti statum ecclesiae vel religionis nec sciunt modos personarum. Item non ieiunaverunt non steterunt non fleverunt nec probati sunt unde tales nec ad minores ordines debent promoveri nec tonsurari. argumento xix. quaestione iij. monasterijs.’ Espina refers here to C. 19 q. 3 c. 6, which mandates a two-year probationary period before a monastery may grant a new convert the tonsure. The references to *minores ordines* and to the specific practices of fasting etc. are Espina’s additions.
- ¹⁸ Weiler notes that *Distinctio* 48 constitutes a categorical exception within the cluster of clerical regulations (*Distinctiones* 35–49), observing that unlike all the others, it ‘has nothing to do with vices and virtues as such’; (Weiler 2004, p. 65).
- ¹⁹ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 658; 171.r a-b: ‘et per consequens affirmaverunt omnes eos esse prohibitos ab Apostolo ordinari in Ecclesia, tamquam neophytos ab eo nominatos et determinatos.’
- ²⁰ For the primary canonical locus on the evaluation of an ordinand’s fitness and the prohibition against promoting those who are *minus idoneus*, see *Decretales Gregorii IX* (Liber Extra), lib. I, tit. 12 (*De scrutinio in ordinatione faciendo*) and lib. I, tit. 14 (*De aetate, et qualitate, et ordine praeficiendorum*), esp. cap. 14 [1.14]. (Weiler 2004, pp. 65–66). On the late medieval evolution of the concept of *inidoneitas*, see (Rossi 2012).
- ²¹ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 662; fol. 171.v b: ‘...propter non esse expertum et exercitatum in doctrina et moribus christiane fidei et religionis. Postquam tamen talis noviter conversus fuerit instructus et exercitatus in fidei christiane vel religionis moribus, et in hoc exegerit aliquod conveniens tempus, aufertur ab eo illa novitas et indispositio vel non idoneitas, et per tale exercitium humilitatis.’
- ²² Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 689; fol. 179.r a: ‘Patet ergo ex supradictis, quod non est dicendus neophytus nullo modo dum fuerit effectus adultus, et vir ille qui, licet fuerit filius alicuius infidelis, sive Iudei, sive gentilis, fuit tamen baptizatus dum esset parvulus, etiam si fuerit ante baptismum circumcisis. Item quod multo minus est appellandus vel habendus neophytus ille qui natus fuit ex parentibus iam fidelibus et more Ecclesie protinus baptizatus, etiam si illi fuerint ante Iudei vel Sarraceni. Item quod non est habendus nec dicendus neophytus ille qui, licet esset adultus et vir quando fuit effectus christianus, tamen vixit iam per aliquod tempus et annos in fide Christi, postquam fuit baptizatus.’ Oropesa further clarified that the *non neophytum* prohibition applied exclusively to the offices of priest and bishop, and did not preclude a neophyte from holding any other position in the Church or from joining a religious order. He also noted that it fell within the authority of the local bishop to determine whether a given person was or was not a neophyte.
- ²³ When Sicroff suggested that Oropesa’s inquiries into biblical and ancient texts – seeking to extract their original meanings in support of his arguments – “ya podría considerarse una anticipación de procedimientos que más tarde emplearían los erasmistas,” it was analyses such as this one that he had in mind (Sicroff 1981, p. 317).
- ²⁴ Oropesa was evidently alluding to the Hebrew category of *Gerim*.
- ²⁵ For Netanyahu, this qualification is what set Oropesa apart from earlier converso thinkers such as the Relator, who thought that ‘Judaism and Christianity were essentially the same religion’; Netanyahu (2001), *Origins*, p. 888.
- ²⁶ Oropesa had in fact already made this claim in passing in chapters 27 and 39, promising to elaborate on it in detail later.
- ²⁷ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 668; fol. 173.v a: Considerandum tamen quod ista indispositio vel non idoneitas ad presidendum in Ecclesia noviter baptizatorum, aut ad religionem conversorum, propter quorum novitatem prohibentur ab Ecclesia sublimari ad prelature dignitatem, minor est, prout communiter et absolute loquendo, in his que convertuntur ex Iudeis ad fidem, et maior in his qui ex gentilitate convertuntur; cuius ratio est, quia si eque et equaliter convertantur et credant, habiliores sunt ad doctrinam et disciplinam fidei qui ex iudaismo veniunt ad fidem, quam qui convertuntur ex gentilitate.
- ²⁸ A substantial body of scholarship has highlighted the central role of Paul’s olive tree metaphor (Romans 11) in pro-converso arguments about the place of Jewish converts within the Church. For an extensive bibliography, see (Stuczynski and Yisraeli 2024, p. 7, nn. 18–21).
- ²⁹ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 668; fol. 173.v a: ‘sicut declaratum est superius, capitulo undequadragesimo, ex auctoritate Apostoli ad Romanos, undecimo capitulo, et ex expositione Nicolai, scilicet, [Romans 11:16] “si delibatio sancta et massa”; ubi ostensum fuit quod sunt habiles et idonei ad proficiendum in Ecclesia Dei in scientia et doctrina et in moribus et disciplina, postquam fuerint ad fidem vere conversi, magis quam illi qui ex gentilitate convertuntur noviter ad fidem Christi.’ Oropesa quoted Lyra’s interpretation of these verses verbatim in Chapter 39, p. 495; and compare to *Biblia sacra cum glossis interlineari et ordinaria...* 6 vols. (Venice: Societas Bibliopolorum, 1588), 6, fol. 25G. On Lyra’s commentary regarding this verse see, (Klepper 2007; Ryan 2007, pp. 167–81; Yisraeli 2014, pp. 202–3).
- ³⁰ Oropesa cleverly links this argument to Paul’s admonition to the gentiles not to boast over the broken branches (Romans 11:17–20), invoking the *Glossa ordinaria*’s explanation that Paul’s warning targeted precisely the sin of *superbia* – thereby again connecting the language of Romans 11 to that of the *non neophytum* principle through the mediation of medieval commentators. Compare *Lumen*, p. 668, and *Biblia sacra cum glossis...*, vol. 6, 25E.

- ³¹ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 669; fol. 173.v a-b: ‘Licet enim fuerint in sua infidelitate iudaice cecitatis indurati et obstinati, ac velut gelu durissimi constricti, tamen, si Deus per interiorem vocationem et spiritualem unctionem emollierit corda eorum ad fidem et devotionem, tanto erunt utiliores Ecclesie et aptiores ad proficiendum in ea, postquam fuerint effecti fideles, quanto fuerunt ante inimiciores et ad nocendum promptiores, dum essent obstinati infideles, ac si gelu liquefiat et convertatur in aquas; quia quantum nocebat constringendo et urendo, dum esset gelu, tanto postmodum proficiet postquam liquefieret irrigando et liniendo.’ On the use of *heart* as a pervasive corporeal metaphor in the *Lumen*—articulating both the inviolability of the inner conscience and the unity of the Christian community—see (Pascua Echegaray 2025).
- ³² Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 669; fol. 173.v b: ‘Et sic est de Iudeis, dum manserint in infidelitate sue cecitatis, quia tunc plurimum nocent Ecclesie Dei, velut quodam nocivum et durissimum gelu, sicut declaratum fuit satis abunde superius, a capitulo vigesimo tertio usque ad vigesimum sextum capitulum; postquam vero fuerint ad fidem conversi multum proficere possunt in Ecclesia, velut aqua liquefacta et defluens ex transacto durissimo gelu iam resoluta.’
- ³³ The Latin version (flante Deo concrecit gelu et rursum latissimae funduntur aquae) is quite different from the Hebrew מִשְׁמַת־אֵל יִתְקַרְרָה; וְרוּחַב מִים בְּמוֹצֵק, which reads in the ESV: ‘By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast.’
- ³⁴ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 669; fol. 174.r a: ‘An Paulus gelu non erat, qui acceptis epistolis Damascum pergens, in corde fidelium quia in terra iactata verbi semina ne ad perfectionem operum surgerent restinguere querebat? Sed gelu hoc in aqua rediit, quia quos persequendo prius premere studuit, hos postmodum fluentis sancte exhortationis infudit, ut tanto uberius electorum messis exurgeret, quanto hanc imber Dei etiam ab ore persecutoris irrigaret’. See the source (Gregorius 1985, Lib. XXVII, cap. XXIX, 53, p. 1373).
- ³⁵ Gregory read this verse as part of a larger textual unit (book 27, which begins in Job 36:22) that prophesied about the spread of the Christian faith. In this context, Gregory interpreted God’s blowing as the awakening of faith in the hearts of the gentiles, which in turn evoked envy in the hearts of the Jews, i.e., the congealing of the ice. Yet, in a short while God has melted that ice, turning the Jewish persecutors into abundant pouring waters—meaning, preachers of the true faith. Gregory invokes here other biblical images of ice, from Ecclus. 3:15; Ps. 126:4; Ps. 147:18.
- ³⁶ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 670; fol. 174.r a: ‘Sicut enim littera occidit, ita spiritus vivificat (Secunda ad Corinthios, tertio), quia spiritualiter facit intelligere et adimplere quod littera precipit, sicut Glossa ordinaria dicit ibidem. Si ergo littera que occidebat in infidelitate, convertatur in spiritum vivificantem, per fidem vivificavit eum, qui convertitur, quia faciet eum idoneum novi testamenti ministrum; sicut ibidem premitit Apostolus, dicens: Qui idoneos nos fecit novi testamenti ministros, non littera, sed spiritu. Deinde vero vivificavit etiam multos alios per illum, quos ille lucravit Deo’. Oropesa was presumably referring to the following gloss: ‘Et sic litera sine spiritu adiuvante occidit. Dum vero adest vivificans spiritus, hoc ipsum intus conscriptum facit diligere, quod foris scriptum lex faciebat timeri.’ *Biblia sacra cum glossis interlineari*, vol. 6, fol. 64F.
- ³⁷ On Marcos García de Mora, “the Bachelor,” and his use of the letter-spirit antithesis, see (Tritle 2015; Tritle 2024). For a broad overview of this trope in anti-Jewish traditions, see (Nirenberg 2013, chaps. 2–3).
- ³⁸ On Torquemada, see (Torquemada 2023, ch. 15, pp. 173, 177).
- ³⁹ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 670; fol. 174.r b: ‘Unde Apostolus hanc causam dicit maxime esse utilem ad proficiendum Ecclesie Dei, scilicet, nosse scripturas veteris testamenti, etiam ante conversionem, et esse in illis nutritum, sicut fuerat Timotheus, cui scribit et dicit (Secunda ad Timotheum, tertio): Quia ab infantia sacras litteras nosti, qui te possunt instruere ad salutem, per fidem que est in Christo Iesu. Omnis enim scriptura divinitus inspirata, utilis est ad docendum, ad arguendum, ad corripiendum, ad erudiendum in iustitia, ut perfectus sit homo Dei ad omne opus bonum instructus’.
- ⁴⁰ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 671; fol. 174.r b: ‘Ecce quantum prosit habere notitiam veteris testamenti, quia talis notitia littere, postquam fuerit spiritualiter intellecta, ut dicit Glossa, est magna facultas ad proficiendum, quoniam potest instruere ad salutem, et perfectum reddere hominem Dei ad omne opus bonum instructum.’ *Biblia sacra cum glossis interlineari et ordinaria*, vol. 6, fols. 125E-F: ‘Multum signat prodesse vet. te. habere notitiam, ubi Christi persona et incarnatio insinuatur, quae ad salutem hminum valet.’
- ⁴¹ Jerome, *Epistola 53 (Ad Paulinum presbyterum de omnibus divinae historiae libris)*. This letter was frequently attached as a prologue to medieval Bibles; see for example *Biblia sacra cum glossis interlineari et ordinaria*, vol. 1, fols. 10A-19D: ‘Cur Paulus apostolus vas electionis? Nempe quia vas Legis et Scripturarum Sanctarum armarium.’
- ⁴² Oropesa also invokes in this context the image of the vessel of honor from II Timothy 2:21.
- ⁴³ Aquinas (2012). On this prologue, see (Froehlich 2009, pp. 28–29; Ryan 2007; Reinhardt 2016).
- ⁴⁴ The standard Larcher-Mortensen translation may give the impression that Aquinas counted Paul’s commentary on Scripture as one of the reasons for calling him *vas electionis*, since it renders *sensum Scripturae tradendo* as ‘by handing down the meaning of the Scriptures.’ However, reading the phrase in its full context—‘Tertio portavit non solum ad praesentes sed etiam ad absentes et futuros, sensum Scripturae tradendo, secundum illud Is. VIII, 1: sume tibi librum grandem et scribe in eo stilo hominis’—it becomes clear that the ‘Scriptures’ Aquinas refers to are Paul’s own epistles, not the Old Testament. The phrase should therefore be rendered: ‘by handing down his thought through writing.’ See (Aquinas 2012), Prologue, p. 2.
- ⁴⁵ On Pablo’s image of Paul, see (Yisraeli 2024) and the bibliography cited there.

- ⁴⁶ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 673; 174.v b—175.r a: ‘quod, sicut de Paulo et aliis Iudeis antiquitus contigit, sicut nunc beatus Gregorius retulit, sic quoque nostris temporibus multoties contingit in eodem populo Iudeorum, quod multi convertuntur ad fidem et ex infidelibus pessimis, fiunt veri catholici et fideles predicatorum; sic etiam successive contigit usque ad finem mundi, sicut iam superius, capitulo vicesimo sexto declaravi; licet autem ceciderint a vera fide, si tamen non permanserint in incredulitate, iterum inserentur in ea, tanquam in optimam olivam, ex qua fracti sunt, ut fructum optimum dent in ea. Potens est enim Deus iterum inserere illos, sicut scribit Apostolus ad Romanos, undecimo capitulo.’
- ⁴⁷ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 674; fol. 175.r a: ‘Et sic patet quod huiusmodi indispositio, vel non idoneitas, est minor in neophytis ex Iudeis conversis et maior in his qui ex gentilibus convertuntur ad fidem, qui numquam habuerunt scientiam legis et prophetarum, nec nutriti fuerunt in doctrina morum ad hec pertinentium, sicut illi qui convertuntur ex Iudeis; qui per hoc, postquam per Spiritum Sanctum fuerint vere conversi, possunt facilius et abundantius doceri in vera fide et moribus christianis, et etiam aliis proficere in eisdem’.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 674; fol. 175.r a-b: ‘Nam, sicut beatus Leo scribit in sermone sexto de Ieiunio: Multum utilitatis evangelicis sanctionibus prebet doctrina legalis, cumque de mandato veteri ad novam observantiam transferuntur, et ex ipsa ecclesiastica devotione monstratur, quod Dominus noster, Iesus Christus non venit legem solvere, sed implere; cessantibus enim significationibus, quibus Salvatoris nostri nuntiabatur adventus, et peractis figuris, quas abstulit ipsa presentia veritatis, ea que, vel ad regulas morum, vel ad simplicem Dei cultum ratio pietatis instituit, in eadem apud nos forma in qua sunt condita perseverant, et, que utrique testamento erant congrua, nulla sunt commutatione variata.’
- ⁴⁹ For English translation of this source, see (Leo the Great 1995, p. 63).
- ⁵⁰ On the Ember Days, see (Willis 1964; Talley 1990; Verstreppe 1993; Stökl Ben Ezra 2003a; Stökl Ben Ezra 2003b; Hayward 2017).
- ⁵¹ A notable example of an authority insisting on the Jewish precedents of these holy days is Guillaume Durandus. See (Durandus 2012) vol. 5, book six, pp. 53, 66. It is worth noting that in the *Golden Legend* (*Legenda Aurea*), Jacobus de Voragine provides a multifaceted structure of eight distinct explanations for the fasts. Within this schema, the connection to Judaism is mentioned but treated as a minor, secondary point, while the overwhelming majority of the text prioritizes physical, medical, and cosmic reasons.
- ⁵² *Decretum Gratiani*, Pars I, Distinctio LXXVI, ante c. 7. Gratian introduces his own commentary (*dictum*) to firmly draw the line: ‘Primum uero mensem, quartum, septimum, et decimum, non Ebreorum ratione debemus accipere, sed nostra’. He immediately follows this statement with St. Jerome’s commentary on Zechariah 8:19 (c. 7), demonstrating that while the Hebrew fasts were historical markers of national mourning, the Roman Rite operates on a separate, natural logic. As for Aquinas, see *Scriptum super Sententiis*, book IV, distinction 15, question 3, article 3, *solutio* and *ad 4*, where he explicitly adopts Gratian’s framework. In the *Summa* he further states that ‘the Church keeps the Ember fasts, neither at the very same time as the Jews, nor for the same reasons.’ See *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 147, a. 5, ad 2.
- ⁵³ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 674; fol. 175.r b: ‘Ex quibus verbis beati Leonis, aperte patet quod, sicut superius est dictum, illi qui convertuntur ex Iudeis ad fidem, multum sunt habiles et dispositi ad bonum, tam in scientia et doctrina, quam in moribus et vivendi disciplina; maxime illi qui ante habuerunt scientiam legis et prophetarum, que multum attestatur evangelio Christi et eius sanctissime legi, et multum quoque utilitatis affert fidelibus Christi ad regulas morum vite et discipline, sicut ex auctoritate beati Leonis nunc patuit. Nam evangelizato eis solummodo Christo et his que ad fidem et sacramenta pertinent, intellectis, creditis et mutatis, cetera omnia manent, prout erant, et tam ad fidem Christi quam ad mores et vitam suorum fidelium, plurimum deserviunt et adiuvant, et ideo multum et etiam faciliter possunt adiuvari in fide et moribus huiusmodi conversi ex iudaismo; et alios quoque docere et adiuvere, postquam fuerint veri fideles effecti ex doctrina et vita transacta, dum essent Iudei.’
- ⁵⁴ See note 17 above.
- ⁵⁵ Yisraeli (2023b); and see also the insightful discussion in Glazer-Eytan (2020).
- ⁵⁶ Ms. BNF Espagnol 356, fol. 5v. On this treatise, see (Orfali 1999).
- ⁵⁷ See notes 4–5 above. Oropesa, of course, explicitly and forcefully condemned Judaization throughout the *Lumen*, lending his full support to its canonical and civil prosecution. The question, however, was how it should be defined.
- ⁵⁸ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 675; fol. 175.r b—175.v a: ‘...que omnia de Iudeis ad fidem Christi vere conversis sunt vera nunc pro tempore nostro, in quo etiam experientia docente vidimus in partibus nostris multos ex genere Iudeorum conversos ad fidem Christi evasisse in parvo tempore magnos doctores et moribus et vita maxime compositos et ornatos; fuisse quoque ex eis aliquos in Ecclesia episcopos et prelatos, multum utiles et exemplares Ecclesie et eius fidelibus, tam in moribus et vita, quam in scientia et doctrina, eo, scilicet, quod ante, dum erant Iudei, fuerunt nutriti in scientia legis et prophetarum; quorum tamen neminem vidimus ex his qui ad fidem convertuntur ex gentilitate, scilicet, ex mahometica secta, et sue infidelitatis errore; eo quod tales, si qui sunt, numquam habuerunt scientiam legis et prophetarum, neque vixerunt secundum instituta eorum, sed potius e contrario rudes et inmundi ac male morigerati; et ideo non sunt docibiles ad doctrinam evangelicam et ad eius scientiam et vitam; neque habiles ita faciliter ad proficiendum in ea Ecclesie Dei, sicut illi qui convertuntur ex iudaismo, si vere et fideliter convertantur, prout nunc fuit dictum.’

- ⁵⁹ Oropesa, *Lumen*, p. 677; 176.r a: ‘Verumtamen, si huiusmodi littera deformata, que eos occidit dum manent in infidelitate, conversa fuerit in spiritum vivificantem per interiorem vocationem et spiritualem fidei illuminationem in istis sic induratis et obstinatis, cum eos docet et trahit ad veram fidem, tunc dicta littera, que ante eis erat blasphema, fit spiritualis ac fidelis et vera omnis illa scientia legis et prophetarum, que ante erat in eis infidelis et falsa, et eos decipiebat et damnabat. Et sic fluunt ex gelu aque largissime et fiunt huiusmodi sic conversi ad fidem Christi multum utiles Ecclesie Dei, sicut ante erant pestiferi et nocentes ei.’

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