Scholars inclined to consider European Jews and Christians of the central Middle Ages find themselves in the enviable position of being able to do so from an excellent vantage point, the legitimately praised shoulders of giants, among whom Robert Chazan is eminent. Within the landscape he has helped render accessible, I propose to pursue a path exploring the ways it may, or may not, have contributed to the road map of intolerance that emerged in and came to characterize postmillennial Europe. More specifically, I wish to add the theme of the *imago Dei* to the list of topoi, hermeneutical tools, and social scaffolding that were active in the organization of Christendom from the mid-eleventh century onward. For even as the notions of *natura* and *ratio*, logic, law, literacy, bureaucracy, and money entered western thought and praxis, so too did the concept of the *imago Dei*, and with great force. Although Augustine (d. 430) had devoted much interpretation to the passage of Genesis (1:26) in which man is held to have been made in the image of God, this biblical passage and others dealing more or less explicitly with the creation of man did not again attract substantial Christian scholarship until the twelfth century.¹

¹ The relevant scriptural passages on the creation of man in the image of God are: Genesis 1:26–27 (the creation account); 5:1, 3 (the transmission of the image from Adam to posterity); 9:6 (the doctrine of the image relative to homicide); 1 Corinthians 11:7 (discussion of headship in the family); Colossians 3:10 (exhortations to the believer to put on the new man); and James 3:9 (treatment of the proper use of the tongue). Psalm 8 does not contain the words “image of God,” but the passage deals in poetic form with the creation of man and the area of his dominion, as does, to a certain extent, Heb. 2:6–8. I owe this excellent tableau to Charles Lee Feinberg, “The Image of God,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129 (1972): 235–246, at p. 236. Twelfth-century Christian exegesis focused particularly on Genesis 1:26–27, on the Psalms, and particularly on the Pauline letters, 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15–17; and Hebrews 1:2, 3, where Paul enunciated the notion that Christ was the image of God.

Within that century, however, there were few scholars who did not, at some point in their exegetical, theological, polemical, or legal writings invoke and consider the creation of man in the image of God.²

The question of whether Jews were made in the image of God is not one I have found directly addressed in medieval texts. In laying out the reasoning which inspired this essay, I will follow the semantic map covered by the twelfth-century Christian exegesis of the *imago Dei*, and argue that its radical Christological and incarnational components came to complicate the Jewish question considerably. Where the *imago Dei* posits Christ as *Ratio* in the ontological constitution of mankind, Jews may be seen as lacking humanity and the human ability to think rationally, a point made vociferously by Peter the Venerable.³ Furthermore, Christian thought about the *imago Dei* also led, in conjunction with the eucharistic debate, to a semiotic of immanence, whereby signs were no longer valued primarily for what they signified, that is, otherworldly ideas, but also for their own material content and signifying modes. The eucharistic sign was a case in point, an exceptional one for sure but one that realigned signification away from transcendence and toward immanence, ushering in a mediatic turn by enabling material modes as representative of reality. Signs of identity, badges, images, and heraldic emblems flooded twelfth-century European society.⁴ In the midst of this rehabilitation of the material, Christians came to face their own carnal thinking. In this context, although they accused Jews of taking signs for things, it was ultimately they, and not the Jews, who took man for God, sign for truth. I submit that confronted with their own semiotic logic of the Eucharist, of the *imago Dei*, and of truth, Christian thinkers faced an impasse, and came to deploy the hermeneutical Jew as a probe of the implications of their own carnal thinking.⁵ The argument that incarnational thinking was problematic for twelfth-century Christian theologians and fueled their

³ See below, note 52.