



DIVIDED SOULS

CONVERTS
FROM
JUDAISM
IN GERMANY,
1500-1750

**ELISHEVA
CARLEBACH**

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in Germany, 1500–1750

Elisheva Carlebach

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Oma Esther
Babby Maud
Savta Jean
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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction	1
1. The Medieval Legacy: Converts in the Culture of Ashkenaz	11
2. The Lost Crown of Synagoga: Converts from Judaism in Medieval Christendom	33
3. The Turning Point: The Sixteenth Century	47
4. The Last Deception: Conversion and the Endtime	67
5. Writing the Divided Self: Convert Autobiography	88
6. The Professions of Conversion	124
7. Conversion and Rupture of the Family	138
8. Conversion, Language, and Identity	157
9. Revealing the Secrets of Judaism: The Literature of Jewish Ceremonial	170
10. Representation and Rivalry: Jewish Converts and Christian Hebraists	200
11. Conclusion: Converts in the Age of Enlightenment	222
Appendix: The Conversion Autobiography of Friedrich Albrecht Christiani	235
Notes	243
Bibliography	289
Index	319

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Hebrew prayer against converts	27
2. A Jew hanging between dogs	41
3. Antonius Margaritha's <i>Entire Jewish Faith</i>	57
4. Preaching to the Jews of Rome	60
5. The "Red Jews" advancing	72
6. Sabbatai Zevi, false messiah	77
7. Sabbatai Zevi, great deceiver and false messiah	78
8. Unconverted and converted Jews	96
9. Young Jews at a baptism ceremony	107
10. Christ versus the devil at the baptismal font	108
11. Ave Maria and alphabet in Hebrew	165
12. Priestly blessings and penitential flagellation	186
13. Kapparot and other Jewish rituals	187
14. Matzah-baking scene	188
15. Sukkot (Tabernacles)	189
16. Marriage procession	190
17. Immersion after menstruation	191
18. Divorce	192
19. Kapparot and penitential flagellation	194
20. Kapparot and penitential flagellation	195

21. A Jew wearing tefillin	196
22. Childbirth	210
23. Selig, <i>Der Jude</i> , title page.	224
24. The Torah in the Age of Enlightenment	225
25. Anonymous, <i>Rabinismus</i> , title page	233

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INTRODUCTION

What did it mean to be a Jew turned Christian in medieval and early modern Europe? Medieval religious usage borrowed the term *conversion* from the al/chemical sciences as a metaphor, in which one substance was changed into something utterly different by a mysterious process. Conceptions of transformation or rebirth had always informed the imagery of Christian conversion. In conversion to Christianity, divine grace transfigured the soul, created it anew, so that no residue of the earlier self remained. In German lands, from the sixteenth century, this belief in the indelible power of baptism began to erode in the case of Jewish converts. Christians believed that the Jewish nature of the converts inhered so deeply that no baptismal chrism could reconfigure it. These more fixed attitudes about their Jewishness form the backdrop for the voices and experiences of the converts in this book. Although they continued to refer to themselves as newborns, Christians saw them as “taufjuden,” baptized, but not truly converted.

Converts in the History of German Jewry

For the chronological scope of this book, I adopt the term “early modern” to denote a period which extends from the early sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century. In German history, these years form a distinct historical unit, bounded by Luther’s Reformation and the rapid expansion of print on one end and the rise of Prussia’s centralized state on the other. The linguistic-cultural concept of a German *Sprachraum* serves most conveniently in this period in lieu of a political unit. Although attitudes toward Jews and conversion varied from one small sovereign entity to another, theological and popular lay thinking on these issues often transcended such boundaries.

The forces for change in the sixteenth century overturned attitudes toward Jewish conversion that stemmed from centuries earlier, during the Crusades. The first crusaders violated the traditional tolerance of Jews that had prevailed in Christian Europe. Jews had lived securely as merchants, as subjects, and as neighbors among Christians. The confidence that German Jews had expressed prior to the First Crusade testified to their sense of belonging within their communities. The crusaders refused to regard the Jews as just another piece in the patchwork of

a multilayered feudal and corporate medieval society. Enemies of Christ, thorns in the body of Christendom: to the crusaders, Jews posed no less danger to Christian society than the fabled Moors from a distant land. While some individual Christians and some entire Christian communities justified Jewish trust by extending protection to their Jewish neighbors, in many instances burghers joined forces with crusaders, and bishops and princes threw up their hands in resignation. It appeared as though many elements in Christian society had reached a consensus with the most extreme pronouncements of crusader zeal. Christian society did not absorb this radical redefinition overnight; complete implementation of its consequences took centuries more. Implacable Christian foes of Jewish existence in Europe gradually implemented the ideas that had been unleashed by the violence of the crusaders. A voluminous literature exists about the place of Jews in the medieval Christian mind: demons, sorcerers, rapacious usurers and ritual murderers—the catalogue is endless and well known. Under the best of circumstances Jews were forced to live apart, to be marked as different, to earn a living in the most socially abhorrent manner; under the worst they were banned, expelled, libeled, condemned, and sentenced to collective death. There is far less material devoted to exploring the common spaces shared by Jews and Christians and their more quotidian exchanges with one another. Yet Jews and Christians had always interacted economically and socially. The possibility of leaving the Jewish fold, escaping the ranks of the scorned and detested, always existed for Jews.

The confrontation with the crusaders changed the definition of baptism of Jews in both the Christian and Jewish mind. Neither group could continue to view the baptism of Jews as a voluntary act that initiated a transformation of identity. The radical behavior of the crusaders turned baptism of Jews into a symbol of violent conflict. Since medieval Christian theologians did not vehemently oppose violent baptisms, such baptisms were ultimately accepted as legitimate, giving rise to a lingering popular suspicion that no true conversion had taken place—hence, the figure that was no longer a real Jew, yet not a real Christian, a counterfeit human being.

For Jews the change was just as extreme. Faced with the choice of conversion to a triumphalist Christianity or death, shocked Ashkenazic Jews idealized martyrdom and shunned conversion. The image of baptism inscribed in the Hebrew Crusade chronicles was one of violence, of violation, of the ultimate defilement of Jewishness. Leaders enjoined even the weakest Jews to counter the onslaught with active martyrdom; any lesser response left an ineradicable stain upon the Jewish soul. Over the next centuries, in episode after violent episode, a cruel choice was presented to the Jews of Europe: convert to Christianity or be

killed. The Jews of Ashkenaz subsequently reenacted the initial Jewish repudiation of baptism many times. Jewish sources repeated and reinforced the disdain for, and condemnation of, the converts.

Lewis Rambo has suggested that the very dramatic language of death and rebirth in Christianity helped form the Christian sense of conversion as a violent and dramatic process; that the old must die before the new can come into being.¹ While under the best of circumstances, conversion by members of a minority to the majority religion or culture proved difficult, medieval Jews traversed the psychological, communal, religious, and political distance from despised Other to the compact, and often persecuting, majority in a particularly traumatic and complex passage. The figure of the baptized Jew, the liminal Jew-Christian, stood at the margins of Jewish fears and Christian hostility.

Not until the period inaugurated by Luther's Reformation and the rise of German humanism did the medieval notion of absolute opposition, in which Jews and Christians stood poised as mortal foes until the end of time, give way to one in which the lines became less sharp. Historians have long viewed the Reformation as the distinctive event that shaped German identity, as surely as political moments shaped the identities of other European nations. Even without subscribing to that view, the development of the German language and its standardization through print, the growth of German literature, the humanist movement in German lands, and the confessionalization of German society all lent force to the emergence of a sense of national character and identity without a congruent political entity. The early modern centuries that form the chronological center of this book transformed notions of identity and community for Christians in German lands as well as for Jews.

This book attempts a close reading of the conversion experience of Jews in early modern German lands for what it can teach us about Christian self-definition and Jewish identity in German lands, and about those Jews who crossed the boundary-lines. Jews who converted voluntarily to Christianity in the early modern period experienced profound unease and discomfort with their indeterminate status. Although they abjured their Jewish religion, elements of their Jewish identities remained, and they asserted that their Jewishness formed a positive component of their new identities. In doing so, converts reversed the state of absolute opposition that had characterized medieval Jewish-Christian relations.

In their quest to find acceptance and forge a sense of community, converts to Christianity in early modern German lands turned out an enormous body of literature, much of it autobiographical. I have tried to let them speak in their own voices wherever possible. Their need to find individual accommodation between their own conflicted Jewish and Christian selves prefigured the debate over the

place of Jews in modern European society. Historians of the Jews adopted a view of the converts similar to that of medieval Jewish communities. They regarded converts either as traitors, as a weak and dispensable element, or simply as lost souls whose choice to leave the fold excised them conclusively from Jewish history. They did not view converts as providing a usable past for modern Jews. While these judgments are valid in some cases, the collective historical influence of the converts was complex and enduring. They did not simply disappear within the majority. The barriers to swift assimilation made them the first German Jews to experience the consequences of a dual identity even after they had chosen to leave the confines of the Jewish community. The new obstacles they faced served to demonstrate that leaving Judaism for Christianity was never a simple transformation.

The World of Islam

The contrast between the Jewish experience of conversion to Christianity and that of Jews in another monotheistic universe of faith, Islam, could not be starker. Unlike the great theological weight attached to every conversion from Judaism in the Christian world, conversions of Jews in medieval Islam were regarded as more neutral events. With a few notable exceptions, Muslims did not exert particular pressure on medieval Jews to adopt Islam, nor did they engage in missionary activity among the Jews. In fact, no separate class of Muslim theologians existed for the primary purpose of fostering missionary activity. Rather, Muslim individuals such as soldiers, traders, and Sufi saints, as well institutions and intermarriage, accounted for the majority of converts to Islam.² Individuals from all ranks of Jewish society sometimes found it more convenient to join the ruling religion, with no hindrances to prevent them from doing so.³ As one eighteenth-century Jewish traveler noted, “The arabs will not debate matters concerning their religion neither among themselves nor with anyone else lest they be defeated and weakened in their faith. They do not urge anyone to adopt their religion but if a person is heard saying the words . . . ‘My Master Muhamad is God’s messenger,’ whether in jest or in error he has to convert or be burnt alive.”⁴

The only formal act required of sixteenth-century Jewish converts to Islam was to make a statement, not necessarily before an official body. Even for those who wished to make a formal declaration before the Kadi with two witnesses, the ceremonies on record show that the converts’ obligations were minimal. The convert had to prove that he was not a minor, and that he acted freely, without compulsion. Then the convert made two pronouncements, *shahadas*. One declaration affirmed belief in Allah and his prophets; the other, that the convert had “gone out of the Jewish religion” and would adhere to Islam from then on. The

convert then threw away the yellow turban, and from that moment he became a *muhtadi*, one who has come onto the right path. Many converts did not change their names, some even remained in the Jewish quarter. Moreover, conversion generally remained a marginal phenomenon which did not affect the internal life and conduct of the Jewish community.⁵

Because the Jews of medieval Islam had integrated more successfully into the rhythms of daily life of their Muslim neighbors, even an exceptional episode of violent coercion did not produce as deep an inner rupture as the same act engendered among Jews within Christendom. In cases where Muslims used force to effect conversion, Jews in the medieval Islamic milieu tended to pay lip service to Islam as a necessary, albeit temporary, stratagem for survival. Genizah scholar S. D. Goitein explained the seemingly negligible disruptive force of Jewish conversion to Islam under even the most traumatic circumstances as a product of their close interaction on a regular basis.⁶ Minorities living amidst a numerically overwhelming majority took part in the others' lives, "according to local custom and a natural, if unpredictable, intermingling of sensibility among populations living in the same place."⁷

During the twelfth-century Almohad conquest of southern Spain, forced conversion created a class of secret Jews with all the repercussions and permutations so familiar from the later, more pervasive instance of the Iberian Marranos. Sephardic Jewish leaders reacted by creating a literature of consolation rather than of scorn, vigorously refuting Jewish attitudes that repudiated forced converts to Islam.⁸

Nehemiah Levtzion has emphasized another aspect of Jewish conversion to Islam. Jews converting under coercion to Islam generally converted as a community. Unlike those of Ashkenaz, they tended to retain their communal structure even under circumstances of coerced conversion. Assimilation of a community of converts within the Islamic world tended to be extremely slow even when it was willing; the pace was even slower when it was coerced. These circumstances allowed the community to develop collective strategies for survival. Few comparable instances occurred in Ashkenaz.

The core of the Sephardic strategy can be gleaned from Maimonides' directions to the community converted under duress.

I will specify here the proper way for a person to view himself in these days of coerced conversion: Anyone who cannot leave . . . must look upon himself as one who profanes God's name, not exactly willingly but almost so. At the same time he must bear in mind that if he fulfils a precept, God will reward him doubly . . . It is not right to alienate, scorn, and hate people

who desecrate the Sabbath . . . Do not despise the *poshe'a* (evildoer) in Israel when he comes to perform an observance secretly . . . 'for I will pardon those I allow to survive' [Jeremiah 50:20].⁹

The strategy articulated by Maimonides simply denied the efficacy of coerced conversion. While it was far from an ideal state of Jewish existence, the mechanism of conversion was meaningless. It left the Jewish status of the convert unaffected: the only thing that mattered was the forced violation of certain Jewish laws. Regardless of what the Muslims said or did, those commandments were still in full force vis-à-vis the unwillingly converted Jew. In this view, the mechanism of conversion to Islam, the *shahada*, the verbal proclamation that effected the transition was utterly meaningless. "*Ein kofin bo ki im al ha-dibbur bi-levad.*" The coercion amounted to pronouncement of empty words. Precisely because Maimonides regarded Islam as an imposter religion, he maintained that its conversion process meant nothing, and his influence dominated the Sephardic posture toward coercive conversion. Both *taqiyya* and marranism, pretenses of apostasy, constitute subversive rejections of violent conversions. (Halakhic evaluations of these acts constitute a separate and complex subject.)

The lack of any expectation that Jewish converts to Islam serve a special theological purpose stands in greatest contrast to the experience of Jewish converts to Christianity. While converts from Judaism in Christian lands were employed as particularly effective and knowledgeable missionizers, no similar expectation existed for Jewish converts to Islam. In the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church reaffirmed its commitment to train new converts, "so that from those [who have lately converted] shall come forth workers suitable for the work of the Gospel, who will be able to preach the mysteries of the Christian faith in every land where Jews and other infidels dwell."¹⁰ Conversely, when Christians began to reconquer Spain and large numbers of Muslims converted to Christianity, the "Christians did not, by and large, experience the Muslims as jurists, theologians, philosophers, and political theorists. They experienced them as a social community, . . . with whom they had to deal."¹¹ Only the relationship between Judaism and Christianity produced the expectation that converts from Judaism would play a special role.

Converts from Judaism occupied a preeminent place in the imaginations of both Jews and Christians, and their singular status made the smooth integration of first-generation converts an impossibility. Converts served the Jewish-Christian confrontation not only in discrete practical capacities, but as a trope, a figure of the imagination onto which beliefs and fears concerning Jews were projected. The argument of Sander Gilman, that in reacting to converts, early

modern Christians were projecting their deepest fears and beliefs concerning Jews, helps to explain why different Christian societies regarded converts from Judaism in distinctive ways.

Iberian Divergences

The late medieval Christian society that confronted the question of Jewish converts on the grandest scale was the Iberian. In the late fifteenth century, Spain and Portugal were moving toward political consolidation, national unity, and religious homogeneity. For our purposes, it remains most instructive to note how Jews of Spain and Portugal absorbed the conversion ethos of their Judeo-Muslim past, rather than the Judeo-Christian present. The vast legal and procedural literature, as well as the corpus of halakhic material concerning converted Jews that developed in Iberia, present rich sources for historians seeking to understand the politics of mass conversion and the persistence of Jewish identity. The sheer number of conversions in Iberia, along with the naked use of coercion, are unparalleled in scale for any other Jewish community at any other time or place.

Despite the uniqueness of scale, there are certain features of the Iberian conversion experience which can be instructive in a comparative context. The pressure on Iberian Jews to convert left no party under the illusion that most converts had experienced spiritual epiphanies. Consequently, "old" Christians believed that Jewish mental structures and social habits continued even after the historical cessation of professing Judaism. The Inquisitors formulated a definition of Judaizing which emphasized a set of practices rather than beliefs. This led to the ultimate rejection of the converts and their descendants by that society. The lines of continuity and contact between Iberian Inquisitors of the Dominican order and their counterparts in German lands will be explored below.

Italian Parallels

Of all the Jewish communities in western Europe, Italian Jewry paralleled German Jewry most closely in demographic structure and political predicament. In both German and Italian lands, a loose constellation of independent cities and autonomous principalities each regarded Jews within the local context. Jews lived in relatively large numbers in some Italian cities, and dispersed more thinly throughout other regions, particularly the north. Papal control over a vast area, combined with the Catholic Church's ambiguous message of contemptuous toleration of Jews, complicated the picture of Jewish conversion in Italian lands. The constant interference by other powers, particularly Spain, as they gained hegemony over Italian cities, further knotted the strands of influence.¹² Jews, as well as their tormentors, easily crossed the borders between northern Italian and

southern German lands. The late fifteenth-century ritual murder case of Simon of Trent, in which the prosecutors accused the Jews of Regensburg of having conspired with those of Trent, provides a case in point.

From the sixteenth century, fear of the growing strength of Protestantism led the Catholic Church to the polemical barricades. During the years of the Council of Trent, the church designated conversion of Jews as one of the hallmarks of true Christianity and undertook a highly organized drive to convert Jews.¹³ While not all historians agree with Kenneth Stow that conversionary zeal lay at the core of all papal Jewry policy after the Pope issued the bull *Cum nimis absurdum* in 1555, it is indisputable that the Catholic Church engaged in more vigorous missionary activity than ever before. The establishment of Houses of Catechumens in Rome, Venice, Modena, and other cities by the Catholic Church, the introduction of an Inquisition, and the institution of forced missionary sermons, all aided the effort to bring Jews to Christianity.

In addition to external religious pressure, Jews in Italy followed cultural and intellectual paths to conversion. Ideas which seeped through the porous ghetto walls served as a cause of subtle internal erosion of Jewish faith. During the Renaissance, Jewish intellectuals mingled with Christians, learned from their classical texts, taught them Hebrew and Kabbalah, and some ultimately converted. These figures include Immanuel Tremellius, Sixtus Senensis, and Paul Eustachius. Their existence suggests that the pressures on Italian Jews to convert were not all related to church initiatives.¹⁴ While there are no firm overall numbers for any land, the lists and records that do survive suggest that the rate of Jewish conversion to Christianity from the second half of the sixteenth century in Italy was relatively high.¹⁵

As in early modern German lands, conversion from Judaism in Italy through the eighteenth century was not a ticket for Jews wishing to assimilate rapidly into the highest social circles of Christian society.¹⁶ Renata Segre suggests that the combined pressures of secular and ecclesiastical authorities, relentless harassment in the form of forced preaching, abduction of children, and other threats tended to induce the most vulnerable individuals to convert.¹⁷ This may explain why most converts in Italy did not rise to positions of power or prestige. Apart from service in the church itself, they did not follow an easy path toward integration into Catholic society. After expending an extraordinary amount of resources to achieve conversions, Italian Catholic society did remarkably little with the converts.¹⁸ Even in cases of noble or wealthy Jewish origins, and prestigious godparents, Italian converts from Judaism could not marry into good society.¹⁹ It is unclear whether this was a cause or an effect of Christian attitudes toward the converts. The suspicion that converts emerged from the lower classes of Jewish

society may have influenced Christian attitudes toward them; continuing discrimination even after baptism may have prevented more well-born Jews from being enticed by conversion. Like their German counterparts, many Italian neophytes earned from their conversions merely a license to beg; one even specialized in the unmasking of rival neophytes whose licenses were false. Some converts carved out niches for themselves as censors of Hebrew books, and then as cataloguers of collections which came into Christian hands.²⁰ A few became teachers of Hebrew, like their German counterparts who looked to academic careers in which they could make use of their backgrounds. For both Italian and German converts, designation of their convert status formed part of their Christian biography, effectively integrating their Jewish origins into their new Christian identities.

English Reticence

Converts from Judaism in the history and imagination of England have been the subject of several recent innovative studies. James Shapiro's *Shakespeare and the Jews*, Todd Endelman's *Radical Assimilation*, and Michael Ragussis' *Figures of Conversion* each contribute to our understanding of the formation of English identity, Jewishness as a foil to the emerging sense of Englishness, and the problematics of conversion within this context.²¹ For centuries after the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290, no professing Jews resided in England. Jews remained in the cultural and literary imaginations of the English, although no Jewish community existed to lend reality to these images. The deep fears of the English regarding Jews took on particular characteristics. For the English, the Jew was circumciser, waiting to carve the flesh of Christians, most famously embodied in Shylock and his pound of flesh.

The first Jews to return to England did so under cover of secrecy. Baptized Spanish and Portuguese Marranos settled in Protestant England, believing themselves secure from the common enemy, Spain. Once they received tacit permission from Cromwell to live as Jews, their numbers gradually grew. The former Marranos who founded the Sephardic Jewish community in London embraced the culture and society of England, having been educated in non-Jewish environments in Iberia. Ashkenazic Jews appeared in large numbers in England from the late seventeenth century. As they prospered, many members of the most successful classes began a climb into English society that led to conversion and intermarriage with Christians. Todd Endelman, who characterized this trajectory as a process of "drift and defection," noted that "English Jews who converted almost never recorded their reasons for doing so—unlike their counterparts in German-speaking lands."²² Moreover, once converted, they found few obstacles

to complete integration into English society, unlike converted Jews in German lands.

This book focuses on the dynamics of Jewish conversion to Christianity in German lands in the two centuries after the Reformation. The writings of converts from Judaism illuminate and give individual voice to the world they left, the world they entered, and the unabating tensions between them. The converts played a central role in shaping the images of Jews and Judaism held by Christians, the self-perception of Jews, and the internalization of the Christian critique by German Jews.

The first chapter traces the image of converts from Judaism in the medieval Ashkenazic tradition. The Jewish community portrayed converts as emerging from marginal elements of Jewish society, although kinship and property often necessitated ties between converts and Jews. The second introduces medieval Christianity and its periodic obsession with obtaining converts from Judaism. Christian authorities expended resources to secure Jewish converts in far greater proportion than they did for any other group. Medieval Jews who converted often played public roles in advancing the anti-Jewish polemic at critical junctures. Medieval Jewish and Christian society essentially repudiated the person and the motives of the converts. The third and fourth chapters assess some of the changes in early sixteenth-century German society that brought converts widespread public notice. The central role of converts and the wide dissemination of converts' writings were propelled by the Reformation and confessionalization of early modern German lands. The attendant eschatological expectation in the Christian world, messianic movements in the Jewish world, and the rapid rise of inexpensive print all set the stage for the emergence of converts into public awareness. Chapters 5–8 analyze the journey of early modern converts through the thicket of conflicting perceptions of their motives and their attempts to construct new identities and find new communities. The converts produced a variety of autobiographical texts, the primary sources for penetrating their world. These texts illuminate the Jewish childhoods of the converts, their social and intellectual status, and their experiences of the process of conversion. I have attempted to trace their subsequent successes or failures to integrate into Christian society, the lingering economic, linguistic, and social barriers, through their own writing. Chapters 9 and 10 address the extensive literature of representation of Judaism written by the converts, the new contours they introduced into the Jewish-Christian polemic, and their role in the leading legal and cultural controversies of their time. Chapter 11 concludes with the ambiguities and changes in position of the converts in the Age of the Enlightenment and beyond.

Chapter 1

THE MEDIEVAL LEGACY

Converts in the Culture of Ashkenaz

Although he has sinned, he remains a Jew.

Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin: 44a

The apostate to idolatry is like a non-Jew in all respects.

Maimonides, Hilkhot Avodah Zara, 2:4

“Forced Conversion of the Local Jews, But Business as Usual”?¹ Historian S. D. Goitein chose this caption to introduce an episode of forced conversion of a medieval Islamic Jewish community. It resembles the formulation of Maimonides in his Epistle on Martyrdom: “From the day we were exiled from our land persecution (*shmad* = forced conversion) has been our unending lot, ‘Because from our youth it has grown along with us like a father and has directed us from our mother’s womb.’”² These expressions of conversion as exilic “business as usual” could never have been used to announce similar events among the Jews of medieval Christian Europe. The medieval Jews of Ashkenaz never regarded conversion by a Jew to Christianity, regardless of the circumstances, as “usual business.”

If there is one issue that represents the difference between the historical experience of the Jews of Ashkenaz (whose primary cultural influence was the Christian world) and that of the Jews of Sepharad (primarily developed within the Muslim world) through the ages, it is their reaction when faced with coerced conversion. With significant exceptions on both sides, the ideal response in Ashkenaz was martyrdom, while the prototypical response in Sepharad was *taqiyya*, or marranism, the pretense of apostasy until the persecution passed. Since the meaning of Jewish conversions in early modern German lands, the subject of this book, can only be understood within the context of the medieval Ashkenazic legacy, it is important to know why these conversions called up such a rich fund of negative associations among Jews.

The historical and cultural forces that shaped Jewish perceptions of conversion to Christianity in the medieval world all but precluded a view of conversion as a spiritual odyssey. The repeated bitter experience of violent compulsion to baptism contributed to the absolute rejection of conversion by Jews of Ashkenaz and turned willing converts into renegade figures regarded with the greatest loathing and derision. These Jews regarded baptism as a betrayal of communal values, a rejection of Jewish destiny, a submission to the illusory verdict of history. The very terminology used to designate converts from Judaism speaks most eloquently of the posture of that community toward converts. Ashkenazic Jews most frequently used the term *meshummad*, from the root *shmad*, meaning utter destruction, and implying the absolute loss of that soul from the Jewish community.³ In the words of one Ashkenazic grammarian, “The root derives from ‘to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate.’ We call a Jew who converts ‘meshummad’ because the phenomenon of conversion began at a time of ‘shmad’ [violent coercion], and they were called meshummadim, that is to say, they converted under violent duress. Now, even when they convert willingly, the name has remained.”⁴ By contrast, the terms for converts from Judaism in the world of Islam, widely used in geniza material, derives from the root *pasha* (sin) in Hebrew.⁵

Neither members of the Jewish community nor fully excised from it, converts continued to play a significant role both in the imaginative life of the community as well as in its routine activities. Historian Jacob Katz included “the apostate” as one of the significant typological figures of the medieval Jewish community, albeit one who existed on the margins. A filter through which Jews and Christians mediated their images of one another, converts were the first to negotiate the increasingly rigid boundaries between these cultures and communities.

Early Literary Paradigms

The emergence of the convert to Christianity as an archetype of malevolence within medieval Ashkenazic culture can be traced to early medieval literary sources, including historical or quasi-historical narratives, chronicles, halakhic literature, and liturgical passages. Each of these records speaks in a different tone and context, each genre operating within a specific framework with different ground rules. Yet, they reflect existing attitudes and left their imprint on the historical consciousness of Ashkenazic Jews. These texts provide the historical or myth/historical grounding without which the communal, religious, and psychological dimensions remain inadequate for understanding conversion in early modern German lands.⁶

The Chronicle of Le Mans

One of the oldest European Jewish texts to transmit an image of a convert to Christianity is the late tenth-century *Chronicle of Le Mans*.⁷ In this narrative, an apostate from Judaism alleged that Jews, motivated by a compulsion to replay their crime against Jesus, attempted to harm their local count. The apostate then dangled the prospect before the count that once he eliminated the Jews, their property remained to be expropriated. While the author of the chronicle remains anonymous and the apostate eponymous, many of the characteristics of this apostate recurred in later depictions of converts.⁸ The text introduced the convert as an “offshoot of evil, of the root of the serpent,” a reference to the notion that apostates were born with tainted souls, inherently evil, never really part of the Jewish community. Nevertheless, even after the apostate in the narrative had committed his first evil deeds, the author commented on the apostate’s potential to revert to Judaism.⁹ The tension between the fixity and fluidity of their identity characterized depictions of apostates.

This chronicle depicted the apostate, like his successors, as motivated solely by opportunism and petty personal grievances, turning a personal vendetta against one Jew into implacable hatred of the entire people. The name, “Sehok ben Esther,” linked this text to the Purim story in the Book of Esther.¹⁰ If there was any question regarding the symbolic identity of the apostate, references to him as *tsar*, *oyev* (foe, enemy), terms reserved in the Book of Esther for Haman, leave no doubt. In this narrative, the apostate played the role that had traditionally been reserved for the greatest foe of the Jews, while the count played the secondary role of King of Persia, a willing dupe in the hands of a conniving villain.¹¹

In this early characterization we can already trace the transference onto a more vulnerable figure of Jewish anger against Christian rulers who controlled the Jewish fate completely. Jews imposed severe self-censorship on direct expressions of anger and betrayal. They could not afford to provoke Christian rulers who failed to maintain their explicit or implied promises of safety and security, because any negative expression could later be used as evidence that Jews harbored ill will toward their Christian protectors. In a process that developed over centuries and culminated in Josel of Rosheim’s sixteenth-century *Sefer ha-miknah*, converts became secondary targets of Jewish anger.

In another adumbration of the image and role of apostates, the villain in *The Chronicle of Le Mans* led Christians into the Jewish inner sanctum, claiming the unique role of revealing to Christians the secret Jewish spaces which he had already penetrated as a Jew. The apostate did not confine himself to one spe-

cific and easily refutable charge (concerning an effigy); he “revealed” that the seemingly innocent Jewish daily worship service was permeated by expressions of desire to harm Christians.¹² The apostate translated the popular Christian belief that Jews hated Jesus into Jewish hatred of all Christian authorities. This text reflected many of the *topoi* associated with the figure of a convert at the time it was written.

If this chronicle does in fact date back to the late tenth century, it can explain the tension concerning the status of converts that escalated in the course of the eleventh. According to historian of early Ashkenaz Avraham Grossman, “The number of Jews who converted to Christianity in that time [the eleventh century] is far greater than has generally been accepted by scholars.”¹³ These include Jews who converted because they were persuaded by Christian missionary activity or because they were attracted to Christian society for the whole gamut of reasons that inspired such crossing of boundaries. Grossman argues that, far from being a peripheral problem, conversion to Christianity was one of the most significant issues to face Jewish communities in pre-Crusade Northern Europe.

In the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Jews were coerced into baptism during the course of several violent anti-Jewish attacks.¹⁴ Several of the most eminent families in Ashkenaz suffered such baptisms within their ranks, most notably the son of R. Gershom, “Light of the Exile” of Mainz, and possibly Elhanan, son of R. Shimon of the noted Abun family.¹⁵ The ambiguous status assigned to these forced converts to Christianity in early eleventh-century sources is noteworthy, and may reflect the existence of willing converts, some of whom turned into malevolent apostates.

Concerning the coerced baptism of R. Gershom’s son, later sources preserve a testimony “that R. Gershom mourned for his son fourteen days [double the usual mourning period of seven days], as he had been baptized.”¹⁶ While this source implied that the forced conversion was what prompted the double period of mourning, it was understood differently by thirteenth-century rabbinic luminary R. Meir of Rothenburg. He discussed whether Jewish law mandated mourning the death of a child who had turned apostate: “There is no obligation to mourn an apostate who dies. . . . Even though R. Gershom mourned his son when he died for fourteen days, the law does not follow him, as he acted out of overwhelming grief.”¹⁷ Grossman conjectured that the son of R. Gershom apparently died or was killed shortly after the incident and did not have a chance to revert to Judaism. If this were so, the story could serve as an example of a popular perception in Ashkenaz that the taint of baptism overpowered all considerations of intention, contrary to the position of halakhic sources. It is R. Gershom to whom Rashi, towering scholar and communal leader of the late eleventh century,

attributed the prohibition against reminding reverted apostates of their prior status, “for whoever shall remind a person [that he had been baptized] should be subject to perpetual excommunication.”¹⁸ The vehemence of this prohibition implies that it was directed against contrary popular opinion in the community. The controversy over whether a *kohen* (man of priestly descent) who had become a Christian retained his priestly status when he reverted to Judaism similarly addressed the question of the potency of baptism, the pollution of the baptismal font, and the price of having lived as a Christian.¹⁹

Concerning the child from the Abun family, according to one tradition, he was kidnapped from his parental home as a small child and baptized. He later became a priest and rose through the ranks until he became pope. Toward the end of his life, he met his Jewish father, and in a dramatic denouement, repented and died a martyr.²⁰ Stories with these motifs reflect the Jewish fear of child baptisms against parental will, the conviction that baptized Jews became enemies of their own people, the fantasy that these souls might ultimately return, and the profound belief that martyrdom was the only appropriate response to coerced Christianity.²¹ These early sources laid the foundations for Jewish attitudes to both forced and willing converts in the shattering events that later engulfed the Jews of Ashkenaz.

Consolidation of a Discourse: The Crusade Chronicles

While it is difficult to determine on the basis of extant sources just how central a role the issue of conversion played for Jews of Europe during the eleventh century, the First Crusade in 1096 changed all that. During the eleventh century, one of rapid growth and change for northwestern Europe, Christian identity, piety, and consciousness intensified. The status of Jews, now the only conspicuous community of non-Christians living in medieval western Europe, changed decisively during the eleventh century. As the boundaries between the religious communities became more sharply delineated, the price of trying to negotiate them grew proportionately. Religious tensions erupted in violent attacks against Jews in some of the cities visited by Crusader bands. Confronted with the choice between baptism and death, many Jews chose death. Whether or not the Crusades can be considered a watershed in Jewish-Christian relations in Europe, they were certainly more deeply inscribed in the collective memory of medieval Ashkenazic Jewry than any other instance of persecution.²² Long after living memory of the events had faded, chronicles, elegies, memorial prayers, *Memorbücher*, and even tombstones perpetuated the memory of these events and served as a powerful internal polemic against baptism into Christianity even under extreme duress.²³

The Hebrew Crusade chronicles presented martyrdom as the ideal response to the threat of coerced baptism by the Crusaders. At first glance, the texts appear to convey a conflicting message concerning forced baptism. The chroniclers did not conceal the fact that Jews did not universally respond to the Crusaders with martyrdom. The longest of the chronicles, attributed to Shlomo bar Shimshon, contains several prominent references to Jews baptized by the Crusaders. For example, after recording the experience of some eight hundred martyrs in the city of Worms, the chronicler reported: "They left only a tiny remnant, whom they coerced and baptized against their will, with their putrid waters."²⁴ Similarly, in a report concerning the town of Moers: "Those who survived were putrified against their will, and they had their way with them."²⁵ The entire Jewish community of Regensburg was baptized, apparently at the initiative of the local burghers, who used this as a ruse to save their Jewish co-residents. After the Crusaders had passed, "they [the baptized Jews] returned immediately to the Lord . . . and greatly repented. For what they had done they had done under great duress. They could not stand up against the enemy and indeed the enemy did not wish to kill them. May our Rock forgive us our shortcomings."²⁶ The chronicle depicts the Jews who survived performing the greatest acts of compassion toward their martyred fellows. "The Hebrews who had been coerced came and took pity on them and wanted to bury them."²⁷ This chronicle even contains a passage defending the forced converts:

Now it is fitting to tell the praise of those forcibly converted. In all that they ate and drank they mortally endangered themselves. They slaughtered meat and removed the forbidden fat from it. They examined the meat according to rabbinic law. They did not drink *yayn nesekh*. They did not go to church except under duress. Every time they went, they went out of great compulsion and fear. They went reluctantly. The gentiles themselves knew that they had not converted wholeheartedly, but only out of fear of the Crusaders, and that they did not believe in their deity, but rather they clung to the fear of the Lord and held fast to the sublime God, creator of heaven and earth. In the sight of the gentiles they observed the sabbath properly and observed the Torah of the Lord secretly. Anyone who speaks ill of them insults the countenance of the Divine Presence.²⁸

The concluding passage betrays traces of resistance to portraying the baptized in a favorable light. The survivors who had not been baptized, or relatives of the martyrs, may have objected to the *anusim* (coerced converts) and argued that they should not be reintegrated into the Jewish community without penalty. Halakhic sources indicate that surviving Jews raised questions about the status of

the converts. The vehemence of this chronicle in defense of baptized Jews raises the question of whether its creator(s) might not have been among the baptized as well.²⁹

The need for justification and the positive portrayal of the figure of converts in Ashkenaz points to an existing, and contrary, literary and cultural tradition. Earlier persecutions in which Jews were forcibly baptized in Ashkenaz, including members of the several distinguished families mentioned above, left ambiguous traces concerning the status of those who converted under duress. The teachings of the Hasidei Ashkenaz that emerged in the thirteenth century concerning the indelibility of baptism as a stain upon the Jewish soul for all generations, may have been circulating among the affected communities.

Even after taking into account every single positive reference to the baptized Jews who survived the Crusades, the overwhelming burden of all three Hebrew chronicles conveys the opposite message. The authors of these chronicles wrote with the intention of strengthening the resolve of the surviving Jews. Each act of martyrdom demonstrated how to resist baptism, albeit insincere and under pain of death. Valorizing the examples of those who preferred martyrdom to coerced baptism would empower others faced with the same choice to resist the great pressure to convert. The image of benevolent marranism did not survive within Ashkenazic popular tradition. Despite overwhelming halakhic support for the untainted Jewish status of forced converts in Ashkenaz, it did not become an acceptable communal response to this form of persecution.³⁰

A story preserved in *Sefer Hasidim* illustrates the willful obliteration of the memory of forced baptism among some Jews, so that their actions would not set an undesirable precedent. "During the time of forced conversions, a bishop sent a Jew to the neighboring town, where the Jews had been forcibly converted by the bishop. The bishop said, 'Whatever they did, you Jews will follow.' The man reported [falsely] that all those Jews had died for the sake of the Divine Name."³¹

In another story from the same source, the taint of baptism erupted even in later generations, to corrupt the descendants of the bearers. "There were two brothers who were apostates. The sage investigated their ancestors to learn what had brought this about. When the catastrophe struck, the Jewish community had said: 'What shall we do?' The rabbi had replied: 'Watch me and do the same.' He took a cross and carried it so that the Christians would not kill him. They forcibly converted him along with the other Jews of his town. Therefore his descendants had apostatized."³²

The martyrs sacrificed their lives and suffered horrible torments in order to avoid being contaminated by baptismal waters. Their fear that their children would be removed and reared as Christians motivated them to commit unprece-

dedicated acts, opening a new chapter in the history of Jewish martyrdom.³³ Their revulsion goes beyond even the most exacting halakhic demands. The instinctual and profound repudiation of baptism led some of the baptized Jews to commit suicide after the Crusaders had left, to kill other Jews, and to take the lives of their own children, acts of radical defiance nowhere mandated by Jewish law; yet the chroniclers characterized these as the ideal responses.³⁴

The Hebrew Crusade chronicles link the image of baptism with the language of violence and of personal violation. In the eyes of the Hebrew chroniclers, the actions of the Crusaders issued more out of a desire to annihilate the Jewish spirit than to foster the growth of the Christian. The first mention of baptism in the chronicle, placed in the mouth of the Crusaders, equated it with physical annihilation: "Let us annihilate them as a people, so that the name of Israel will be obliterated, or let them become as we are and accept the son of lust."³⁵ The image of baptism that was transmitted from the Jewish experience of the Crusades constituted a complete capitulation to the forces of manifest untruth and impurity.

While the chronicles did not link every anti-Christian invective to baptism, they expressed every mention of baptism in the most denigrating terms, most often as being "befouled by putrid waters."³⁶ Derogatory terms such as *tzachanah* (stench) often sufficed to designate baptism. In summarizing the entire anti-Christian polemic in these phrases, the invectives "functioned as an arsenal for the Jews in their resistance to the ceaseless attempts made by Christians to convert them." Anna Abulafia characterized the chronicle literature as a concise means of transmitting the lessons of the *Toledot Yeshu*, an ancient Jewish polemical counter-history to the New Testament.³⁷ This polemic educated Jews to abhor the sacred symbols of the Christian religion. The *Toledot Yeshu*, however, contained no instances of confrontations which Jews could readily apply to contemporary circumstances. The chronicles provided historical exempla of how to reject Christianity when the opportunity arose.

Other Crusade literature described the religion rejected by the martyrs not only as false, but as a form of sexual defilement. A *kinah* (dirge) for the Crusade martyrs referred to baptismal waters as *mayim ha-me'arerim*, the biblical term for waters used to test the faithfulness of a straying wife.³⁸ R. Ephraim of Bonn's *Sefer zekhirah*, a chronicle of the Second Crusade, depicts one pious Jewess and her three daughters coerced and baptized in the *mayim ha-marim ha-mea'arerim*, a striking metaphor for baptism as conjugal violation, and resistance as proof of the connubial faithfulness of Jews to their God. The extreme repudiation of baptism was nourished by a metaphor of conjugal fidelity between Jews and their God; baptism represented an irreversible violation of that relationship.³⁹ Against such

extreme expressions of rejection, a benign image of well-meaning and penitent survivors could not prevail.

The actions of the martyrs were meant to stand as eternal testimony to the power of the one faith against the other. By accepting dreadful deaths rather than abandoning their ancestral beliefs, the martyrs proved the perfection of the Jewish faith to the world. Individuals who failed the test of faith by accepting baptism undermined the truth claim of Judaism, and for that there could be no atonement. These texts transformed even coerced baptism into a mortal sin against the collective ideal in Ashkenaz. Conversion to Christianity, regardless of the impetus, became firmly associated with physical violence, sexual degradation, and spiritual annihilation. Even the weakest Jews, women and children, were expected to put up the ultimate resistance to such attempts to eradicate their Jewishness.

The Hesitating Will

Stories of martyrdom in medieval Ashkenaz often told of heroic resistance and rejection of conversion to Christianity. The story of Rabbi Amnon, linked to a most stirring prayer of the Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) services, “U-netane tokef,” became deeply embedded in medieval Jewish consciousness. The moving tale of martyrdom was first preserved in a thirteenth-century text, which attributed it to a twelfth-century author.⁴⁰ As historian Ivan Marcus has noted, the story differed from other tales of martyrdom feeding into the collective store of Ashkenazic memory because its subject, R. Amnon, appeared to hesitate over the question of conversion. Rabbi Amnon then expiated for creating the appearance of doubt by choosing and enduring a terrible martyr’s death. In Marcus’s view, the narrative was the first to interpret the request for a waiting period as a possible sign of an individual Jew’s ambivalence toward conversion. Significantly, the story transferred “the agent of the sin from Gentile oppressor to the hesitating will of the Jew himself.”⁴¹ This subtle shift would eventually come into full flower in the course of the medieval centuries. The burden of blame would come to rest with the Jew who succumbed, rather than on the Christian who pressured him.

An Ashkenazic halakhic manuscript written in the fourteenth or fifteenth century preserved another tale of the hesitating will of an otherwise learned and pious Jew. The protagonist, a member of the Jewish elite of pre-expulsion London, resolved his dilemma in an equally tragic way.

An event which occurred in England: there was an experienced scholar, very wealthy, who studied in the yeshivah, named R. Yom Tov, *ztl* (the

memory of the righteous is a blessing.) On the eve of *Shavu'ot*, he took his hook and he hanged himself. His father, R. Moshe Hasid (the Pious) did not leave his room and did not shed a tear. He studied in the *midrash* (study hall) as though nothing bad had happened, for he said that his son had inflicted it upon himself. . . . Only servants and simpletons were occupied with him [prepared him for burial] and we did not touch him. Very few scholars carried his coffin, together with the servants, and they transported him by carriage to the city of London, to the area of the cemetery; the rabbi and the members of the yeshivah walked behind his coffin.

That night, he came to me in a dream, and I saw him, more handsome than in life. He appeared to many that night; he had come to the Great Light; he was completely sure that he would enter that world immediately. The master, *zt"l*, also saw what he saw, and on the eighth of *Sivan* in London, he eulogized him greatly, for that young man was a pious and Godfearing man; in all the communities I have not seen his like. . . . It subsequently became clear that he had judged himself harshly. Something of a *shed* (evil spirit) had dwelled within him . . . He said that the evil spirit had appeared before him like a warp and woof [term used to signify the crucifix] and had pressured him to worship idolatry.⁴²

In this instance, the temptation to convert arose within the mind of the Jew R. Yom Tov in the absence of any external pressure, or at least without memory of such pressure. Only death provided full peace and absolution. Later literary material continued to present the drama of a communal Jewish struggle for each soul tempted to Christianity, although some stories had happier endings.⁴³

Unbroken Spirit

The late thirteenth century provided another drama which soon entered Ashkenazic historical memory. In it, an apostate's betrayal of R. Meir of Rothenburg, a revered Jewish leader, obscured the role of the royal Christian malefactor. R. Meir, the foremost halakhist and communal leader of his age, personified the tragic and heroic posture of medieval German Jewry.⁴⁴ The betrayal of this beloved leader symbolized the treachery of malicious apostates faced by the Jews of Ashkenaz.

In the summer of 1286, R. Meir left Rothenburg with his entire family, joining a party of other Jews, apparently bound for the Holy Land. When he stopped in the mountainous region of Lombardy to await fellow emigrants, Imperial forces arrested and imprisoned him. The story of his incarceration by Emperor

Rudolph I of Habsburg and the refusal of the emperor to release even his remains for burial came to symbolize the tormented relationship between the Jews of the Empire and the Christian authorities. All contemporary sources indicate that the arrest and detention of R. Meir resulted from direct intervention by the emperor, possibly in order to discourage further Jewish emigration from German lands. The annalist of Colmar for the year 1287 reported that “the Rotweiler Jew . . . had been taken by King Rudolph.”⁴⁵ This source, and another one recorded shortly after the events, attributed the capture of R. Meir directly to Rudolph. No intermediate agent is mentioned. Throughout Jewish retellings of the story, in the transmission cluster which we can designate as Sephardic, Rudolph remained the direct agent of R. Meir’s travails.

German-Jewish sources, however, offer a completely different tradition concerning the circumstances of R. Meir’s capture. According to the version preserved in the early sixteenth-century Minhag Book of Worms, an apostate (named Knippe or Kinpe) recognized R. Meir and informed a bishop of his presence. The bishop then ordered the arrest.⁴⁶ Juzpa Shammash, seventeenth-century compiler of the customs of Worms, cited another version of the story in his book of miracle tales, *Ma’aseh Nissim*, apparently as he heard it told among the Jews of Worms: “One informer, who was an apostate, (*mosser ehad meshummad*) informed against him before the Roman King. The *mosser* (informer) advised the king to watch carefully when MaHaRa”M [R. Meir] passed through his land on his way, in order to invent a libel against him and to imprison him. . . . The king believed the meshummad (apostate) and ordered the citizens to ambush R. Meir as he passed, and to bring him before the king.”⁴⁷

This seventeenth-century version of the story magnifies the role of the informer-apostate. It contains no mention of a bishop; the emperor plays an almost passive role following the advice of the apostate. Moreover, it softens the role of the emperor. “The king honored [R. Meir] greatly in prison, and permitted him to bring all his books so that he could study Torah whenever he wished.” Although this version further recounted that the king allowed R. Meir to languish in prison until his death seven years later, and forbade the release of his body for burial for another fourteen years, it does not express, in word or tone, opprobrium against Rudolph and his cruelty toward the man of God. This account of R. Meir in the Worms collection of Yuzpa circulated broadly.

Of course, while not every incident left its mark on literature, some episodes involving the malefaction of apostates did not fail to leave a deep imprint on German Jewry. In 1474, the elderly R. Israel Bruna, then rabbi in Regensburg and foremost halakhic decisor in German lands, was arrested on charges of ritual

murder. Although the accuser, a converted Jewish thief named Hans Veyol, later recanted, the imprisonment of R. Israel sent shock waves throughout German Jewry.⁴⁸

The Sixteenth Century: Josel of Rosheim

Josel of Rosheim, sixteenth-century intercessor for German Jews at the Imperial Court, developed most fully the Ashkenazic tendency to magnify the malevolent image of the convert, and thereby minimize the injustice perpetrated by a Christian king. In the early sixteenth century, converts from Judaism became particularly prominent in German lands. Three of them, Victor von Carben, Johannes Pfefferkorn, and Antonius Margaritha, rose to great public renown by using the power of printing to threaten the tenuous existence of Jewish communities in German lands. To counter their newly found voice and power, Josel of Rosheim's *Sefer ha-miknah* articulated the sharpest and most ramified denunciation of converts written by any Jew. This unique chronicle focused on the role of informers and apostates as the driving force behind the calamities that befell German-Jewish communities.⁴⁹ Josel linked an informer-turned-apostate to each Jewish disaster. In each chapter, an apostate committed an act of treachery, some form of *mesirah* (informing), while the traitor was still a Jew. This betrayal of communal solidarity served as an inevitable first step towards apostasy, complete severance from the House of Israel.

Josel's chronicle provides a conspicuous example of how apostates came to play the role of the darkest alter ego in Jewish perceptions of calamity. It transfigured the traditional formula, "Due to our sins we have been exiled," into "Due to *their* treachery, we have suffered." Josel attributed the suffering of Jewry in exile to the malefaction of its own worst sons. In *Sefer ha-miknah's* account of Jewish experience, apostates played a preeminent role. Josel's projection of malevolent agency onto converts, rather than direct attack on the primary aggressors, represents the culmination of a trend that began with the first medieval Jewish narratives in which converts played a role.

The self-perception of Ashkenazic Jewry as a pure and holy community nourished Josel's historical world view. At the apex of the ideal community stood individuals such as Josel, who devoted their lives and resources to protecting the Jewish community. *Sefer ha-miknah* served as his attempt to reconcile this ideal image with historical and personal experience of a different order. The grim reality was that German Jewry of Josel's day contained individuals who were weak, selfish, or criminal, who would endanger the welfare of an entire community for the sake of power, money, or revenge. The mystical perfection of the community with its paragons of devoted service found their absolute antithesis in its traitors, ren-

dered on a mythic scale, as the embodiment of evil: “Their nourishment is from the filth of the primordial serpent, which has reached Esau, Eliphaz, and their offspring, Amalek and Haman . . . there is nothing so vile in the eyes of God as the class of *mosrim* (informers) for they are accursed.”⁵⁰ Josel blurred the distinction between *mosrim* (informers), *meshummadim* (apostates), and *minim* (heretics), to indicate that they were all part of a single phenomenological continuum, the dark forces in an epic struggle within Jewish society throughout history.

Josel elevated his belief that Jewish informers would inevitably convert to Christianity to the level of doctrine. “In each generation thorns and brambles have sprouted up; they have caused Israel to falter in their exile and have maligne (*hilshinu*) in order to deliver the people of God to their death. Most have gone onto the evil path and apostatized publicly; it is a tradition from our scribes: Whoever has been tainted by the impure spirit and become involved in *mesirah* (informing), either he or his descendants will end up in apostasy.”⁵¹ Josel cited numerous examples of the trajectory that led directly from betrayal of the community to apostasy. This was the destiny of tainted souls, from which even an illustrious pedigree could not shield them. If it were not fulfilled immediately, this preordained fate would eventually find fulfillment in a later generation; if the marked person did not convert, his children would.

Josel’s systematic application of an archetypal function of the apostate to the entire course of Jewish history remains unique in its consistency. His elevation of apostates to the status of primary hostile “Other” deflected the ultimate responsibility for oppression of Jews from the highest power in the land to internal malefactors. By using the apostates as a foil and counterimage to the benign Imperial image, Josel added new contours to the figure of the apostate as a topology in sixteenth-century Ashkenazic historical writing.⁵²

Josel’s relegation of willing apostates to the darkest regions of the Jewish historiographical imagination formed an extension of the tendency in Ashkenazic literature to reject the notion of baptism under duress as a strategy for survival. Chronicles, as well as other sources, affirm that German Jews obdurately withstood the temptation to submit to baptism whenever that choice provided a way out of hideous death, in the wake of the Black Plague and through other anti-Jewish depredations of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁵³

Ashkenazic sources deemphasized or omitted the fact that some individual Ashkenazic Jews chose baptism rather than death. When educating Ashkenazic Jews about the history of Iberian Jewry, for example, editors excised references to a communal strategy that chose conversion and survival over martyrdom. Translators into Yiddish of the *Shevet Yehudah*, a chronicle which detailed many instances of mass conversion among Sephardic Jews, omitted entire chapters and all

references to these events. They simply obliterated the memory before it reached Ashkenazic readers.⁵⁴

Menahem Amelander's Yiddish chronicle elaborated on the image of Ashkenazic preference for martyrdom over coerced conversion. "Many daughters have acted with valor, but you have exceeded them all.' This is a parable to the Jews. Although many communities suffered terrible persecutions for His Name's sake, and did not wish to apostatize, they could not withstand the trial. But the communities of Ashkenaz [German lands], Bohemia, Moravia, and Hungary which suffered more than all the others, nevertheless persisted in their religion and their Torah."⁵⁵ He concluded his chapter on the persecutions of German Jews in the wake of the Black Plague and the charges of well poisoning: "The scribes have written that there has been no suffering like that of the Jews in Ashkenaz since heaven and earth were created. Nevertheless . . . they stood firm and did not apostatize, Heaven forbid, but died to sanctify his Name."⁵⁶

Apostates in Medieval Jewish Law

While Jewish literary texts, and even some converts from Judaism, created the impression that conversion initiated a rupture so extreme that their former co-religionists cut off ties and spurned them absolutely, the reality in most cases diverged from this ideal. The converts' patent motive for their depiction of the severance as final and complete was their need to appeal to Christian charity. Orphaned from the community that had nurtured them, they appealed for financial support as well as social acceptance to their adoptive community. Every party to the ideal vision of a reborn convert had practical and ideological motives for maintaining the notion of a complete split, but it cannot be sustained as the historical truth governing the relationship between the convert, his former community, and his new one. There were many areas of congruence and continuity between the converts and the Jewish community, as their considerable place in Jewish legal sources testifies.

Attitudes toward apostates evolved slowly in Jewish law, reflecting the tension between cutting off the traitor root and branch and affirming the immutability of Jewishness.⁵⁷ Converts from the Jewish community had forged many ties, such as marriage and kinship, business and inheritance, which survived long beyond the formal act of baptism. The persistent, if ambivalent, claim of the Jewish community concerning the ultimate spiritual identity of the convert strengthened these bonds.

Talmudic tradition recognized only the sin of aggravated heresy; it comprehended no category of total renunciation of Jewishness. The Talmud used the Hebrew terms *mumar* and *meshummad* almost interchangeably to designate apos-

tates, while it distinguished between limited apostasy, habitual transgressions of a particular nature, and a more comprehensive apostasy which entailed rejection of the entire Torah. In both instances, the person retained his basic status as a Jew, providing the underpinnings for the notion of Jewish immutability. During the medieval period, exclusivist claims of Christianity increased the consequences of leaving the fold. The terms that medieval halakhists inherited from talmudic and geonic sources, which developed primarily in pagan and Muslim societies, could not begin to encompass the intense rivalry and the heightened consequences of abandoning Judaism within medieval Christendom. Concerning the Jewish status of apostates, Geonic sources drew a line between matters of inheritance, where they deemed the bond of kinship to have been broken by the apostasy, and matters of personal status, such as divorce and levirate marriage.⁵⁸ In the latter instances, they tended to regard the apostate as still fully Jewish.

The debate among Sephardic halakhists over the status of *conversos* and *Marranos* in Iberia stimulated the production of a rich *responsa* literature.⁵⁹ The dimensions of the Iberian conversion phenomenon differed fundamentally from those in Ashkenaz, which never experienced a parallel mass conversion. Conversion in medieval Ashkenaz remained essentially an individual phenomenon until the nineteenth century. The *responsa* literature of medieval Ashkenaz abounds in examples of the interaction between apostates and the Jewish community. Mid-twelfth-century French Jewish leader R. Jacob Tam reported that more than twenty *gittin* (writs of divorce) were written in Paris, in France, as well as in German lands, for converts who had apparently left their Jewish wives behind. Grossman argues persuasively that this represents only a fraction of the actual number of converts.⁶⁰ R. Tam's report indicated that these conversions affected very respectable families within the communities. Members of those families would need to interact with the converts in a variety of ways.

Most *responsa* deal with cases of male apostates, not necessarily because there were many fewer instances of female conversion, but because male conversion triggered greater halakhic problems. If a woman left the fold, her husband could be halakhically freed to marry another. If a man converted, Jewish law still required that he grant his wife a Jewish divorce to enable her to remarry.⁶¹ This paradox in Jewish law, which treated the apostate as one whose soul was cut off, and whose family observed mourning rituals, yet still regarded him as legally married under Jewish law to his Jewish wife, became the subject of derision by some apostates. Once the husband left the Jewish community, the standard communal pressures no longer served to effect the release of his wife. The only communal recourses, attempts to bribe the husband or to extract divorce in a moment of compassion and guilt for the eternal predicament of his wife, fell either to

family members or to representatives of the local Jewish community. While this problem occurred throughout the medieval Jewish world, it was best represented in Ashkenazic halakhic literature.⁶²

Later literature shows that the pattern of male conversion and female resistance was the dominant pattern for married couples. Medieval responsa do not reflect the many instances in which unwilling women converted knowing that they had no marital future in the Jewish community, and that they would usually lose their children as well.⁶³ If a man died childless, his wife could not remarry without *halitzah*, the ritual to free her from the obligation of levirate marriage. If the surviving brother had converted, her marital fate lay in his power.⁶⁴ Another frequent question that arose in rabbinic responsa concerned the status of the apostate's estate and his eligibility to inherit from Jewish relatives.⁶⁵ Conflicting claims often took years to litigate and kept Jewish and Christian judiciaries entangled with one another for the duration.

Many responsa attest to other reasons for contacts with apostates. In the fifteenth century, a young Jewish man, Loewe of Passau, took an oath not to gamble with any Jew. He later asked R. Isserlein if he was permitted to play with a certain apostate in Neustadt, as the law did not consider an apostate to be a Jew.⁶⁶ Other questions regarding casual social contact abounded. Was an apostate regarded as a Jew or a non-Jew when it came to the prohibition against Jews charging one another interest?⁶⁷ Was the wine left in the charge of an apostate considered kosher, or was it *ayin nesekh* (wine prepared by Gentiles) and forbidden to Jews to drink?⁶⁸ Might an apostate act as a *Shabbos goy*, doing things for Jews on the Sabbath that they were not permitted to do themselves?⁶⁹ Was one permitted to sell meat which had become unkosher to an apostate? Might a Jew accept charity from an apostate?⁷⁰ These many discussions with their varied responses betrayed the deep tension in Jewish law and society between affirmation of the immutable character of Jewishness irrespective of baptism and the desire to welcome back penitents against the need to impose harsh penalties to prevent further conversions.

Liturgy

Literature and law were not the only vehicles which fixed images of apostates in medieval Jewish consciousness. Unlike Jewish prayers which asked for the destruction of idolators, enemies of God, and arrogant kingdoms, which Christian polemicists construed as intentionally anti-Christian, Jewish daily prayers included one invocation specifically aimed at informers (*ve-la-malshinim*) and apostates (*ve-la-meshummadim*): "May the informers or/ apostates have no hope." Introduced to ostracize heretics, including early Christians of Jewish extraction, the

Item Sy haben zwai sunderlicher gebet wider vns cri/
stendie lauten in yr hebraischer sprach al|o

Felamschomodim al tehy dickfa vechol hami
 חֶמּוֹדִים וְכָל הַתְּהוֹמָה אֵל וְלִמְשִׁימָרִים
 nim kerega jouedu vechol oyfe amcho
 עֵמֶד אֲוִיבֵל וְכָל יֵאֲבָרוּ כְּהַגְעֵי לִגְלִים
 bef jitrael mehera ykoreson vmalchus
 וּמַלְכוּת יְכַדְהוּן מְהַדָּה לְשִׂדְאֵל בֵּית
 sodon mehera teacker vshaber vssmager
 וְהַמְגֵר וְהַשִּׁבֵר הַעֵקֵד מְהַדָּה זְרוּן
 fesachnia tol oyfenu bymhera beyomenu
 בְּיַמֵּינוּ וּבְמַהְרָה אֲוִיבֵלֵנוּ כָּל וְהַבְּגֵלֵעַ

Fig. 1. Hebrew prayer against converts, “Felamschomodim,” with transliteration,
from Johannes Pfefferkorn, *Ich bin ein buchlein* (Augsburg, 1509).

Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

paragraph was imbued with new meaning throughout the medieval period. Some recensions of the prayer from Muslim lands specified Christians as the “informers and apostates.” When medieval European Jews uttered these imprecations, they may certainly have understood them to refer to apostates to Christianity. Although different recensions of this prayer abounded, censors or internal censorship often forced its revision or excision.⁷¹

Converts from Judaism delighted in adducing this passage to prove the undying Jewish enmity for Christians in general and for new converts in particular. Spanish convert Nicholas Donin introduced the text to a wide audience when he cited it as proof that Jews cursed the church, the king, and all Christians daily in their synagogues. Early sixteenth-century convert Victor von Carben wrote that “Jews who go over to Christianity (which they believe to be the worst religion in the whole world) are cursed twice daily in their [Jewish] prayers, day and night, in Hebrew. The prayer goes as follows: ‘Lameschommodim all thehi thykfo.’” He translated *meshummadim* as “verdilgten und verwüsten,” destroyed and annihilated.⁷² Convert Johannes Pfefferkorn cited this prayer to convince Emperor Maximilian to confiscate and destroy Hebrew books.⁷³

Eminent German humanist Johannes Reuchlin rebutted this argument forcefully in his “Opinion concerning the Question of Whether to Confiscate, Destroy and Burn all Jewish Books.”⁷⁴ Reuchlin asked, “On what basis do the Christians wish to destroy the Talmud which they do not understand? I will provide a small example. Recently, a pamphlet against the Jews was printed [Pfefferkorn’s] wherein a prayer is cited which is embedded in their prayerbook. . . . It begins: “וּלְמִשְׁחָמָדִים ve-la-meshummadim” (and for the apostates). It is greatly held against them, as though they intended by it to maliciously and venomously curse the apostles and their baptized successors, the entire Christian church, and the Roman Empire.” Reuchlin remonstrated that the word *meshummad* meant neither baptized, nor apostle, nor Christians, nor the Roman Empire, but “the destroyed”; in his reading the prayer meant: “May those who pray for our destruction be themselves destroyed.”⁷⁵ Reuchlin’s defense notwithstanding, converts continued to posit that Jews directed this prayer against them. Convert Antonius Margaritha translated it, “and all those who adhere to another religion should be destroyed instantly,” while convert Paul Kirchner simply translated *meshummadim* as “baptized Jews.”⁷⁶ By the late medieval period, the original intent of the framers of the liturgy becomes irrelevant. The question of what came first, the intention of the Jews or the accusation of the apostates, was rendered moot. By the sixteenth century this passage certainly served to remind German Jews of the apostates in their midst.

Penitent Apostates

A fair percentage of converts could not make the radical adjustments necessary to succeed in their new faith communities and returned to their communities of origin. Penitent apostates form a separate chapter in the history of converts.⁷⁷ In addition to voluntary converts who simply regretted their decision, the many instances of forced conversion in Ashkenaz created situations in which Jews who had been baptized against their will sought to reenter the community once circumstances permitted. Because these penitents had failed to live up to the ideal of martyrdom in Ashkenaz, numerous responsa seek to ascertain whether penalties and degradations ought to be applied to them. In most cases, rabbis who may have deplored the acceptance of coerced baptism before the fact, advocated receiving the returning convert without penalty after the fact. As R. Meir of Rothenburg replied to a question concerning the status of coerced converts as witnesses:

The fact that the captives did not give their lives for their religion does not disqualify them as witnesses. Although a Jew is enjoined to choose death

rather than be forced to worship idols, should he violate this law he would not have become disqualified as a witness, although he would be guilty of having committed a sin. Moreover, according to the account given by the captives, they never actually embraced Christianity, but merely listened without comment to the priest's recitation of his senseless ritual in the presence of the Gentiles. Thus the captives never committed a sin; for a Jew is not enjoined to choose death rather than allow the Christians to deceive themselves into believing that they have converted them.⁷⁸

Despite vigorous efforts by halakhists (including R. Gershom in the eleventh century, Rashi in the twelfth, and R. Meir in the thirteenth) to sustain the Jewish status of repentant apostates, Jewish folk beliefs and traditions concerning the efficacy of baptism endured.⁷⁹ Returning apostates or forced converts were required to undergo various purification rites in order to rejoin the Jewish community. One striking medieval description of the ceremony comes from an Inquisition manual: "After this he is stripped of his garments and is sometimes bathed in warm water. The Jews then rub him energetically with sand over his entire body, but especially on his forehead, chest and arms, that is, on the places which during baptism received the holy chrism. Then they cut the nails of his hands and feet until they bleed. They shave his head, and afterwards put him in the waters of a flowing stream, and plunge his head in the water three times. After this immersion they recite. . . . This done, he emerges from the water, dons a new shirt and breeches, and all the attending Jews give him a name, which is usually the name he had before baptism."⁸⁰

These ritual forms of counter-baptism survived through the centuries. A fifteenth-century responsum asked whether it was permitted "for someone who had apostatized, and come to be purified [on the intermediate holiday] to be shaved in order to be immersed and enter the true faith . . . for he cannot perform many of the sacred rituals until he shaves and immerses."⁸¹ An eighteenth-century description by a converted Jew, intent on highlighting the revulsion of Jews to converts, bears a striking resemblance to the medieval rite. "Not only does the returning convert have to undergo difficult penances, as the rabbi assigns, which could include many and difficult fasts, but he also must immerse in a *mikveh* (ritual bath) in front of three rabbinical judges, and so to speak, allow himself to be baptized again (*wieder tauffen lassen*). He has to bear all manner of insults and pay mind to every detail, especially if he is unlearned."⁸² The persistence of these rituals reinforces the notion that medieval Jews in Ashkenaz attributed potency to baptism despite the fact that Jewish law did not recognize it.⁸³

Conversion as Threat to the Jewish Community

Jewish communities could not actively and overtly discourage conversion, but given the noxious image and harmful actions of many converts, we may ask whether threats of voluntary conversion affected the internal workings of the community. The possibility that a Jew might resort to conversion to escape severe sanctions or even retaliate for them had to be considered before each communal decision to apply such sanctions. Jews who violated communal consensus were subject to severe forms of *herem*. These bans of excommunication were sufficient to jeopardize an individual's life and livelihood, leaving a Jew facing a ban with no alternatives except humiliating acquiescence to communal standards or conversion out. Conversion thus remained an option for deeply disaffected Jews; in fact, nineteenth-century historian Heinrich Graetz posited that medieval Jewish apostasy was a reaction to the power of excommunication by medieval Jewish communities.⁸⁴ The seventeenth-century case of convert Moses Marcus, grandson of noted memoirist Glikl Hameln, serves as an illustration of the alienating power of the ban. The Jewish community excommunicated Moses' wealthy and powerful father, and he did not see his son for over ten years. Alienated and vulnerable, Moses converted to Christianity.⁸⁵

Threats of conversion sometimes came from the most desperate and powerless voices in the medieval Jewish community. Women in dire marital straits would sometimes threaten conversion to coerce their husbands to grant them a divorce decree: "Leah rebelled against her husband, A, the son of Mendel Kern. When warned that she might lose her *ketubbah* and the dowry and that she might be forced to wait many years for her divorce, she threatened, among other things, to go and live among the Gentiles. Since the women of Regensburg were always arrogant in their relations to their husbands and now are even more supercilious than ever, Leah should be dealt with in a manner that would serve as a warning to her haughty sisters."⁸⁶

Another medieval responsum concerned a woman who had adulterously conceived and borne a child while her husband was away. Her father asked the court whether she could be put to death for this. "When asked whether he had tried other means of controlling her, he answered that whenever he reproved her she threatened to apostatize altogether and pleaded that she was not the first woman who ever sinned."⁸⁷ The case of one Jewish woman provides a most enterprising twist on the use of conversion. Her husband refused to grant her a divorce, and the Jewish court refused to coerce him. The woman converted to Christianity, forcing the court to coerce her husband to issue the divorce. As soon as the court

began the proceedings, the woman reverted to Judaism. As soon as this happened, the husband retracted his assent. The rabbis ruled that the court must continue to coerce him “because of the likelihood that she would apostatize again if the divorce were not granted.”⁸⁸ While such an open shuttling between religions would have been impossible in most of medieval Christian Europe, the responsum attests to the perception in Jewish legal texts that this action threatened to rear its head as a last resort for people in desperate straits. A complex fifteenth-century responsum considered whether the principle “that Jewish women not leave the fold” could operate in cases where a Jewish woman needed a release from her husband who had apostatized.⁸⁹

The particular nature of divorce aside, Jewish communities continually faced the question of whether to temper their response to deviance from communal norms out of fear that harsh measures could push a person into apostasy. A seventeenth-century rabbinic responsum articulated precisely such a concern: “Concerning your query in which A deliberately imbibed *ḡayn nesekeh* [Gentile-prepared wine], and the community wished to punish him by imposing a fine and issuing a proclamation about him. Their rabbinic leader deterred them from doing so, concerned that he would blaspheme even further, eat forbidden foods, and leave the faith, *yetzei chutz la-dat*, and the onus of the blame would fall on the congregation which drove him to that.”⁹⁰ In this particular instance R. Yair Hayim Bacharach replied that the community must not be swayed to bend its principles for fear of apostasy:

While it appears at first glance that the rabbi ruled correctly . . . if we heed this, God forbid, the evil ones will continue to do whatever they please. Even the judges will be concerned in the same manner, and truth will be trampled. The judgment of Maharam [R. Meir of Rothenberg] that we ease up on our struggle with the sinners, emanates from a concern for the safety of the [the Jewish community], not from concern for the ruin of the sinners . . . If a Jew has sinned in a manner that he is obligated to pay a fine or be whipped or excommunicated, we do not withhold anything out of fear that he will become incensed and sin even greater sins, [we do not] budge, God forbid, from the law and teachings of our Torah. . . . Moreover, whoever can eject such a *mumar*, one who denies the unity [of God] and defies the Creator, from [their community] has done a good deed and has done nothing contrary to our faith.⁹¹

Regardless of their actual numbers, apostates from Judaism remained a significant presence in medieval Ashkenazic communal life. So long as Jews lived within the

corporate structure of the *kehillah*, with the lines between the Jewish and Christian worlds rigidly delineated, the condition of most European Jews until the late eighteenth century, converts remained figures on the margin. They evoked the fear, mistrust, and enmity which Jews could not fully express against the hostile Other whose world they inhabited.

THE LOST CROWN OF SYNAGOGA

Converts from Judaism in Medieval Christendom

Surely the leopard cannot change his spots
Nor the Moor his skin. Is that not impossible?
So does the Jew remain a deceiver
Although he's been baptized and acts like a Christian.
I'm speaking of the majority. Out of hundreds . . .
Perhaps one will remain a true believer.

Riederer, introduction to Schudt, Jüdischer Merckwürdigkeiten, vol. 4.

The tension in medieval Christendom between the rejection of Jews and Judaism and the ever growing desire to embrace Jews through conversion contributed to the predicament of the converts themselves. It rendered their identity as ambiguous among Christians as it was among Jews. The simultaneous forces of attraction and repulsion, the medieval Christian imperative to humiliate Jews as well as to attract them, to segregate them yet to reach out to them, affected both Jews and converts. In fact, the theological justification for the continued presence of Jews in some parts of western Europe was their ultimate conversion which would herald the Second Coming. But the means and methods of obtaining conversions from Judaism in medieval Europe, added to the steady stream of anti-Jewish polemic and invective, corrupted the image of converts in the minds of Christians even more than that of Jews themselves.

The theological sanction for the existence of Jews in Europe posed a challenge to the great religious figures of the medieval Christian world. A missionizer who could convince Jews of the truth of Christianity manifested divine powers of persuasion. Thomas Aquinas, for example, needed no embellishment of his genuine achievements as a great theologian to merit a venerable place in the Christian

pantheon. Yet, his hagiographers appended a story of successful conversion of Jews, of dubious historicity, to his life's accomplishments.¹

Nor was it only in his writings that greatness appeared, but also in his living speech, to which truth itself gave a force that none could resist. . . . Consider, for example, the effect his words had on two Jews, rich men and learned in their Law, whom he met at the castle of Molará near Rome, a property of the lord Cardinal Richard. It was the season of Christmas and Thomas was a guest of the Cardinal, along with these Jews, who were accustomed to stay at the castle every year for the festival. At the cardinal's suggestion Thomas entered into conversation with them, and the ensuing discussion continued for a long time, Thomas using the Scriptures in various ways to demonstrate the coming into the world of its Lord and Saviour. Then he made an appointment with them for the following day, on the understanding that either they would refute his arguments or profess themselves believers; and in the meantime he gave himself to prayer on their behalf, begging Him who was born for sinners to come to these on his birthday. And next morning the day-star had risen in the hearts of these two Jews: they came to the place appointed, shed their outworn Jewish errors, and were clothed with the Lord Christ in baptism.²

It is noteworthy that the Jews whom Aquinas was said to have converted were both wealthy and learned. The wealth indicated that they did not convert for pecuniary reasons, and their scholarship testified to their high personal status. These characteristics removed the usual suspicion of base motivations for conversions.

Generations of popes and great theologians accorded an exalted place to converts with official pronouncements such as that of Pope Gregory IX to the converts Nivello and Anselm: "We embrace converts from Judaism with even greater affection [than other converts]."³ Even in vehicles that popularized theological themes, such as the early modern *Fastnachtspiele* (Shrovetide carnival dramas), figures of converts from Judaism signified the success of the church and the despair of the synagogue. The treason of Jews who converted to the other side caused the iconic figure of Synagoga to cast off her crown.⁴ Yet, despite the welcome extended by generations of popes, skepticism concerning the efficacy of conversion of Jews persisted among Christians. No official statement could allay the abiding popular belief that Jewishness inhered so deeply that it could never be effaced by baptism. Why did the pervasive suspicion that baptism by water could not overpower "baptism by the knife" persist, despite formal declarations to the contrary by the church elite?⁵ Medieval Jews were often courted for conversion

by the clerical elite and well-intentioned missionaries, only to be rejected and distrusted as converts by just about everyone else.

Judaism Interminable

The notion of the immutability of Jewishness took distinctive forms in early modern German culture and manifested itself in ways other than, for example, the proto-racist legislation of fifteenth-century Iberia.⁶ Medieval images of the unchanging nature of the Jewish convert persisted into the early modern period. Among the most popular metaphors were the old dog who could not learn new tricks, and the cat and mouse, represented visually on the Andreas church in Cologne, and passed down orally in such ditties as:

Wenn die Maus die Katze frisst
Wird der Jud ein rechte Christ!

(“When cats are gobbled by mice;
Jews will become true followers of Christ.”)

Assertions concerning the unchangeable nature of Jews received elaborate affirmation in the dramas of early sixteenth-century German playwrights.⁷ Kirchhof sharply mocked converted Jews. His work offered countless examples of their deceitfulness and malice.⁸ Portraying the convert as a Jew now permitted to do things heretofore forbidden to him, Kirchhof depicted converts enjoying pork sausages, but otherwise bearing the same negative characteristics as their fellow Jews—no inner spiritual conversion had taken place.⁹ Hans Behem, the charismatic figure known as the Drummer of Niklashausen, referred to Jews only once in his remarks, and only as a metaphor for difficult conversion—he could sooner reform the Jews than the clergy and scriptural authorities.¹⁰

One popular broadsheet dubbed the baptismal font *Judenbad*, the Jewish bath; one who sprang out of it remained the same person as the one who jumped in, now armed with new methods of deceiving Christians.¹¹ In *Der Juden Badstüb* (The Jewish Bathhouse) of 1535, Philip von Allendorf preserved some of the German folklore concerning the uselessness of baptism for Jews. Water spent on baptism of Jews was wasted in his view. Jews were destined for another type of bath—in the vapors of hell.¹² Other popular sayings recommended drowning as the only effective baptism for Jews. One convert recalled that “self-named Christians” had taunted him more than ten times with the motto, “When a Jew is baptized, one should hang a millstone around his neck and throw him into the water where it is deepest.”¹³

The discrepancy between the ideal of mass conversion of Jews to Christianity

and the small numbers of actual converts gave rise in the early modern period to a literature of frustration, on the “The Difficult to Convert Jewish Heart.”¹⁴ The authors questioned the motives of converts and asserted that they did not constitute the best socioeconomic “material.” As Joseph Justus Scaliger, the sixteenth-century Orientalist asserted, most Jews who converted originated from bad stock: “Rarement un juif converti au Christianisme est homme de bien; les convertis sont généralement mauvaises gens.”¹⁵

The formal-legalistic, and informal designations for baptized Jews reflected and sustained the belief in the converts’ inherent Jewishness. Regardless of whether intended for the benefit or the denigration of converts, such labels served as constant reminders to baptized former Jews, as well as to those around them, of their exceptional status. Victor von Carben complained that even after his baptism people would point at him saying, “See, there goes a baptized Jew”; or, concerning his advanced age, “An old Jew seldom becomes a good Christian.” Johannes Pfefferkorn reported a similar popular motto, “A crooked old branch is difficult to straighten.”¹⁶ Stephan Isaac reported that this was a theme in his father Johannes’ life as it had been throughout all of his own Christian metamorphoses. Of the Catholics, he said, “as long as I was one of them, they honored me greatly; once I exposed their shame [by converting to Protestantism], they called me a Jew.”¹⁷ Throughout the controversies in which he took part, the constant reminders of his Jewish extraction seem to cross denominational lines: “Judaeus quidam conversus Stephanus Isaacus; . . . Stephanus Isaacus, olim Judaeus natus et circumcisis in concione falsa.” One report to Rome called him *un giudeo mal battezzato*, a badly baptized Jew. His baptism had not eradicated his Jewishness. In the heat of polemic, his antagonists among both Catholics and Protestants simply referred to him as “Jew,” not even converted Jew. One leading citizen in Bensheim complained of having had to appear before “Stephan Isaci den Juden” in 1591, decades after his childhood conversion.¹⁸ In his own correspondence, Stephan Isaac signed himself with the title ‘minister’ or ‘minister JC’; he never referred to his own origins.¹⁹ The designations for converted Jews became badges that identified and distinguished them from other Christians and complicated their entry into Christian society.

Nevertheless, the pervasiveness of suspicion was not due solely to lingering ethnic traits or explicit labels. The tendency to see “converted Jews” rather than *bona fide* Christians can be traced to several policies of both church and state which converged with anti-Jewish discourse to create a belief structure that denied the efficacy of baptism of Jews. The church accepted as irrevocable conversions obtained even under severe duress. From the initial parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity, the question of how much Jewishness remained

with the convert continued to vex Christian authorities. In the medieval period, contrary opinions existed simultaneously within canon tradition. The Council of Toledo of 633 declared even coerced baptisms valid, while an eighth-century conciliar opinion held that converts who secretly retained certain aspects of Judaism should not be accepted as Christians. In the thirteenth century, Christian law regarded Jews who had been baptized even under severe coercion as fully Christian, although as late as 1298, Pope Boniface VIII denounced such baptisms.²⁰ The anti-coercion pronouncements testified by their continued appearance to the unceasing efforts by some members of the Christian clergy to bring Jews to baptism by force and to their belief that these baptisms would result in permanent conversions. It was a policy that bore unintended consequences. The acceptance of coercion vitiated the transformative power of baptism of Jews in the eyes of Christians.

Another reason for Christian suspicion of Jewish converts was the tendency to offer conversion to Jewish criminals to mitigate their punishment. These practices fostered the notion that Jews did not convert out of conviction, that their conversions were superficial and did not affect the true Jewish nature of the convert. The phenomenon of reversion to Judaism tainted all converts. While most were sincere, some were charlatans who became beggars, wandering about pretending to be candidates for conversion from Judaism. After collecting whatever money and gifts were reserved for converts, they would leave town to replay the scam in another locale. Among the criminal classes in early modern German lands, conversion served as a convenient disguise for thieves. Baptism could not ameliorate the negative image of such converts, and their notoriety affected the Christian perception of all converts.

Conversion and Coercion in the High Middle Ages

He who is led to Christianity by violence, by fear, and by torture, and who receives the sacrament of baptism to avoid harm (even as he who comes falsely to baptism), receives indeed the stamp of Christianity and can be obliged to observe the Christian faith.

*Pope Innocent III, 1201*²¹

The Christian turn to violence against Jews as a means of winning converts changed the understanding of conversion for Jews and Christians. During the First and Second Crusades, Christians confronted Jews in a struggle to the death. Whether the encounter ended in the physical or spiritual elimination of the Jews, the ultimate goal was to rid Christendom of all Jews. Baptisms effected at sword's point, with death as the only alternative, were accepted by the church (although

not by Christian monarchs) as valid and binding; the acceptance, after the fact, of forced conversion turned the meaning of baptism of Jews into an expression of hatred and contempt, the ultimate expression of Christian frustration with Jewish obduracy. In the face of Christian triumph, the act of baptism did not constitute a sufficient guarantee of true conversion.²² True conversion, since early Christianity, was a profound, mysterious process of exploration whose outcome could be anticipated but never assured.²³ An act of grace and a gift of divine mercy, it often required the seal of a sign or miracle to convince the observer of its truth and efficacy. The baptism of Jews stood in marked contrast to this conception of true conversion. The affirmation by the Christian Church of the binding nature of coerced conversions, despite a tradition going back to Pope Gregory that compulsion militated against sincerity, heightened the impression among many Christians that conversions from Judaism could not be authentic.

Jewish converts to Christianity were often reminded of their Jewish origins for the rest of their lives. Unlike pagans who converted to Christianity *en masse* in the early Christian centuries, medieval Jews converted to Christianity as individuals. Pagan society experienced Christianization as a gradual collective transformation. Individual Jews who converted to Christianity left one highly defined religious, ethnic, and social structure to enter another faith community whose self-image derived in large measure from a very negative view of the community of origin of the convert. Thus, converts from Judaism could not blend casually into Christian society. Their progress was monitored with all the suspicion and wariness engendered by an enemy who had suddenly switched sides.

The events of 1096 reverberated so deeply because they adumbrated a medieval cycle in which Jews were blamed for some crime against Christendom—ritual murder, desecration of the host, and poisoning the water supply were the most frequent—and were then faced with the choice of cruel death or baptism. While the Jews of Ashkenaz chose martyrs' deaths with astonishing strength, many succumbed to baptism under threat of death or torture. The existence within medieval Europe of considerable numbers of these most reluctant new Christians contributed to the suspicion with which all converts were regarded.²⁴ Christians concerned with the conversion of Jews tended to collapse distinctions between instances in which converts from Judaism sincerely regretted their conversions, as well as cases of coerced baptism where the subjects had tried to escape the burdens which their new identity imposed upon them by force, with cases of intentional fraud. They regarded all conversions as superficial and insincere unless proved otherwise.

Conversion as Punishment

*God will punish you, you blasphemous Devil's mouths, and convert you.*²⁵

Punitive measures against Jewish criminals condemned to execution were far more painful and humiliating than the standard punishment meted out to Christian criminals. From the perspective of the church, Christian criminals could confess and atone for their capital crimes by their deaths, attaining salvation for their immortal souls; the execution of Jewish malefactors, however, could not effect their salvation, since all Jewish souls were damned. A Jew who died without conversion was equivalent to a criminal who died without confession. Neither achieved atonement, and both would be condemned to hell.²⁶ This reasoning led many clergymen to advocate that strenuous efforts be made to ensure the conversion of any Jew who had been sentenced to death.²⁷ During his incarceration, right up to the point of execution and the moment of death, a Jew would be exhorted to convert. Gottfried Thomas Zeitmann, the eighteenth-century evangelical preacher in Frankfurt am Main, who was a convert himself, frequently visited hospitals where convicted criminals awaited their final sentences. He wrote that the conversion of Jewish malefactors was a routine part of his work. The successful conversion of a Jew in these circumstances was such a rare event for Zeitmann that it occasioned a celebration and provided an excuse to publish the conversion sermon.²⁸

Conversion bestowed an immediate benefit, removing the threat of additional torture and humiliation reserved for Jews only. Baptism thus became part of a punitive equation: horrible death as a Jew equaled baptism plus an easier death as a Christian. This equation turned executions of Jews into another form of public anti-Jewish drama, and baptism into another of the humiliations applied to Jews who had forfeited the last vestiges of protection from the Christian authorities, both secular and religious. Jews condemned to death went to their executions dressed conspicuously as Jews, sometimes wearing their religious head coverings, their *tefillin*, or other items intended to humiliate or punish not only their persons but their religion as well.²⁹ Large crowds would gather to be entertained by the torture, to hear the inflammatory anti-Jewish sermon, and to share the suspense of waiting to see whether the Jew would convert.³⁰ While some Jews broke under torture or fear, others made public confessions of the Jewish faith, or denounced the Christian. "In March . . . 1699, in Celle, a Jew named Jonas Meyer, as a result of his many acts of theft, was being prepared for the gallows. When the cord was already around his neck, he cursed Jesus and all those who believed in him; then he was choked." Even in the case of Jews

who remained stubborn to the bitter end, violent public death of the blasphemer provided instant gratification to the audience.³¹

In the case of accused thieves, baptism occupied an important place in the punitive framework. In contrast to Christian thieves condemned to death by hanging in the usual manner, Jews were sentenced to be hanged by their feet between two hungry dogs. The penal system regarded hanging “from the bottom up” as the more severe form, because it caused greater suffering and degradation to the still-conscious condemned man.³² The Jewish convict would remain suspended for days, measures being taken to keep the condemned alive as long as possible; however, the suffering could be ended at any time if the Jew indicated his willingness to be baptized. Johann Jacob Schudt reported that in August of 1588 a Jew remained hanging in that manner, fully conscious, for seven days. He died obdurate in his Judaism, Schudt noted, outliving one of the dogs.³³

In 1553, a Jew named Anstedt was accused of theft and sentenced to be hanged in Weissenstein. On the scaffold, following many initial refusals, he finally agreed to be baptized. He was then immediately executed to give him no chance to renounce his baptism. This conversion crowned the career of the talented preacher who convinced him; Jacob Andree published an account of the conversion and of the sermon that he preached on that occasion. However, the circumstances recounted by Andree raise doubt as to whether it was Andree’s preaching that caused Anstedt to change his mind and accept baptism. Andree repeatedly asked the Jew, as he was being led to the gallows, if he would prefer baptism. He refused steadfastly and was hanged by his feet between two hungry dogs, likewise hanging by their feet. After they gnawed off his ears, they began going after his elbows. Anstedt began to scream piteously. The dogs began to gnaw at him again, and he “chanted the Psalms in Hebrew begging God to save him.” When he called out to the audience watching the spectacle, “Is there no *mensch*, decent man, among you who will save me? Please help me! Have mercy on me! Let my great need move you.” The pastor responded, “You are responsible for your own suffering—you can save your soul from the everlasting flames of hell . . . Only Jesus can save you.”

According to Andree’s own account, he then launched into a long religious tirade concerning the fate of Jews who remained obdurate in their unbelief. Once he had completed the sermon and turned to leave the Jew to the dogs, several bystanders told Andree that the Jew had changed his mind about baptism. The preacher asked, “Dear Anstedt, have my words gone to your heart?” The Jew replied, “Only God knows.” After several more such dubious exchanges, Andree baptized the Jew, still hanging. The change of status now meant that he could be released from hanging by his feet; hanged by his neck, he died on the gallows.

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 2. A Jew hanging between dogs. Woodcut from Johannes Stumpf, *Gemeiner loblicher Eydgnoschafft* (Zurich, 1548). Reproduced courtesy of Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

And thus, concluded the preacher's account, did this man turn into a believing Christian from a godless Jew.³⁴

The case of Anstedt exemplifies the widespread practice of offering convicted Jewish criminals a chance to mitigate painful deaths or relax harsh sentences by the acceptance of baptism.³⁵ A Jew of Kissleg sentenced to death in 1603 for swindling allowed himself to be baptized; "in order that he enjoy this first baptism, he asked to be graced by the sword, and by the sword he was executed."³⁶ Jews convicted of every sort of crime became sacrifices to the affirmation of Christianity, as they performed their excruciating roles before large gatherings of onlookers. One preacher, Johann Udenio, conspired with the condemned Jew to orches-

trate the miracle of conversion as precisely as possible.³⁷ While every execution drew crowds of spectators, the prospect of conversion added suspense and drama to the spectacle. The “indescribable” number of casual spectators drawn to the execution of the former Jew Christian Treu even attracted several Jews.³⁸

Andree published his account of the conversion of Anstedt in 1560; it was re-published in 1608 in Frankfurt and again as late as 1721 in Dresden. Thus, in the event of “successful” outcomes in which the condemned Jew converted, converts became the subjects of a distinctive literature. By the seventeenth century, the *Todesurteil* had become a popular genre. Published in conjunction with executions, they contained pictures of delinquents along with their biographies, details of their crimes, and the full judicial sentence. In the case of a convict who converted before his execution, the genre merged with that of converts’ biographies.

Most Jews who converted at the time of their execution did so in order to escape torture; some were even offered the chance to have their sentences stayed. The theory behind granting the convert a stay of execution was “that through the sacrament, he is redeemed from the crime, the convert becomes a new person through the baptism, and this new person is not guilty.”³⁹ Christians witnessed the application of baptism as a way for criminals to mitigate or avoid punishment, and concluded that the possibility of baptism not only made it easier for Jews to become criminals, but debased the value of Jewish conversions. “A Jew seldom converts unless he has committed a crime . . . that he should not hang; otherwise his punishment for stealing would be too painful.”⁴⁰ While these conversions *in extremis* alleviated the physical suffering of the converts, the church attributed more of a spiritual dimension to their motives.⁴¹ However, in the popular Christian view, this type of baptism was a further degradation of Jews, rather than a gift of grace. It did not really alter the Jewishness of the converted but seemed to serve as the final humiliation of the Jew and the ultimate capitulation to Christian majesty.

Conversion as Deception

“Jews who remain sincerely within the Christian religion are rarer than citrons in Muscovy.”⁴² This derisive statement summed up the general skepticism among Christians regarding the intentions of converts to Christianity. They condemned Jews who accepted baptism as a deliberate deception, along with those who tried honestly, but failed, to thrive as Christians. For every successful and willing convert, there were many who never integrated into Christian society, or made the necessary internal adjustments to remain Christian. Some willing converts from Judaism to Christianity ended up quietly renouncing their baptisms and rejoining Jewish communities.⁴³ Taking into account variations across time and place, this

renunciation remained a crime through the eighteenth century, so that the number of reversions to Judaism is even more difficult to ascertain than the number of conversions. Even converts who were baptized sincerely sometimes reverted to Judaism out of equally sober motives, the results of failure to be accepted into Christian society. Some reverted after spending many years as Christians.⁴⁴ Their true numbers can never be known, because even congregations that kept meticulous baptismal records could not always be aware of the eventual fate of their formerly Jewish converts, who could disappear and resume Jewish life under a false name.⁴⁵

Relapsed converts served to affirm some of the most negative assumptions made by Christians about Jewish character. Relapses from Christianity reinforced the stereotype of Jewish obduracy and raised new questions about the extent to which Jewish character could be transformed by baptism.⁴⁶ Missionaries, including some former Jews, noted with chagrin that no conversion to Christianity was ever final.⁴⁷ Georg Serpilius of Regensburg wrote a *Catalogue of Converts from Judaism Delineated by Centuries*. He divided his subjects into two telling categories: "Those who remained [converted], and those Jews who reverted."⁴⁸ Schudt's very substantial section on Jewish conversions opens with a long discussion of the prevailing prejudices against the possibility of successful conversions.⁴⁹ Some missionaries called for the publication of conversion narratives for the purpose of discouraging multiple baptisms and abuses of the system, a complete inversion of their original purpose, the valorization of the convert.⁵⁰ Convert Paul Wilhelm Hirsch wrote not only of the masses of Jews who remained obdurate in their blindness, but of converted Jews who reverted to Judaism.⁵¹ Even ardent missionaries found that cases of backsliding made it difficult to sustain belief in the eventual mass conversion of all Jews. Benjamin Fehren, a missionary, argued that using the cases of bad individuals to draw conclusions regarding all converts, *ab invidia ductum*, were committing the error of basing their entire case on *Schwärmer and Irrgeister*, fraudulent and mistaken souls. Precisely because the final conversion of Jews at the end of history was a matter whose exact contours remained obscure and whose exact time remained unknown, the idea was vulnerable to manipulation on part of deceivers; their deception did not detract from the truth of the ultimate vision, however.⁵²

The cases of sincere reversion were complicated by the existence of *Tauftrug*, the exploitation of baptism to commit fraud. Although this cynical practice did not originate with Jews, it was always associated with them. The advantages to be gained from baptism were so great that, as early as the fourteenth century, numerous members of the Christian underclasses wandered through German lands pretending to be converted former Jews. In fifteenth-century Basel, *wer-*

merin, Christian women who falsely claimed to have been converted from Judaism and to have special abilities to communicate with the other world, wandered throughout the countryside. For their services, they collected fees.⁵³

Some time later Jewish beggars caught on and began to perpetrate similar scams. The sixteenth century saw an increasing number of cases of baptism undertaken fraudulently. While the evidence is anecdotal, everyone who worked with converts seems to have experienced a fraudulent conversion, one which was undertaken purely for the sake of the *Taufgeschenk*, the baptismal gift, and repeated, sometimes several times, before someone caught up with the culprit. The very public nature of these baptisms often proved the converts' undoing, when someone who had seen them receiving the same sacrament earlier recognized them at a subsequent baptismal ceremony.

Eighteenth-century Nuremberg chronicler Andreas Würfel emphasized the unlikelihood that Jews would freely seek conversion to Christianity. Würfel's discussion "On the Jews who were baptized in Nuremberg" was inherently slanted. Since Jews had been expelled from Nuremberg in the late fifteenth century, Würfel's records dating after the expulsion did not reflect the experience of native Jews, but of those converts, either from neighboring villages or from distant places, who were brought to the city to be baptized. Since deliberate fraud was more likely to be perpetrated by foreigners or strangers, the rate of recidivism or fraud recorded there may well have been much higher than in a city with an indigenous Jewish population.⁵⁴ *Tauftrug*, fraudulent baptism, confirmed the Christian belief that the innate cupidity and duplicity of Jews could not be effaced by baptism.

For Würfel, the Ashkenazic penchant for martyrdom was a legacy so deeply inscribed that voluntary submission to baptism indicated to him *prima facie* evidence of fraud. His chapter on the converted Jews of Nuremberg begins with descriptions of Jewish martyrdom from chronicler Gedaliah ibn Yahya's *Shalshet ha-kabbalah* and Solomon ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah*. "Jews have no greater disgust for anything than they do for baptism. Before they would willingly allow themselves to be persuaded of it, they would gladly choose death."⁵⁵ One Christian clergyman, himself a former Jew, stated at the conversion of another, "There are to be found within our own baptized community great deceivers, thieves and robbers."⁵⁶ Established converts from Judaism did not trust that their own peers were converting honestly. One eighteenth-century preacher compared a lapsed convert, caught seeking a second baptism, to a delinquent child. One could extend Christian mercy to him, but the prognosis for permanent rehabilitation was bleak.⁵⁷ As a result of the notoriety enjoyed by fraudulent converts, sincere converts found themselves constantly striving to differentiate themselves from their

unsavory counterparts. Only with the rise in the number of baptisms in the late eighteenth century did instances of baptism purely in the name of deception appear to diminish. In the mind of many German Christians, conversions from Judaism were not really meaningful or effective but were undertaken to extract some material benefit from Christian society. The “true” Jewish nature of the convert could not be altered.

Perfidious Converts

The deep suspicion of Jewish converts held by medieval Christian society resulted in a persistent drive by converts to prove their loyalty to Christianity by attacking Jews and Judaism. Converted Jews initiated some of the worst manifestations of medieval anti-Judaism. A converted Jew, “Theobald,” provided the crucial testimony in the first ritual murder accusation concerning the Christian boy William of Norwich. “Theobald” divulged to Thomas of Monmouth, the “sleuth” who created the narrative, the great “secret”: that Jews met annually at a rabbinical synod to choose a victim for their occult practice, the ritual murder of a young Christian.⁵⁸ While to date, no historical confirmation exists for this convert, his image and authority as a convert were crucial to the credibility of Thomas of Monmouth’s tale. His evidence for the existence of ritual murder was testimony “uttered by one who was a converted enemy, and had also been privy to the *secrets of our enemies*.”⁵⁹

The use of converts as a polemical tool against Judaism is a unique product of the Jewish-Christian encounter, in which the ambiguities of hatred conflicted with the desire for conversion and resulted in a unique configuration. The development of medieval Jewish-Christian theological disputation is inconceivable without the initiative of converted Jews such as Petrus Alfonsi, Nicholas Donin, and Pablo Christiani.⁶⁰ Alfonsi was the first to put forth the argument that Jews knew that the Talmud was a Law set against the divine Law but they consciously kept its diabolical nature secret. He advocated the rejection of the traditional Christian position on toleration of the Jews, arguing that far from adhering to the Old Testament, Jews secretly subscribed to a contrary doctrine which subverted it utterly. Donin “revealed” the Talmud’s allegedly anti-Christian teachings, and Pablo Christiani in the course of the Barcelona disputation showed that Jews had no faith and therefore deserved to be treated as heretics. Christiani negated the Jewish faith, not merely as an inferior, anachronistic faith long since superseded by Christianity, but as an imposter religion—really no religion at all. With this argument, Christiani effectively negated his own past, emphasizing that his conversion led to a new creation *ex nihilo*, as it were, rather than a spiritual progression in which Judaism served as a first step. Christiani’s denunciation established

a pattern in which converts rejected the Judaism of their past, in order to take full possession of their new Christian identities.⁶¹ Throughout the medieval period converts were often behind the most infamous incidents of book burnings and confiscations, and the promotion of such policies as forcing Jews to hear conversion sermons.⁶² Only in the early modern period could converts finally embrace their Jewish past as an integral part of their Christian present.

THE TURNING POINT

The Sixteenth Century

The dramatic emergence of converts from Judaism into the public sphere in the early sixteenth century had no precedent in medieval German culture. Unlike the Iberian and Italian proselytizing campaigns of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there was no centralized drive to convert Jews in German lands throughout the medieval period. For all its violence, most medieval missionary encounters between Jews and Christians in Germany remained sporadic and disorganized. The actual number of converts from Judaism to Christianity in German lands remained extremely small through the late eighteenth century.¹ Nevertheless, despite their insignificant numbers, converts from Judaism dominated Jewish-Christian discourse in German lands from the first years of the sixteenth century. Although not as statistically significant as converts had been for Iberian Jewry, their counterparts in German lands played a crucial role as mediators between cultures and religions. Whereas their medieval predecessors had dominated the theological disputations, the sixteenth-century German figures loomed large in the shaping of Jewry policy within the Empire and played a pivotal role in drawing and presenting a distorted image of Jews and the Jewish religion in the early modern period. Some of the most noxious images of Jews popularized in German lands were propelled into public consciousness by former Jews.

Three innovators, Victor von Carben, Johannes Pfefferkorn, and Antonius Margaritha, pioneered the creation of new roles and new spheres of activity for converts in German lands. In this new convert culture, the medieval past of Ashkenaz remained much in evidence alongside new forms of convert literature and new ways of articulating convert identity. Many of the successors of Carben, Pfefferkorn, and Margaritha emulated their work, but few left as deep an impression on the image of Jews and Judaism in German lands. How did these converts perceive their role? How did they adjust to the differences between their expectations and the realities they faced after conversion? What images of Jews did they convey to the Christian world, and what lessons about the Christian world

did they represent to their erstwhile coreligionists? Several factors converge to explain why, in the early decades of the sixteenth century, the role of converts expanded beyond their rather narrow theological–polemical role in medieval disputations, to the forefront of public consciousness, first in the intellectual world and eventually in the popular mind as well.

Between Iberia and Germania

The influence of Spanish strategies for dealing with both Jews and new converts on German policies and the imagination of lay and religious leaders merits closer examination. The evidence suggests that the Dominican order, flush with its great success of conversion and expulsion of Spanish Jewry, attempted to import public religious disputations and other high–pressure missionizing tactics into German lands. Compared to the elaborate preparations and careful ground rules that characterized other medieval polemical confrontations, theological exchanges between Christians and Jews in German lands had been characterized by a remarkable lack of formality.² The possibilities of greater cross–fertilization between Spanish and German diplomatic and clerical circles grew after 1496, when Maximilian I, Habsburg emperor, engineered the marriage of his son Phillip to Juana of Castile, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain.³ Active Dominican centers such as the one in Cologne may have served as channels of Spanish influence, while printing centers such as Basel published large numbers of works by Spanish authors. After their Iberian success, the Dominicans looked to their established footholds in German lands and specifically to Cologne to implement similar policies, including the use of converted Jews as missionaries.⁴ While the absence of political unity may have prevented the establishment of centralized anti–heretical institutions such as the Inquisition in German lands, the lack of a political center did not hamper the flow of rhetoric, images, and ideas.⁵ Definitions of Judaism, polemical goals and tactics, as well as images of converts, permeated cultural and geographical boundaries.

The Catholic defender Johannes Eck, famed for his disputation against Luther, linked the techniques of Spanish monks and priests against the Jews with polemical and missionary activities in late fifteenth–century German lands. “Monks and priests rose often to dispute with the Jews, as occurred many times in Castile and Navarre. I will name only one German: Peter Schwarz, preacher of the order who came from Salamanca, where he had studied Hebrew and Arabic. . . . He demanded of the Emperor that the Jews of Regensburg should be coerced to attend his sermon which he preached against the Jews.”⁶ Trained by the Dominicans in Salamanca, German–born Peter Schwarz/Nigri returned from Spain to his native land. He attempted to transplant his newly acquired techniques of disputation

to work against the Jews in the German Imperial cities of Frankfurt, Regensburg, Worms, and Nuremberg.⁷ Schwarz/Nigri was prepared to preach to Jews in Hebrew, and apparently even in Yiddish. According to one eyewitness in Nuremberg, after his public diatribe, Schwarz/Nigri tried to engage individual Jews in further polemical exchange but could find no willing disputants among the local Jews. They said, “He preached well . . . but we can find rabbis to interpret otherwise.’ They sent to Erlangen for the Jew Vogelein, who was a rabbi; he came but he refused to dispute. They then sent to Bohemia for the most learned scholar among the Jews. He came and said that he was happy to have met the monk; that the monk was an excellent doctor, but he did not wish to dispute him; he had a letter drawn up that they did not wish to oppose him.”⁸ The contrast between the grand spectacle of public disputations in Spain and Schwarz/Nigri’s unsuccessful attempts to find a Jewish interlocutor could not be more striking. The mechanisms of coercion used to compel Spanish Jews to participate in disputations did not operate in the Empire as they had elsewhere. Schwarz/Nigri did not pave any new paths to missionizing among the Jews of Germany and does not appear to have been very effective. He wrote *Stella Meschiah*, a missionizing tract, ostensibly out of love for the Jews. “I made this little book to satisfy their spiritual hunger and not to persecute them, for I love them.”⁹ A typical missionary of his time, Schwarz/Nigri introduced his work with an avowal of good intentions which did not deter him from expressing the strongest contempt for Judaism.¹⁰

Polemical works produced within the Iberian context found their way to German cities as soon as presses began to roll.¹¹ A polemic attributed to the medieval convert Samuel of Morocco, translated from Arabic into Hebrew into Latin in Spain, was first published in Mantua in 1475 and then in Nuremberg in 1498. Translated into German in 1524, it was reprinted several times thereafter in German cities, in both Latin and German editions.¹² Spanish Franciscan Alonso d’Espina’s *Fortalitium fidei* (composed in 1460) was printed first in Strasbourg (1471) and subsequently in at least six other German editions, including Basel and Nuremberg.¹³ Espina himself had recycled German material from thirteenth-century Thomas of Cantimpré concerning the ritual murder of a Christian girl in Pforzheim, Bavaria, in 1261; the history of this book represents a complete circle of Spanish–German influence.¹⁴ Espina’s compendium of sharply anti-Jewish, and particularly anti-convert, lore appealed to Christian clergy in German lands for centuries after it was first published.¹⁵ It influenced civilian government policy as well. Shortly after the *Fortalitium* appeared in Nuremberg, in 1494, the city council began preparing its petition to expel the Jewish population that had dwelled in this Imperial city for centuries. In 1498 the emperor acceded to the expulsion request and banished the Jews of Nuremberg in 1499.¹⁶ Ulrich Zasius used

Espina's work as a source for his 1508 treatise, "Three Questions on the Baptism of Jewish Children," which legally justified Christian authorities' removing Jewish children from their parents to be raised as Christians.¹⁷ Matthew Adrian, a former Spanish Jew, came to the University of Tübingen after his conversion. There, he taught Hebrew to Christian Hebraists such as Konrad Pellikan and presumably served as a source of information for Christian scholars curious about Judaism.¹⁸

The exchange between Iberia and German lands was lively and bi-directional. Intrepid Spanish clerics who had experienced the German religious schism imported a nascent Spanish Reformation into Spain. The Inquisition, based in the Spanish Netherlands, penetrated into German lands in search of these heretics; those unable to elude its agents were deported to Spain and burned at the stake.¹⁹ German merchants sojourning in Lisbon published a detailed report of the 1506 massacres of New Christians, and distributed them to a voracious reading public.²⁰

The efforts by members of the Dominican order to export their Spanish proselytizing methods to the Habsburg emperor's German holdings do not seem to have succeeded on a large scale. According to the criteria outlined by Robert Chazan in his discussion of medieval missionizing, a serious commitment to proselytizing among the Jews would have been manifested in several ways. First, significant resources would have had to be allocated to the initiative, both in terms of training personnel and enlisting the support of secular authorities to coerce Jewish submission. Second, techniques for confronting the Jews in a systematic way, such as requiring their attendance at sermons or staging disputations, would have had to be initiated and regularized. Finally, effective and innovative arguments would have had to be developed to ensure the maximum impact.²¹ By the sixteenth century, this medieval approach would have had to be modified somewhat. Resources would have had to be devoted to the training and support of converts after their conversions, as the Catholic Church did with the *domus conversorum* (house of catechumens) in late sixteenth-century Rome. None of these things were done in sixteenth-century German lands, however. Even the isolated instances of disputations in German lands remained mostly private and spontaneous.²²

One sixteenth-century example suffices to show the difference in conception and implementation of Jewish-Christian disputation on German soil. When the book of convert Antonius Margaritha "exposing" the treachery of Jews and the subversive rituals of Judaism was first published (1530), Charles V, the first Habsburg emperor to govern both Spanish and German territories, ordered that a "disputation" be arranged. He ordered Josel of Rosheim, leader of Imperial Jewry,

to defend the Jewish position against Margaritha's new charges at the Imperial Diet of Augsburg, in 1530. Selma Stern, eminent historian and biographer of Josel, referred to "the enormous burden of responsibility thrust upon Josel by the introduction of this Spanish practice into Germany." But even a superficial re-counting of the events leads to another conclusion. Although the exchange may have taken place before a distinguished audience of participants in the Reichstag, no other Jews were compelled to appear. No theologians cited religious proof-texts or logical arguments to buttress their religious claims before a polemically vulnerable audience. No protocols of the disputation were preserved, or apparently even written, by any of the participants. This "disputation" had a different configuration and another purpose.

The most dramatic proof of the distinctive aspect of the events at Augsburg lay in its surprising conclusion. In the words of Stern, Josel's persuasive powers were so great that "the Imperial Commission had Margaritha arrested as a dangerous troublemaker and finally expelled him from Augsburg."²³ In the whole history of medieval Jewish-Christian disputation in Spain and elsewhere, the outcome of a Jewish-Christian disputation never led to the triumphant victory of the Jewish spokesman and the ignominious expulsion of the representative of Christianity. Had this been a religious polemic, such an outcome would have been inconceivable. The event at Augsburg was no medieval-style disputation over the correctness of the Jewish faith or the superiority of Christianity, but rather a political debate as to whether the emperor should extend the customary privileges of toleration to Jews as his Imperial forebears had done. The desired result was not the conversion of Jews but the clarification of the new emperor's Jewry policy. Even if some individual members of the Imperial Court hoped to duplicate the Spanish experience and to employ Margaritha's text as the basis for a medieval-style disputation, that was not how the Imperial Court generally perceived it.

One of the rare records of a disputation held under the auspices of a secular authority took place in 1704 in the court of Hannover. As Martin Friedrich has already noted, that disputation is equally striking for the manner in which it differed from the medieval Spanish model. Here, both sides had freedom to dispute as equals, and the dignity of the Jewish disputant remained intact to the end. Friedrich cites several other instances of disputation, but all these examples combined simply prove that medieval-style missionizing to the Jews did not make an effective and lasting impression in early modern German lands. It remained fragmented and fleeting, mirroring the political and religious fragmentation in German lands.²⁴

The methods used by Spanish clerics to bring impressive numbers of Jews to

the baptismal font do not seem to have been widely emulated, or even correctly understood, by German clergymen. Johannes Müller, seventeenth-century pastor of St. Peter's church in Hamburg and active missionary to the city's Jews, wrote of Hieronymus de Sancta Fide, a prominent medieval Iberian convert from Judaism, that his anti-Jewish book was "read" publicly in Spain to Jews and Christians, resulting in the conversion of five thousand Jews to Christianity. Müller's account conveys a total lack of comprehension of the dynamics of public disputation Iberian style.²⁵ The political fragmentation of German political life, combined with the thinly dispersed population of early modern German Jewry, no longer concentrated in urban areas, did not lend itself easily to the methods that had succeeded so well under Iberian circumstances.

Johannes Pfefferkorn: Confrontation and Controversy

A great deal of scholarly energy has been devoted to delineating the real issues behind a controversy that erupted between Johannes Pfefferkorn, a 1504 convert from Judaism, and Johannes Reuchlin, a Christian humanist scholar. Here I want to emphasize only those elements of this early sixteenth-century conflict that affected the encounter between Jews, Christians, and converts in early modern German lands. Beginning in 1507, Pfefferkorn published several treatises, all of them abusive of the Jewish religion and tradition. In their structure and content, they served as models for a long series of successors, which would adopt similar arguments and strategies. Based on a polemical Christian tradition of misunderstanding how Jews read the Talmud, and misrepresenting its contents, Pfefferkorn presented all post-biblical Jewish literature as though it were of a piece, all of it deeply anti-Christian in nature.

Pfefferkorn did not stop at a negative characterization of Jews and Judaism. He agitated actively for an accelerated program of missionizing designed to bring about the mass conversion of Jews in German lands. Determined to undermine the civil status of Jews within the Empire, Pfefferkorn depicted them as dangerous enemies of Christians and urged that they be deprived of the right to live anywhere in Christendom. He recommended economic restrictions on Jewish livelihood, the coercion of Jews to attend Christian sermons, and the destruction of Jewish books. It was the last of these recommendations that ignited the spark of controversy within the community of learned men of the Empire and set Pfefferkorn and Reuchlin on a collision course.

Johannes Reuchlin, Pfefferkorn's opponent, brought German humanists closer to important developments within the scholarly world of the Florentine Renaissance, including the return to Hebrew sources. Renaissance philosopher Pico

della Mirandola had nurtured a new generation of Hebraist humanists; his disciple Johannes Reuchlin transplanted Christian Hebraism onto German soil.²⁶ The turn toward Hebrew rendered Jews and Judaism subjects of the most serious scholarly interest manifested in the Christian world for over a millennium.²⁷ Aware that the German humanists lagged far behind their Italian counterparts in many subjects, Reuchlin advocated the study of Hebrew, along with Greek and Latin, as a prerequisite for an authentic encounter with the texts that formed the basis for Christian civilization. In addition to his pioneering competency as a Christian Hebraist, Reuchlin introduced methods of using Kabbalah, Jewish mystical teachings, to support Christian doctrines.

While Reuchlin, like every Christian of his time, believed that Christianity had superseded Judaism and that Christian society should seek to convert Jews, he rejected the notion that Christians had a right to use force to achieve this objective. He argued that Jews had enjoyed the right of practicing their religion within the Empire long before the birth of Christianity. From the point of view of Imperial law, both Christianity and Judaism constituted “sects,” their adherents subject equally to the laws of the Empire. Reaching back to the image of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Roman Empire that preceded the rise of Christianity, Reuchlin argued that measures such as book burning, the kidnapping and baptism of Jewish children, any resort to religious coercion whatsoever, should be shunned as a violation of Imperial law.

Reuchlin mocked Pfefferkorn’s pretensions to authoritative knowledge concerning the content of Jewish books. He correctly pointed out that no Christians then living in German lands, himself included, and few Jews could claim any kind of competency in the Talmud. He distinguished between different genres of Jewish literature and emphasized that many of the citations in Pfefferkorn’s polemical arsenal referred to pagans rather than Christians; in fact, Reuchlin argued, very few Jewish books addressed or refuted Christianity directly. Books such as the Talmud taught Jews to observe their religion correctly, and neither church nor state had a right to interfere in Jewish learning or praxis.²⁸

Pfefferkorn nearly succeeded in his campaign against Jewish books; they were confiscated in anticipation of a trial. But ultimately, with the help of Reuchlin’s “Opinion” and Jewish intercession, the emperor revoked the book burning. Its political consequences aside, the Reuchlin–Pfefferkorn confrontation set the tone for the contest between converted Jews who claimed access to Jewish knowledge as a birthright and Christian Hebraists who made painstaking but impressive progress in Hebraic and Judaic subjects, a struggle for control of the representation of Jews and Judaism that persisted through the eighteenth century.

The Impact of Print

The rapid development of printing, an efficient and inexpensive means of spreading ideas, played a critical role in Pfefferkorn's success in attaining a large public following. By the early sixteenth century, a dazzling array of printed material in many genres rolled off German printing presses. Books, tracts, and illustrated broadsides disseminated Reformation ideas, educating the masses to question and sometimes reject their old beliefs and embrace the new. Many religious movements took advantage of the new technology to convey their ideas. The greater availability of printed texts, for example, fueled the interest in Christian Hebraica. Christians who hoped to print Hebraica needed the expertise of fluent Hebrew readers for all aspects of the process, from typesetting Hebrew print, often within the same work as Latin characters, to editing and proofreading.²⁹ The world of Christian-Hebrew publishing became a hospitable sanctuary for Jews and Christians working side by side. Above all, it became a haven for converts. The house of Daniel Bomberg, a Christian printer who published some of the earliest Hebrew classics, employed Felix Praetensis to prepare the first edition of the *mikra'ot gedolot* (Hebrew Bible with classical commentaries) and numbered converts among his other employees. Thus, converts from Judaism found themselves at the center of intellectual and religious ferment in early sixteenth-century Germany, and their increased visibility and influence owed a great deal to ready access to printed matter.

Antonius Margaritha, the Protestant Reformation, and the Persistence of anti-Judaism

The Reformation marked a turning point in the history of the Christian church. Shattering the hegemony of the papacy in Rome, the Reformation paved the way to denominational choice. Protestant sects now leveled many of the same charges against the Roman church and against one another as the church had for centuries leveled against the Jews. While Jews remained conspicuous as non-Christians, Christian rivals replaced the Jews as chief objects of scorn. The religious reconfiguration of the Reformation led Germans to re-examine their identities; the image and role of Jews underwent renewed appraisal as well. At this critical time of redefinition, converts—simultaneously insiders and outsiders—helped to re-define each community as it interpreted itself against the other. Many medieval anti-Jewish strands persisted into this new age of confessional reconfiguration, some nurtured by converts from Judaism.

Protestantism, in its efforts to peel away layers of Roman interpretation,

stimulated the return to the Hebrew roots of the Bible. Until the late fifteenth century, very few Christians, including clergy, cared to cultivate Hebrew. The Council of Vienne (France) in the early fourteenth century had first called for Hebrew to be taught at European universities for its polemical utility, and Reuchlin echoed this call in the early sixteenth century, directed at German institutions of higher learning. The response would revolutionize the place of Hebrew in the German university curriculum. In the medieval period, theologians blamed Jewish knowledge of Hebrew, the language of Scripture, for Jewish hubris in opposing Christian missionary efforts and Christian interpretations of the text. Christians identified Hebrew with the Jews, as the private language of a despised population.³⁰ Reformation scholarship overturned these medieval prejudices and emphasized the “*Hebraica veritas*,” the truth embedded in the Hebrew Bible. Christian Hebraists focused anew on the linguistic and hermeneutic study of the Bible, stimulating great interest in Hebrew and Jewish mystical lore. While contemporary Jews constituted a living repository of knowledge about the past they shared with Christians, Christians assumed that Jews would be loath to reveal their secrets to Christians. As one early sixteenth-century Christian Hebraist claimed, “Jews were reluctant to communicate their observances even to their best Christian friends.”³¹ But converts could serve as ideal guides to hidden Hebraic resources.

The highly visible career of convert Antonius Margaritha, most notorious after Pfefferkorn for his stinging representation of Jews and Judaism as threats to Christendom, provides another early sixteenth-century example of the trajectory followed by many subsequent converts. A son of Regensburg’s chief rabbi, a scion of the illustrious Margolis family, Margaritha converted to Christianity in 1522, three years after the Jewish community was permanently expelled from Regensburg, his native city. The exact circumstances of Margaritha’s baptism remain obscure. He converted in Wasserburg, a small Bavarian town on the river Inn, prosperous enough in the sixteenth century, but not prominent enough to draw him there specifically for the purpose of conversion. With its centuries-old cathedral, Wasserburg certainly possessed the facilities to handle a routine conversion.³² But Margaritha’s would not have been a routine baptism: his father, Samuel, had been a chief rabbi of the Empire’s most distinguished Jewish community, and his grandfather Jacob stood out among the most illustrious Jewish scholars in fifteenth-century Ashkenaz. Surely, with enough advance notice, a grand ceremony might have been prepared for this occasion, with prominent sponsors to serve as godparents. But no trace of such a ceremony has survived. Wasserburg’s geographic location and relatively modest standing indicate that

perhaps Margaritha converted without giving the Christian clergy much advance notice. He may have been following his father southeast when he made up his mind to convert.³³

Several years after his baptism, Margaritha published a German book entitled *Der ganz Judisch glaub* (The Entire Jewish Faith), which purported to reveal the anti-Christian content of Jewish religious custom and ritual. This book raised Margaritha to great prominence; it came to the attention of both the emperor and Martin Luther. It charged that Jews posed an inherent, immediate danger to the Empire because the Jewish religion was anti-Christian to the core. Following the public careers of Victor von Carben and Johannes Pfefferkorn, Margaritha conformed to the pattern whereby converted Jews developed the predominant modes of representation of Jews and Judaism for the German reading public. They played a vital role in a contest for authority and authenticity against Christian Hebraists.

The career of Margaritha adumbrated the life path of future converts in other respects as well. The first of the prominent converts after Protestantism changed the confessional complexion of German lands, Margaritha's Jewish contemporary Josel of Rosheim charged that, after his initial conversion to Catholicism, Margaritha converted again to Luther's denomination. Although there is no evidence to substantiate this claim, Margaritha's reputed confessional vacillations became a hallmark of Jewish converts to Christianity in the post-Reformation age.³⁴

Converts between Denominations

As German society underwent a process of confessionalization, each denomination established its own institutions and tried to control its adherents and attract new converts.³⁵ In German lands alone, Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anabaptists struggled for territory and authority. While the conversion of Jews did not merit high priority in the early generations of the Reformation, it carried great symbolic weight. Roman Catholic apologist Roberto Bellarmine counted successful missionary activity among the marks of the true church, and the lack of it in Protestant lands a sign of the deficiency of the new faith: "Heretics [Protestants] are never said to have converted either pagans or Jews to the faith, but only to have perverted Christians. But in this one century the Catholics have converted many thousands of heathens in the new world. Every year a certain number of Jews are converted and baptized at Rome by Catholics who adhere in loyalty to the bishop of Rome; and there are some Turks who are converted by the Catholics both at Rome and elsewhere. The Lutherans compare themselves

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 3. Antonius Margaritha's *Der gantz Judisch Glaub* (*The Entire Jewish Faith*), reprinted many times throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Frankfurt, 1561).
Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

to the apostles and the evangelists; yet though they have amongst them a very large number of Jews, . . . they have hardly converted even so much as a handful.”³⁶ In the competition between denominations, converts from Judaism found greater leverage and freedom of movement than at any earlier time. The existence of more than one official denomination in German lands by the third and fourth decades of the sixteenth century complicated the choices facing converts in several ways.

Before the formation of Protestant confessions, the church promoted the majesty of a universal religion to potential converts. At the same time, the specter of the use of force and the unacceptable adoration of saints and icons, “idolatry” in the eyes of many Jews, presented substantial obstacles to conversion. One convert remembered his first encounter with the notion of another type of Christianity. Shalome ben Shalomoh, approached by a young Christian contemporary seeking to convert him to Christianity, retorted, “‘Why, think you I will worship images?’ For such was my ignorance that I thought all Christians were Papists, there being none but Papists, who were called Christians, and Jews, in the country where I was born.”³⁷

The multiple forms of Christianity that became available to potential converts confused them as to the identity of the real church. As Lotharius Franz Fried, formerly Joseph Marcus, reminisced, “When I look back upon my conversion, I wonder how it happened. There are so many byways and sidepaths. Each side calls out, ‘Christ is here, this is He, I am the right path to embrace the true mother.’ Many [Jews] like me missed the right path, stumbled from the rain into the river.”³⁸ The policy of territorially determined denomination, difficult enough for Christians who were forced to change confessions when their leaders changed their minds or lands changed hands, sometimes led to absurd outcomes for Jewish converts. In one Jewish family, children born in different confessional territories had to be converted to the confession of their respective birthplace.³⁹ When he considered the reasons for the meager number of conversions from Judaism, eighteenth-century anti-Jewish Hebraist Johann Eisenmenger cited first “the great disunity within the Christian religion.” He recounted that when he approached a Jew concerning conversion, the Jew retorted, “First you Christians clean up your own house, quit cursing one another, and decide on the essentials of your religion. Then, come back to us.”⁴⁰ According to Eisenmenger, Jews even had to devise two separate terms of debasement for the “religions of the Christians.” They referred to Roman Catholicism as “the insignificant faith,” and to Luther’s religion as “the new faith.”⁴¹

Clear guidelines no longer served even with respect to fundamental issues like the sacraments. As one wry observer noted in an early eighteenth-century treatise,

tise on baptism, a chart now tabulated the differences between the doctrines of the Reformed Church in France, England, and Scotland. If committed believers needed a diagram to keep track of what each denomination believed, what were the newcomers to the faith to do?⁴² Missionary Heinrich Callenberg planned to publish a separate pamphlet on the history of the erring sects in contemporary Christianity, along with a brief demonstration of how each sect deviated from the teachings of the New Testament, because “the Jews are very put off by such divisions and claim that even if they would wish to convert they wouldn’t know to which side to convert.”⁴³ The medieval Christian argument that sectarianism and rabbinic contentiousness proved that Jews no longer possessed the true interpretation of the divine word could now be leveled against Christians.

Reformation and Conversion

Arising out of a profound critique of the Roman church, Protestantism placed new emphasis on the importance of obtaining converts from Judaism. In the earliest phase of his thought, Martin Luther placed high hopes on securing massive conversion of Jews, which he saw as the greatest testimonial for his project of Christian renewal and his rejection of the religious accretions of papistry. “If I had been a Jew and seen such idiots . . . ruling and teaching the Christian religion, I would rather have been a sow than a Christian. . . . When these Jews saw that Judaism had such strong scriptural basis and that Christianity [Catholicism] was pure nonsense without biblical support, how could they become . . . good Christians? . . . If the Jews are treated benignly and are instructed kindly through the Bible, many of them will become real Christians.”⁴⁴

Luther eventually abandoned his hope for the massive conversion of Jews; in fact, their conversion remained a largely neglected element of the Protestant agenda. After a long hiatus in missionizing to the Jews, several waves of reforming clergy, culminating in the Pietist movement in the late seventeenth century, devoted serious attention to proselytizing among the Jews. The establishment of “institutes” devoted to the friendly persuasion of Jews to convert to the reformed faith, such as those of Esdras Edzard in late seventeenth-century Hamburg and of Heinrich Callenberg in early eighteenth-century Halle, lent new impetus to the Christian mission in German lands. The Protestant critique of Catholic compulsion tactics served the internal polemical purpose of attacking Catholicism and advanced the contention that Protestantism offered Jews a friendlier, gentler church.

Although some Protestant princes promoted coercive measures to get Jews to convert, most Protestants criticized the Inquisition, the recourse to forced baptism, and even the use of compulsory conversionary sermons, a practice still

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the print version of this title.]

Fig. 4. Preaching to the Jews of Rome. Hieronymus Hess, “Die Bekehrung der Juden in Rom,” a satirical German engraving of Catholic coercion (Rome, 1823).
Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

widespread in Rome. The few attempts to force Jews to attend sermons in German lands resulted in the wry observation that while Jews could be compelled, through fines and other punishments, to be present at the sermons, they could not be compelled to pay attention.⁴⁵ As one anonymous pamphlet mocked, “This is what happens when Jews are forced to attend sermons they don’t wish to hear.”⁴⁶ The pamphleteer cited a description from a traveler through Italy: “There are approximately eight thousand souls. They are forced every Friday to listen to the sermons of a Dominican monk concerning their unbelief. The *sbirri* (Roman police) go among them with big sticks to wake those who fall asleep; two clerics take the name of the absentees in order to punish them. They check their ears to see that they haven’t stopped them with wool.”⁴⁷ Likewise, the author cited the judgment of respected Hebraist Wagenseil about forced preaching in Rome: “Men and women are forced to hear. When the hitter wields his stick, it causes such a tumult, the preacher is interrupted. No one is engaged by the sermon, the people are easily distracted, and it is no wonder that nothing is accomplished.”⁴⁸

The case of convert Johannes Isaac and his son Stephan (1542–97), whom we encountered earlier, provides a dramatic example of the complications that the

Reformation introduced into the lives and destinies of converts.⁴⁹ Each underwent multiple conversions. Johannes, along with his then four-year-old son, Stephan, originally converted from Judaism to Lutheranism under the influence of pastor Johannes Draconites in 1546. When Martin Luther died that same year, Johannes even wrote a “Zionide,” an elegy mourning Luther’s death. After two years, the political climate in Hesse changed. Johannes Isaac’s Protestant sponsor, the Landgraf (count) of Hesse, imprisoned by Granvelle, chancellor of (Catholic) Emperor Charles V, could no longer serve as his protector. When the Catholics decided that Isaac could be useful to them, they asked Johannes Isaac to serve as teacher of Hebrew in the (Catholic) University of Louvain, in Brabant; he apparently had no qualms about converting again, this time to Catholicism.

In 1551, Isaac left Louvain, and went on to serve as professor of Hebrew in Cologne. But the charge of instability in matters of faith clung to Johannes. When the issue of his father’s inconstancy was raised years later, his son Stephan justified it by claiming that Johannes was a convert of only two years’ duration when he reconverted and did not really understand the differences between the denominations! In 1570, almost twenty years after he arrived in Cologne, someone tendered a complaint against Johannes Isaac, that he had derided the mass and denigrated the host by turning his back to the altar during communion. Feeling that he would never truly be accepted as a Catholic (according to Stephan), Johannes then began to regret his conversion from Protestantism. As a result of this incident, the Jesuits, who had been orchestrating Stephan’s career as a Catholic priest, alienated the father from his then Catholic-priest son, to Johannes’s permanent dismay. Johannes remained in Cologne until his death in 1577, estranged from the son he had fought to tear from his mother’s Jewish home so many years earlier. But the story did not end with Johannes’ death; questions of denominational constancy followed Stephan into the next generation.

Stephan’s Jesuit mentors, aware of his intellectual gifts, prepared him for a life as a polemicist against Protestantism. They granted him special dispensation to read Protestant works in order to refute them. According to his defensive testimony, reading Protestant theology aroused questions within him. In 1582–83 he delivered sermons against the worship of icons and saints, some of the most vexing issues that separated the denominations. He claimed that he wished to repair the church from within, but, as a result of these sermons, the Catholic hierarchy forbade him to preach and tried to distance him from Cologne. By 1584 the dispute had escalated and become exceedingly bitter. Stephan left his lucrative priestly domain, as well as the Catholic Church, a bitter defeat for his Catholic sponsors. He reverted to Protestantism, which he had already experienced briefly during his father’s first stage of conversion. Stephan’s experience of multiple con-

version as he matured within the Catholic world sharpened his critical faculty and enabled him to look at each denomination and its doctrines with greater objectivity. Despite years of preparation for missionary work and his extensive training in Catholicism and polemic, his various opponents attributed his critical stance to a single underlying factor: that he had been born a Jew. Another church document from that controversy in Cologne described Isaac's sermons as "the devil having reached the ultimate sanctuary, and . . . his instrument was a badly baptized Jew." Stephan Isaac never forgave the Jesuits of Cologne for their role; they in turn never failed to remind their audiences that this fierce polemicist, whom they had once prized, was only a "Jew turned false Christian."⁵⁰

Converts who sought to manipulate their promise of baptism could now claim a legitimate excuse for multiple conversion, provided they did it only once in each denomination. A Protestant chronicler of Nuremberg's baptisms recorded the case of a seventeenth-century convert, son of Chajim bar David Schirmer of Grossglogau, who became Christoph Gabriel Ulrich upon his (Protestant) conversion. He later fled to Vienna, where he turned to the Catholic Church. The chronicler reported with satisfaction that this convert ended his life hanged as a thief. The same source reported that another Jew, converted in 1659, Michael of Prague, later "apostatized" to the Jesuits, and that eventually, "the swindler" returned to Judaism.⁵¹ Some converts from Judaism proceeded from one denomination to the other, claiming that they had not found their true place in the first.

The competition between denominations brought benefits to potential converts, allowing them more spiritual latitude. On the other hand, Christian converters now began to view Jewish converts to one denomination as potential defectors to others, so they could never be regarded as truly converted. The chagrin of watching hard-won converts defect to other Christian denominations produced rhetorical venom as sharp as reversions to Judaism had caused.

Sectarianism and Polemic

From the onset of the Reformation, Jewish converts to Christianity were aware of the new polemical vulnerability that the schism within Christendom had created. They countered potential and actual Jewish mockery of the church's claim to universalism by highlighting internal discord and sectarianism among Jews. Stressing the internal dissonance within and between Jewish communities served to negate rabbinic claims to exclusive authority. Converts noted the formal sectarian groups that existed in the past and present. In the early modern period, Jewish sectarian groups, Samaritans and Karaites, had caught the interest of Christian Hebraists searching for the "true" text of the Hebrew Bible.⁵² Although Karaites were rare in early modern northwestern European Jewry, they had flour-

ished in the medieval Sephardic world and in the Crimea.⁵³ Most contemporary converts simply alluded to the existence of these sects as a code for questioning rabbinic claims to exclusive authority. Converts hoped to counter the impression, widespread among Christians, that, compared to the dissension within Christendom, Jews enjoyed unity. As one sixteenth-century Italian put it, "All Jews observed the same law; while Christians disputed endlessly, some wanting it one way and some another."⁵⁴ To counter this perception, converts from Judaism disseminated its opposite. As Moses Marcus observed, the difference in customs and the social division between Spanish-Portuguese and German Jews was almost as great as that between Calvinists and Lutherans.⁵⁵ Converts harped on the Jewish intellectual tradition of dialectical disputation, regional differences in Jewish customs, or various internecine communal disputes to score similar points.

Early sixteenth-century convert Johannes Pfefferkorn referred to *juden secte* in his very first printed references to Jews. He stressed the internal divisiveness of Jewish thought and practice: "Because of their lack of understanding, they divide their beliefs and practices into ten segments, so that one [sect] believes and practices one thing, the other, another thing, the third thus, the fourth so, and they know neither here nor there."⁵⁶ Antonius Margaritha derided Jewish disharmony even more sharply: "They beseech God to let them return to their land, so that their children can be lords and eat large grapes. If they were to come to their land tomorrow, they would not be able to hold it for a year, because of their inner disunity." He recounted the Talmudic story of the feud between "Kamtzo and bar Kamtzo" in detail and with obvious relish. "Even today, Jews are expelled from many places because of the great envy, harshness and quarreling that exists among them, and they betray their own to the Christian authorities."

Margaritha here digressed to describe the layers of Jewish communal self-government. "So many officials, yet they [the Jews] are so few in number. Where many of them live together as in Worms, Frankfurt, and Prague, they have parties, factions, and sects. Each wants to have their own candidates appointed, and if I were to describe all the infighting, I would need another volume." Margaritha pointed out that if a Jew took one of their numerous quarrels concerning their "business and deceit" to the Christian authorities, he was called a *mosser* (traitor) by them; they would consider him to be a godless person and curse him solemnly and harshly. No people treated their beggars as harshly as Jews did, Margaritha complained. When a poor man wanted to marry off his daughter, the rabbi gave him a letter called *kibbutz*, which attested to his great need and good pedigree; he became a *kabtzan* (beggar). He was able to take the letter throughout German lands, wherever Jews lived, perhaps to Frankfurt or Worms. There he showed the letter to the rabbis, *parnassim*, and *gabaim*. In this context Margaritha took

the opportunity to emphasize the distrust that existed between Jews, rather than between Jews and Christians.⁵⁷

In his description of the synagogue services on *Simhat Torah*, the holiday on which many Jewish congregations auctioned off honors to raise money and which was a favorite target of critics of Judaism, Margaritha further underscored the discordant element. "Note well, Christian reader, that on this one occasion there is more enmity and blasphemy, than in all Christendom. No matter who the sexton calls up, they all begin to mutter and complain. Some even complain to the Christian ruler. What a fine way to read God's Law!"⁵⁸

Concerning the Jewish community of Regensburg, Margaritha's native city, Margaritha recalled a time "when I was some 13 or 14 years of age, and not then in the city, that there were great divisions among its Jewish inhabitants, particularly between the older, less wealthy residents, and recent, affluent, arrivals." Margaritha recounted in vivid detail one episode in which a relative newcomer to Regensburg wished to establish himself within the leadership ranks of the community. Many in the community fiercely resisted his attempts because he was a recent arrival. "Such divisiveness prevailed in the Regensburg community, that they were expelled as a result of it; for had they remained united, they would have been able to forestall the expulsion."⁵⁹ Here, Margaritha provided an instance from his immediate experience of Jewish internecine strife.

Margaritha's criticism of Jewish discord remained a staple of his anti-Jewish polemic throughout his career. He devoted considerable space to a historical survey of Jewish sectarianism, to counter the notion among Christians that Jewish communal life was more harmonious and unified than that in the Christian world, rent by conflict in the wake of the Reformation.⁶⁰ Margaritha's contemporary, Josel of Rosheim, acknowledged the harmful consequences for Jewish communities of the perception of disunity. He worried that Christians would reason: "If this people, so scattered and dispersed among us, could nevertheless plan conspiracies to harm *one another* with wiles and deceit, . . . how much more so must they be plotting evil deeds against us" (emphasis added). They would use this concern as an excuse to expel Jewish communities.⁶¹

Convert Christian Gerson described at length "religious schisms among the Jews, the Pharisee and Saducee sects," "disputations among the ancient Jews concerning the doctrine of Resurrection, and the differences in observance that remained despite Maimonides' having set down the principles of the faith. For example, Gerson noted, "the Jews of Jerusalem have fewer days of festival observance than 'we' do, and each community has its own set of prayers. The Jews of France drink Christian wine, those who live in Poland cook fish in Christian dishes; those who live in Switzerland eat the cheese of their neighbors . . . Italian

Jews hold disreputable women in their homes. As one Jewish wit joked, he could in good conscience live like a Christian by eating cheese among the Swiss Jews, wine among the French, etc.”⁶²

Eighteenth-century convert F. A. Augusti traveled widely before his conversion. He paid special attention to the religious condition of his people during his travels, and observed how Jews differed from one another’s practice in many areas. Matters accepted in Cracow as *Glaubenspunkte*, fundamentals of the faith, he reported, were regarded by Oriental and Portuguese Jews as secondary. For example, Augusti cited a meeting among Jews of different backgrounds in which Polish and like-minded German Jews would not cut meat with the same knife which they used to cut cheese or butter. They were taught that this separation was a divine command and so carried with them a *Doppeltmesser*, a double knife. Other Jews laughed heartily at this and used the same knife. During many disputations over this, Augusti heard each side refer to the other as *verketzern*, heretical. He came away convinced more than ever of the tyranny of Jewish scholars and the stupidity of lay people.⁶³

Similarly, Joseph Samuel Frey encountered Jews who had lower standards of observance than himself. “[One such Jew] ate and drank freely of everything that was set before him . . . whilst on the contrary I, according to my education, ate scarcely anything but bread and butter, and that only cut with my own knife, during the whole journey.”⁶⁴ This prompted a Christian onlooker to comment on the futility of the entire ceremonial law; for Frey, it served as another of the signs on his road toward conversion.

In the course of his travels, Augusti met people who represented other Jewish alternatives. One such “Other” was apparently a member of the Karaite community, a group of Jewish sectarians who flourished in parts of Russia and Lithuania, although not named as such. “He chanced upon a man who uncovered several of the superstitions and false interpretations of his co-religionists. The man fostered a reasoned regard and love for the Bible.”⁶⁵

Augusti introduced this chance meeting into his life story as a prelude to his discovery of other superstitions held by Jews and, alternatively, of “rational” ways of reading the Bible. The meeting with the Karaite was clearly intended to portend his conversion. A second encounter with the “Other” that served to prefigure his conversion came about as a result of Augusti’s capture by Turks. Aboard the ship he met a Turk who told him that he had converted from Judaism.⁶⁶ He told Augusti that he had been paraded before the Smyrna Jewish community as a captive, but that the community distrusted his owner because the owner was a “renegade.” In the end, a Polish Jew arranged for his ransom.⁶⁷ Augusti’s narrative yielded an impression of the variety within the world, a sense of mistrust among

Jewish communities, as well as a heightened sensitivity to differences rather than commonality between Jews in faraway places. He directed his observations concerning the *pilpul*, the “casuistic” method, as a cause of Jewish contentiousness, toward a similar polemical goal of demonstrating Jewish disunity. Augusti’s story reinforced the impression of Jews at odds with one another in several places in his narrative and served the polemical purpose of undermining Jewish claims to religious truths. Missionaries did not hesitate to use the perception that the Jewish community was unraveling, its society in a state of crisis, to foster their argument that Judaism was a dead end. One reported that the Jews themselves now admitted, “Among us Jews, matters are wearisome, there is only strife among us. One turns this way, the other that way. I will die a Jew as will my children, but there is no hope for most of the rest. They are no longer Jews. Although they say they are Jews, they are not. They follow Satan more than they follow God. It has never been this way, only words of dispute.”⁶⁸

The contest among the confessions held both rewards and perils for Jews who contemplated leaving the fold. It opened new opportunities to them, while complicating their struggle to find a meaningful place for themselves within the larger society. It enabled them to reflect on both Jewish and Christian society in new ways. This was but one of the larger historical currents that form the context for understanding Jewish converts in this period. In the following chapter, we will see how another, related phenomenon affected the decisions of potential Jewish converts. The intense preoccupation of both Jews and Christians with signs of the endtime raised the stakes and lent additional meaning to each Jewish conversion to Christianity.

THE LAST DECEPTION

Conversion and the Endtime

It is plain . . . that the state of the Jews was to be but for a certain time; and tho' they must be conscious of this, what pains they have taken to deceive the world . . . by setting up fresh Messiahs in every age, and a train of Impostures to support their cause.

Anonymus, Dissertation, 12

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime

.

I would have loved you ten years before the flood:
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.

Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress"

In the Christian drama of the endtime, conversion of the Jews played a central role.¹ As Andrew Gow has observed, "Much of medieval Christian apocalyptic ignored the topic of the Jews except insofar as they—or some of them—were to convert before the Last Judgment."² Medieval art and drama had always depicted the eschaton in vivid detail, and in the early modern period, expectation of the endtime intensified. The conventions of this motif were well known even to those who could not read. For every Last Judgment depicted by Hieronymus Bosch, Lucas Cranach, or Albrecht Dürer, countless others by lesser artists, sculptors, and craftsmen adorned the sacred spaces of early modern people.³ *Flugschriften*, early printed pamphlets, a medium unique to sixteenth-century German lands, circulated apocalyptic material and motifs that do not appear in any other European language.⁴

The apocalyptic tenor of Reformation-era German lands and the heightened interest in Jewish conversion among theologians resonated deeply in early mod-

ern German culture. Luther's rhetoric was suffused with endtime thinking. "I believe that we are the last Trumpet which prepares for and precedes the advent of Christ"; or, from his table conversation, "Then somebody said . . . if the world should last fifty more years . . . Luther said, 'God forbid it should last that long.'"⁵ Luther believed that the endtime would arrive shortly, when the Pope would be exposed as the Antichrist.

Christian opinions concerning the tempo and method of Jewish conversion towards the end of time differed. Some believed that all Jews would be converted by the time of the Second Coming; others, that only a small remnant would ultimately convert, and that the salvation of the church was not linked to mass Jewish conversion. Practical political consequences followed from each of these theological positions. The belief in the ultimate conversion of all Jews formed the basis for the traditional Christian maintenance of the status quo with regard to political treatment of Jews. They could be tolerated within Christendom not only as witnesses to Christian truth but because at the end of time, they would all be converted. Christian magnanimity would ultimately persuade Jews of Christian superiority. The view that Jews might never become Christians translated into a more restrictive policy, as it did not provide any theological justification for Christian rulers to tolerate their Jewish subjects.

At the same time that Christian apocalypticism intensified, Jewish messianic expectations heightened as well. Many Jews throughout the world interpreted Martin Luther's destruction of the Roman hegemony as the beginning of the redemption.⁶ Individual converts absorbed this discourse and often mentioned the imminent end of time within the context of their conversions. Christian Gerson, who converted in the early seventeenth century, described his conversion as coming "shortly before the end of the world."⁷ Friedrich Christiani described his times as *denen letzten Tagen* (these last days), when many Jews were converting, and convert Johann Gottfried said: "Jews, my brothers in the flesh, know that these days are the last days of the six thousand years of the world's existence."⁸

From the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, the question of Jewish conversion and the methods most suited to achieve it remained on the agenda of each successive movement within German Protestantism.⁹ The vast polemical literature written by both converts and missionaries emphasized the absurdity of Jewish messianic beliefs. Christians contrasted the vain Jewish expectation of the messiah with their own assurance that the redeemer had already come. In a more sinister vein, Christian writers cast Jewish messianic claimants as predictable precursors of the Antichrist. They accused all Jews of participating in deceitful schemes to present these charlatans as world redeemers, in an attempt

to subvert Christendom. The ubiquitous accusations of Jewish deceit affected Christian perceptions of Jewish conversions.

Early modern German literary works devoted to the theme of vain Jewish messianic expectations expanded on medieval themes which conflated the dreaded Antichrist with the Jewish messiah. "If Jesus was the Messiah, the only person whom the Jews could be awaiting would be the Antichrist."¹⁰ Centuries of accumulated Christian tradition provided the Antichrist with a biography which reads like a counter-history of the story of Jesus' life. Like Jesus, the Antichrist was said to be born to Jewish parents, raised as a Jew, hailed by the Jews, but accursed with every demonic trait associated with Jews. For a short time, he would control the world until God revealed his true nature; then he would be destroyed, along with all the Jews. The Antichrist "will call himself God and circumcize himself *and call himself the messiah* and rebuild Solomon's temple and place his throne therein *and all the Jews will hasten to him . . . and he will draw the Jews to himself, saying he is the Messiah*, and he will follow Christ's footsteps, saying he wants to ascend to Heaven from the Mount of Olives" (emphasis added).¹¹ The Antichrist tradition saw the Jewish messiah/Antichrist as "master of terror, fullness of malice, who will . . . do wonders . . . through dissimulation."¹² These motifs in all their variations informed Christian literature, drama, and visual culture and inspired the most derisive caricatures of Jewish character. While legends about the Antichrist and messianic associations developed in every vernacular culture, they flourished in greater variety and power in early modern German lands. The literature mocked Jews for being deceived by rabbinic tradition with regard to the nature of the messiah. Traditional polemics and literary satires constantly noted the Jewish proclivity to follow false messiahs. In his eighteenth-century summa of anti-Judaism, Johann Eisenmenger placed two chapters immediately adjacent to one another: "Of Jewish Deceit" and "Of the Jewish Messiah."¹³ No mere happenstance, Eisenmenger intended his readers to believe that these two subjects were closely linked. The identity of the false Jewish messiah as the arch-enemy of Christ reinforced Christian suspicion that Jews who entered the Christian world also presented a false facade, intending to harm Christians rather than redeem them.

Failed Messianic Movements in the Christian Literary Imagination

The subject of Jewish false messiahs became a common feature of the early modern German literature written by converts, Christian polemicists, and missionaries. Creative works disseminated the images of Jewish deceit, self-delusion, and ultimate despair, in a way that collapsed messianic and conversionist themes. In awaiting their "real" messiah, Jews had been deceived as to the true nature of Jesus

as messiah. Passion plays, Christmas plays, and Shrovetide plays (especially the latter) presented these subjects to an avid public. The related themes of the Jew as deceived by Christians, false Jewish messiahs as the ultimate deceivers, and the idea that conversion of the Jews was the only adequate response to false Jewish messianic claims figured prominently in the literature and drama of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁴ Early modern German literature depicted Jews attempting to deceive Christians only to become the *betrogene*, the swindled. At first, stories of reversal of Jewish fortune stood alone. Kirckhof's story "Beraubung eines Juden" (Robbing a Jew), details an elaborate plot to despoil a Jew, in which the author does not hide his delight at the outcome.¹⁵

Eventually, Jewish messianic belief and the "deceitfulness" of failed Jewish messianic movements emerged as a subject of literary mockery independent of its origins in the Antichrist literature. Till Eulenspiegel depicted the Jews of Frankfurt as so impatient to know when the messiah would arrive that a Christian swindler deceived them into buying a "prophecy berry" which they swallowed before realizing that they had been duped; the "berry" contained excrement.¹⁶ Hans Folz, one of the most popular writers of such dramas, elaborated these themes in his play *Ein Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund*. Here, Jewish "rabbis" announce the coming of a messiah. The Sybilla-seer, playing the role of an omniscient chorus, immediately uncovers this plot hatched by the "rabbis." Theirs was not the true messiah, but a false one, the Antichrist. When asked why he is called the *Endcrist* (Antichrist), the creature answers simply, "For I signify the end of the Christians." Asked to explain their motives, the "rabbis" declare that Jews await their messiah so that they can assert their power over the Christians. In their address to their Christian audience within the play, the "rabbis" demonstrate their extreme disrespect, ordering the Christians to move out of the way so that Jews can have their turn at "Gewalt, herschaft und regiment" (power, dominion and rule). In Folz's lines, the Jewish rabbis reveal a bloody fantasy of avenging themselves for everything they have suffered at the hands of Christians. "We have been in misery now / For fourteen hundred years / And in that time / Suffered a great deal at the hands of Christians / . . . If only they knew / What great curses, what hatred and envy / We have always harbored for them, / How much we have stolen from them, / How many whose lives we have spoiled, / Of those to whom we were physicians; / How many young children / We have stolen from them and killed."¹⁷

Jewish messianic hopes became the subject of the grossest Christian projection fantasies, in which Christians believed that Jews must thirst for revenge after the torment they had suffered at Christian hands. In one strand of this theme, a tribe of savage "Red Jews" emerges from centuries of isolation to fight against Chris-

tendom. Of course, according to the Christian plot, these Jewish fantasies ended in failure; they remained mere fantasies “With which you Jews so stupidly attempt to/fool other people and yourselves.”¹⁸ Pamphilius Gengenbach’s *Der Nollhart* (1517) which contained classical depictions of the Antichrist and the “Red Jews,” also introduced a motif of intense Jewish waiting to avenge the suffering that Jews had endured at the hands of Christians for so many years.¹⁹ It contained one Jewish character who desired only that God send the Messiah to his people the very next day. Each of these motifs served as a vehicle for further Jewish deceit and their ultimate conversion to Christianity on Judgment Day.

Shortly after the apostasy of Jewish messianic pretender Sabbatai Zevi, seventeenth-century German author Hans Grimmelshausen, famous for his *Adventures of Simplicissimus*, wrote the most elaborate version of the tale that had been developed by Folz and his contemporaries.²⁰ His *The Enchanted Bird’s Nest* contained a chapter, “The False Messiah,” which can stand as an independent tale and represents substantial expansion of this theme. The hero, a Gentile, posed as Elijah the prophet to deceive a rich Portuguese Jew. (By making the protagonist a Gentile, Grimmelshausen drew upon the older motif of Jews as the deceived.) “Elijah” convinced the Jew to let him sleep with his beautiful daughter by promising the Jew that the child born of the union would be the messiah. The Jew agreed, and Jewry the world over awaited the child eagerly. When the child was born and turned out to be a girl, the rabbis immediately interpreted this as God’s way of protecting his newborn messiah from the wrath of the Gentiles. Openly alluding to the Sabbatian parallels, Grimmelshausen repeatedly emphasized the depth of Jewish credulousness: “If the Jews can imagine that . . . is the messiah, it is no longer surprising that they let themselves be duped by so many swindlers in the past.”²¹ Grimmelshausen’s character, the informant who gave the Gentile hero enough information to pass himself off as a Jew, was himself a Jew who had recently converted to Christianity. His newly acquired Christian faith had wavered when he heard of the imminent arrival of the Jewish messiah. Once the hoax was revealed, he reaffirmed his Christian faith. Many of the Jewish characters embraced Christianity in the end. “Since your messiah has come to naught, I urge you to embrace the Christian religion.”²² When the sole hope of Jewish vindication in the face of Christianity had been dashed, conversion was the only alternative left for the Jews.

The story persisted. In the eighteenth century, Abraham de Santa Clara retold it in “Ein Student betrieget einen Juden” (A Student Deceives a Jew). It went further than its predecessors only in imagining that after the Jews had eagerly awaited the birth of the messiah, their disappointment at the birth of a girl caused them to smash the child against a wall.

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 5. The “Red Jews” advancing, an apocalyptic image. (Note the anachronistic medieval Jewish hats.) Anonymous, *Von einer grosse meng* (Augsburg, 1523). Steyner, the publisher, also printed Margaritha’s first book. Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

The fear that the Jewish messiah, the ultimate Jew, was a deceiver of monumental proportions strengthened the Christian suspicion of ordinary Jews seeking individual redemption through conversion. Some Christians no longer welcomed them as heralds of the Second Coming but saw them as participants in a larger deception perpetrated by Jews. Jewish conversions to Christianity in early modern German lands must be viewed within the multiple contexts of these powerful cultural currents, subversive Jewish messianism and Jewish deceitfulness. Often working counter to one another, these themes endowed each conversion with great apocalyptic weight while undermining the convert's claim to authenticity.

Failed Messiahs and Jewish Conversions

Failed Jewish messianic movements played right into this literary discourse, providing historical confirmation of what may otherwise have seemed like a polemical exaggeration. Missionaries to the Jews and polemicists against Judaism exploited messianic crises and cultivated them as points of entry into dialogue with disappointed and dispirited Jews.²³ Antonius Margaritha wrote in *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* that Jews continually prayed for the messiah, that their writings contained "many excellent sayings concerning the redemption and the future of the *mashiach* (messiah)." In Margaritha's view, hope for imminent redemption formed a central part of the Jewish belief system: "Because their entire faith [the title he chose for his book] and hope consists of the belief that God will still redeem them through their unknown messiah." According to Margaritha, this belief was so central to Judaism that Jews were asked on their deathbeds whether they believed in the messiah. "If they could only be made to believe [that he had come] they would already become one with us."²⁴ Margaritha, like many converts who succeeded him, urged Christians to use messianism to open a dialogue with Jews in order to win them over. Seeking to establish a common ground on the basis of existing Jewish beliefs, Christians and converts elevated messianism and, particularly, failed Jewish messianic movements to new prominence, as a way to bring more Jews into the fold.

Christian Hebraists, theologians, and converts from Judaism who wrote about Jewish customs and practices routinely ridiculed Jewish messianic hopes. Many converts remembered that the very first question put to them when they revealed their intention to become Christian concerned the messiah.²⁵ Some mentioned how the *Zeitungen*, the broadsides of the day, disseminated and elaborated stories concerning the coming of the Jewish messiah, only to have it all end in failure. "Our easily won hope was lost, exchanged for mockery."²⁶ This was not simply a theological datum of which Jews were vaguely aware; it was an active, painful

barb in their flesh, with which Christians continually tormented them. Christian Gerson's early seventeenth-century revelations about the Jewish Talmud contained several sections devoted to Jewish messianic beliefs. He concluded with his most decisive argument: "The Jews have accepted several false Messiahs and were deceived through them."²⁷

Converts, along with Christian missionaries, emphasized the link between failed Jewish messiahs and the conversion of the Jews. These figures appeared first on the horizon of German Jews at the dawn of the sixteenth century, when a Jew of German descent, one Asher Lemlein of Reutlingen, appeared in Istria, near Venice. According to most reports, he announced tidings of the messiah.²⁸ None of the Ashkenazic Jews who chronicled the history of the movement mentioned its polemical implications, although both Sephardic and Christian sources linked the movement to Christian persuasion of Jews to convert. In his *Shalshet ha-kabbalah* (Chain of Tradition), published in Italy in the late sixteenth century, Gedaliah ibn Yahya reported: "When the man [Lemlein] died and the messiah had not come, it caused many conversions, because when the fools saw that the messiah had not arrived, they apostatized immediately."²⁹

Both ibn Yahya and seventeenth-century Sephardic chronicler Joseph Sambari linked the failure of the messianic movement with its polemical consequences within the Christian context, particularly the conversions to Christianity which followed in its wake. Even if these reports exaggerated the numbers of conversions, they prepared the way for polemical exploitation. Johannes Pfefferkorn recalled the strife among the Jews of Halle regarding the status of the Jewish messiah "Lemmel" and urged the Jews in his *Mirror of exhortation of Jews to Christianity* to recognize the true messiahship of Christ. He noted that "we" Jews often fell victim to swindlers, highlighting the incident to greatest polemical advantage.³⁰ Pfefferkorn recalled the excitement over the appearance of Lemlein, harbinger of the messiah, and the disappointment that followed. "Oh, how miserably we were deceived!"³¹ Sebastian Münster, Christian Hebraist and disciple of Elijah Levita, linked the appearance of false Jewish messiahs directly to a polemical vindication of Christianity over Judaism. He had the Christians say: "And it happened in the year 1502 that the Jews did penance in all their dwelling places and in all the lands of exile in order that the messiah might come. Almost a whole year, young and old, children and women did penance in those days, the like of which had never been seen before. And in spite of it all there appeared neither sign nor vestige, not to speak of the reality itself. . . . For how did that repentance of 1502 help you, when all Jews in their habitations and places in exile . . . young and old, infants and women, repented as never before and nothing was revealed to you. . . . You Jews [too] see and understand that your rabbis are confused and wrong."³²

Johannes a Lent, author of the seventeenth-century list of Jewish false messiahs that eventually became the canonical reference work on the subject, devoted a very substantial portion to Lemlein; his description exceeded all prior accounts of the movement.³³ Lent's account included several reports by Jewish (Ganz and ibn Yahya), non-Jewish (Genebrardus), and convert (Johannes Isaac) sources, along with his own introduction and translations from the Hebrew. Lent's excerpt from the work of the Jewish convert contained the most acerbic polemical comment, chiding the blind Jews for continuing to await a messiah in their sinful state.³⁴ Early seventeenth-century convert Christian Gerson drew upon the Hebrew chronicles written in the sixteenth century, including Solomon ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah*, ibn Yahya's *Shalshet ha-kabbalah*, and David Gans's *Sefer Zemah David*, to endow his list of false messiahs with an aura of authenticity.³⁵ Converts from Judaism derided Jewish fallibility in matters messianic, using the example of Lemlein as both a symbol of general Jewish blindness and a justification of their own conversion.

The Golden Ape

Antonius Margaritha provides a small but telling example of the convert's polemic against Jewish messianic beliefs. Margaritha ridiculed one of the biblical passages often cited by medieval Jews as a verse of consolation for the long duration of the exile: "And yet for all that, when they are in the lands of their enemies, I will not reject them nor will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God" (Leviticus 26:44). Margaritha mocked the passage as the *Goldene Affe* (gilded ape), a play on the Hebrew word "ve-Aff" that opens the verse.³⁶ This play on words demonstrates Margaritha's familiarity with the Jewish usage of this verse. It was one of several verses of consolation cited in the medieval Jewish anti-Christian polemical compilation, *Nizzahon Yashan*.³⁷ At the same time, Margaritha's insult converged with popular Christian references to the demonic nature of these Jewish hopes.

For medieval Christians, Jewish messianic prophecies had been fulfilled long ago in the person of their redeemer. They explained the long duration of Jewish hope in a future messiah as the result of innate Jewish obstinacy, spiritual blindness, and even as a sign that the devil had vanquished Jewish reason. German folk tradition often represented the devil or the incarnation of evil spirits in the form of an ape—in the early modern imagination, an accursed and inverted image of man.³⁸ By referring to the cherished hope of the Jews as "the golden ape," Margaritha mocked the Jewish belief that went to the heart of the Jewish-Christian divide. Converts from Judaism continued to cite and mock this passage well into the eighteenth century.³⁹ Perhaps it had already acquired a de-

fiant anti-Christian connotation when Glikl Hameln cited it in her description of the messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi and its disappointing conclusion.⁴⁰

Sabbatai Zevi: The Apostate Messiah

The notion of Jewish credulity in messianic matters became even more of a fixture in European literature in the wake of the messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi. In his *Histoire des juifs*, for example, Jacques Basnage devoted a substantial section to his strategies for conversion of the Jews. He introduced the Sabbatian movement in that context with an apology: "If this article seems a bit long, it is important to remember the impudence of the imposters and the credulity of the people. Moreover, this Jewish credulity did not stop with the death of Sabbatai." Long after the apostasy, the movement still had many Jewish followers.⁴¹ Richard Kidder translated much of the Latin and German material on Sabbatai Zevi for an English audience. He characterized the Jews as "so very credulous that they suffer themselves to be deluded with Cheats and Imposters . . . they who were obstinately bent upon the rejecting of our Jesus have been very prone ever since to embrace and entertain false prophets and Imposters."⁴² Whereas Kidder dispatched the other false messiahs in a single paragraph, he devoted a long section to Sabbatai. In another Christian polemical approach, an Italian account from the seventeenth century claimed that immediately before his conversion to Islam, Sabbatai admitted "That Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, was the true messiah promised to the Hebrews, and their ignorance, perfidy and obstinacy . . ." had kept the Jews from realizing that no other was coming.⁴³

While historians have tended to downplay the participation and interest in this messianic movement in German lands, closer scrutiny reveals an enduring interest in the events surrounding Sabbatai and his movement, within both the Christian and the Jewish world. Several contemporaneous reports published in German sensationalized the news or fabricated fantastic stories for which there were no credible sources. One German theologian reported the reason why Christian newsmongers invented details on their own: the act of deceiving the Jews counted as a meritorious deed according to the doctrine of "an eye for an eye."⁴⁴ The Jews had deceived others for so long, the time had come to repay them in kind. Christian sources reported that German Jews manifested great excitement over the messianic news, their authors delighted at the polemical opportunity that Sabbatai's movement presented.

Fig. 6. Sabbatai Zevi, false messiah. From John Evelyn, *Historia de Tribus hujus seculi famosis impostoribus* (Hamburg, 1669). German-language description of the messianic movement.

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Fig. 7. Sabbatai Zevi, great deceiver and false messiah, king of the Jews, 1666.
From *Die Geschichte von dem grossen Betrieger* (n.p., 1702). Reproduced courtesy of the
Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

At the height of Sabbatai Zevi's messianic movement, at least three "instant" pamphlets appeared in German to provide coverage of the unfolding excitement. Michael Buchenroeder's "Comprehensive Rebuttal of Recent Reports of the Newly Arisen Jewish Messiah" indicated by its title *Eilende Messias Juden-Post* that he had written it during the press of ongoing events. Buchenroeder cited, and then refuted, messianic news and rumors that had recently arrived from the east. The title page indicated as well that it would present the advent of Sabbatai and his prophet Nathan in the company of many other vain Jewish "rebels" who had arisen with similar claims. Buchenroeder reported that "In our times, in this past year, 1666, the outcry has been raised by word of mouth and by the pen concerning the new messiah and his prophet Nathan. It has made the Jews even more lost and confused. Some do not wish to get married; others do not pursue their business with the same intensity as before; still others proclaim great things; some say that there are Christians who are adopting the Jewish faith. Naive Christians are in doubt concerning the true faith, others hope to bring Jesus Christ as Messiah; Christian Gerson has cited similar examples of Christians turning Jew."⁴⁵

To a clergyman like Buchenroeder the advent of a Jewish messianic figure played into an ongoing contest for conversion. Paul Hirsch later wrote his refutation of the Jewish calendar to console Jews who had converted, to reassure them that no other messiah than Jesus could possibly be expected. The current event, the Jewish embrace of a "false and deceitful messiah," simply offered another proof "of the Jews' own love for falsehood and deceit."⁴⁶ Buchenroeder concluded by implying to his readers that this episode would culminate in the same victory for the Christian side that the appearance of earlier false Jewish messiahs had produced: "Many Jews would place themselves under the crucifix of the right and true messiah, and believe in Jesus of Nazareth." He supplied his readers with the familiar list of false messiahs, copied nearly verbatim from that of Christian Gerson a half-century earlier.⁴⁷

Sigismund Hosmann's guide to penetrating the obdurate Jewish heart devoted an entire chapter to the exploitation of Sabbatai's story for missionary purposes.⁴⁸ Johannes a Lent's *Schediasma Historico Philologicum de Judaeorum pseudo-Messiiis* was devoted solely to the elaborate listing of Jewish false messiahs. Although far from reliable, and certainly not the first of its kind, Lent's list served as a model of the effectiveness of "listing" as a polemical tool and as the source for many of his successors.⁴⁹ Lent counted nineteen Jewish false messiahs after the time of Jesus, from Bar Kochba to Mordechai of Eisenstadt, with a special section devoted to Sabbatai Zevi.⁵⁰ The conclusion to be drawn from the fact that Jews had been duped by so many false messiahs from the time of Jesus was obvious to Christians: "The Jews have accepted so many false messiahs, because . . . they should

have accepted the true messiah and not permitted themselves to be duped by the false ones.”⁵¹

Johann Jacob Schudt’s *Jüdischer Merckwürdigkeiten*, the great eighteenth-century compendium of Jewish lore, devoted substantial sections to the Sabbatian movement and its aftermath. If any doubt remains as to Schudt’s intentions towards this material, the introduction to the fourth volume, a poem by Johann Riederer addressed directly to the Jews, makes his meaning perfectly clear:

You blind heap! You miserable children of Levi!
 Can you not perceive that the Messiah has already come
 That your false Christ/ Sabbatai Sevi
 Like others before him/came to a nasty end.
 Be aware that we know your cunning/and godless nature
 Although you may call *us* Edomites a hundred times over.⁵²

Christian scholars interested in pursuing the conversion of Jews did not merely focus on the Sabbatian debacle in their literary works. They recounted the events which led up to it as a lively and often persuasive background for their missionary efforts. Christian Hebraist Wagenseil asked Ber Perlhefter, in February 1676 to respond to his query regarding the meaning of certain messianic midrashim. Perlhefter, an adherent of Sabbatai Zevi, responded politely, but averred that “he had put a muzzle over his mouth, not to divulge matters pertaining to the messiah, for they were profound and hidden.”⁵³ Perlhefter remained a staunch Sabbatian, although he kept the depth of his messianic commitment from Wagenseil.

Perlhefter left Wagenseil’s employ for a rabbinic position in Modena, where messianic incidents caught up with him again, in 1681/82. “A certain Ashkenazic Jew, named Rabbi Mordechai from the city of Eisenstadt, proclaimed himself a prophet and afterwards said that he was the messiah, and the Ashkenazim believed him. For over a year, I wrote to this R. Mordechai to come to Italy, for the Jews there wanted to meet him as well. When this R. Mordechai arrived in Italy, all the Jews believed in him, that he was the messiah, and they paid him great homage, and called him messiah. I too went there, but I saw that he was a crazy man; I investigated him and recognized signs of impurity and black magic. I immediately left him to warn the Jews not to believe him, for he was a fool and a magician.” Perlhefter complained to Wagenseil that his denunciation of this “messiah” as a charlatan earned him the wrath of the community. Wagenseil hastened to make polemical use of Perlhefter’s information. He rushed a copy of Perlhefter’s description to Johannes a Lent, who was just finishing his catalogue of Jewish false

messiahs. Perleheffer's description of Mordechai of Eisenstadt informed the last chapter in Lent's opus, aimed at mocking Jewish messianic hopes.

Of all the Christian clerics who used the historical accounts of failed Jewish messianic movements to gain converts for the church, none did so with greater success than Esdras Edzard. At the height of Sabbatai's movement, Edzard seems to have been more concerned with its impact on the faith of local Christians. "Some Christian merchants came to Edzard with this arrogant, unchristian talk: 'What can we do, dear Mr. Edzard? We have not only heard from Jews but also from our Christian correspondents in Smyrna, Aleppo, Constantinople, and other parts of Turkey, very certain reports, that the new Jewish messiah has performed all these wonders, and Jews the world over are assembling around him. What are we to make of the Christian teaching and belief concerning the messiah?'"⁵⁴ Never wavering, Edzard took this opportunity to assure the Christians that Sabbatai was an imposter and a deceiver. "Have a bit of patience, his deceit will soon be apparent." Edzard reminded the local Christians that Jews had been the subject of interminable mockery and derision, "since from the time of Christ they had been misled by over sixty such false messiahs and deceivers, as Christ himself already forewarned." Once subsequent events confirmed Edzard's counsel to his Christian coreligionists, he decided to make special use of the Sabbatian debacle in his efforts to convert Jews.⁵⁵

Pastor at the Lutheran Michaelskirche in Hamburg, Edzard does not appear to have manifested particular interest in the conversion of Jews before the movement of Sabbatai. The impact of the movement galvanized his own vision of the endtime; in its unfolding Edzard saw the prelude to the long-awaited conversion of the Jews before the Second Coming.⁵⁶ Its conclusion provided the most effective possible tool to bring Jews to faith in the Christian Savior. In 1667 he began to solicit seed money for a project to attract and maintain Jewish converts to Christianity; over one hundred contributors supported Edzard's initiative. Edzard devoted the remainder of his career to this project and achieved a truly remarkable rate of success. After an initial preparation period, a wave of baptisms of Jews in his church began in 1671; it did not subside until his death in 1708. During those years, Edzard was responsible for the baptism of 148 Jews in his church. To understand this number in context, in the preceding half-century only eleven Jews were baptized in Hamburg. In the same period as Edzard baptized 148 Jews, a total of 179 Jewish baptisms were registered in all German Protestant churches combined.⁵⁷ Moreover, Edzard did not rest content with simply getting Jews to the baptismal font. He devoted special attention to their continued spiritual development after baptism, holding frequent catechism lessons and counseling sessions to keep them from backsliding. He prided himself on the

low rate of recidivism among his converts and used his success to attract greater financial support.⁵⁸

Edzard's success brought him great renown during his lifetime. Nuremberg chronicler Andreas Würfel reported that the number of Jews preparing for baptism under Edzard at that time was so great that a twenty-year-old Berlin Jew who had been instructed by Edzard in 1694 could not be baptized in Hamburg. Preference had to be given to local Jews wishing to convert; those who came from other cities Edzard sent elsewhere for the ceremony.⁵⁹ English bishop Richard Kidder envied the success of Edzard, "who hath been an Instrument of converting more Jews (among which are a considerable number of Rabbins) than perhaps have ever been converted by any one person in the world since the Age of Miracles." He hoped that his example could be imported and duplicated on English soil. "In the city of Hamburg in the last seven years several Hundreds have been brought over to the Christian faith . . . If one man hath been the instrument of so many conversions, what might not a number of men do . . . The worthy son of this Dr. Edzard (now a preacher in London) . . . brought over several of the Jews to the Christian faith."⁶⁰

Autobiographical accounts by converts from Judaism in the wake of the Sabbatian movement confirm that the failed messianic movement loomed large in their decision to convert. Among these we find converts who had come under the influence of Edzard. Friedrich Albrecht Christiani, a disciple of Edzard, credited Sabbatai with showing him the error of the Jews and the truth of Christianity. Christiani expressed astonishment that so many Jews were converting, something he could never have predicted during his youth.

While I had no doubts about this [his Jewish upbringing], God had something else in mind for me. In the year 1666, when I had only been in Bruch-sall a short time, a loud cry went forth among the Jewish population concerning a newly arisen messiah. It excited the Jews far and wide, that they had been saved by this delusion. Their so-called and long awaited messiah had now come, who would bring them into the Promised Land, out of their miserable condition. In order to do so, they readied themselves in many places and made arrangements. They sold their household goods and tried to satisfy their debts at half their value, in order that they might have ample travel funds for the journey. While this false illusion seduced the Jews, it provided me with an opportunity to study the root of the matter, and to investigate more conscientiously the teachings concerning the messiah.⁶¹

Christophorus Paulus Maier, the former Solomon ben Maier of Frankfurt am Main, wrote a brief treatise thanking his patrons, along with an account of his

conversion in 1673. “I will briefly touch upon the main reason for my profession [of Christianity]. What initially brought me to turn away from the religion I had hitherto defended, was a new Messias, named שבתי צבי [Sabbatai Zevi] who arose in Turkey in 1667. News later emerged from Constantinople that he had been burned. Some magnificent messias!”⁶²

Theodore John, formerly Yom Tov of Prague, traveling in London, happened upon a cleric who introduced him to the son of Edzard, “a Lutheran divine, minister to the German church established in London.” Jo. Edzard, “like a spiritual father begat me into Christ, utterly convincing and faithfully instructing me.” Shortly after he converted in 1692, John published a detailed account of his conversion. To the very first question he was asked, “Why do you turn Christian?,” John replied that he was “convinced of the gross and blind errors of Judaism and of their vain waiting for a messias.” When asked what the chief errors in Judaism were, John replied with a similar emphasis: “All their doctrine is naught, but especially that of the Messias Person and Office, and of their vain looking for his coming, when really he is come long ago.”⁶³ Of the fifty-four questions in his baptismal catechism, fully forty-two were devoted to the messiah. Other fundamental Christian beliefs such as the New Covenant, the Virgin Birth, and the meaning of baptism were dealt with in a brief and perfunctory manner. John’s conversion account may be regarded as a primer for the Edzard method of proselytizing Jews. While the emphasis on the messiah was nothing novel within the history of the Jewish–Christian polemic, Edzard’s emphasis on the “vain looking” for the messiah, a reminder of recent messianic movements, characterized his distinctive approach.

The Sabbatian movement resonated in the accounts of many other Jews on the brink of conversion. Italian convert Giulio Morosini, among those converted to Christianity just before the movement, wrote that his Christian faith was strengthened by the Jewish messianic failure. His guide for those who preach to the Jews, *Via della Fede*, devoted considerable attention to Sabbatai. Convert Paolo Medici’s derisive account of Jewish customs concluded with a list of false messiahs “accepted and credited” by the Jews, proof of the truth of Jesus’ prophecy that “Many will come using my name and saying I am the messiah, and saying I will deceive many.”⁶⁴ Almost two centuries after the movement of Sabbatai, convert Isaac da Costa credited it with opening discussions on the nature of the messiah that were unprecedented in the medieval Jewish world: “Ideas especially, long entirely unheard of among the Jews, concerning the nature and office of the messiah, to which the appearance of this man gave rise among that nation and their scribes in different parts of the world.”⁶⁵

The repercussions of the Sabbatian movement on Jewish conversion to Chris-

tianity could be felt for decades after it had passed from the scene. Lotharius Franz Fried, formerly Joseph Marcus, devoted considerable space to false messiahs in his anti-Jewish tract.⁶⁶ Friedrich Ragstadt von Weille converted in 1669. He reflected on the great benefits of an infusion of Jewish converts for revitalizing the Christian church and urged Christians to use whatever persuasive means they could marshal to bring Jews to the church. His emphasis on the effectiveness of the messianic argument for Jewish conversion and his scornful account of Jewish false messiahs attests to the link between them in his eyes.⁶⁷ Jacob Melammed of Cornitz converted in 1676 with his family, because “Sabbatai Zevi, for whom we had waited for a whole year with fasts and mortifications, was all lies.”⁶⁸ Convert Mordechai ben Shemaya of Neuhaus studied Kabbalah with Sabbatian visionary Abraham Rovigo; he converted to Christianity to become Phillip Ernst Christfelss in 1701.⁶⁹ Each of these converts viewed their conversions to the “true messiah, Jesus” as the pioneering “Erstlinge,” to be followed by mass Jewish conversion.⁷⁰

Long after the initial movement of Sabbatai had subsided, his epigones continued to drive Jews to conversion. Sabbatian preacher and prophet Zadok of Horodna predicted Sabbatai’s return as messiah in 1695. When the date passed without event, Moses ben Aaron of Cracow, later known as Johann Kemper of Uppsala, converted, in 1696. Zadok had traveled widely, and the convert recalled, “Was there not a great tumult among the Jews in 1695? Did they not empty their homes and sell their possessions? They slaughtered their cattle and bought provisions to travel with the messiah to Jerusalem. . . . For so many have arisen and claimed to be messiahs, ben Kozib [bar Kochba], and several years ago, Sabbatai Zevi, and most recently . . . R. Zadok in Vilna.”⁷¹ Both the timing of Kemper’s conversion and his vivid recollections of the events surrounding the latest failure of Sabbatian prophecy indicate that in his mind the two were closely connected.

More conversions resulted from the disillusionment following the collapse of another movement led by a pietistic Sabbatian, R. Judah Hasid, in 1700. A gifted preacher, R. Judah gathered his followers and left Poland with thirty-one families bound for the Holy Land. The group traveled first to the German lands, where they stirred up crowds of Jews in Frankfurt, then headed south to Italy and the Holy Land. To his followers R. Judah preached penitence in preparation for an imminent messianic denouement. R. Judah did not reveal publicly the identity of the messiah he awaited, but his inner circle knew that it was the revenant Sabbatai. According to Eisenmenger, a contemporary of these events, the German Jews were so “absolutely certain that the messiah would be appearing imminently, that a certain Jew here in Frankfurt said to some Christians, ‘In a year from now, I will no longer be here, and you will no longer be here either.’” Eisenmenger

interpreted this statement to mean that the Jews would no longer be there because their messiah would have taken them to the Promised Land; the Christians would no longer be there because “their rabbis taught them that all Christians will be killed in the time of the Messiah.”⁷²

A former participant provided an insider’s account of R. Judah Hasid’s movement. Franciscus Lotharius Phillipus counted thirty-seven *hasidim* who left Poland with R. Judah Hasid, deliberately taking a circuitous path to the Holy Land so that they could attract more followers on the way. From Poland they traveled through Silesia, Moravia, Bohemia, the German lands, and then through the Tirol to Venice. By the time they reached Venice, their ranks had swollen to four hundred men. Phillipus wrote that the members of the group wanted to acknowledge R. Judah himself as the messiah, although he never claimed that title. The company split in two; only about half of the four hundred actually made it to the Holy Land. When they arrived, R. Judah immediately founded a *bet midrash* (house of study). There, he practiced devotions, penitential rites, and offered heartfelt prayers accompanied by sighs and “tears like a flowing fountain.” Every evening and every morning he immersed himself three times in a well or a stream, always with great ardor. After eleven days of this regimen, he became ill and suddenly died. After his death, the Jews and particularly his so-called “Chassiden” became fickle and began to reconsider the great deceit; they concluded that the messiah had long since come. Some of the company converted to Islam, “and we, the other portion, recognized the true Messiah and Savior in Germany. Some went over to the Papists [Catholics], but thirteen of us converted to the pure and elevating Evangelical [Protestant] belief.”⁷³ According to Hebraist Schudt, Phillipus was none other than Wolf Levi of Lublin, nephew of R. Judah Hasid. Together with another follower, Simcha Hasid, he converted in Nordlingen in 1707.⁷⁴ The spiritual devastation among the followers of R. Judah struck deeply. No missionaries in Christendom appear to have been better prepared to take polemical advantage of this moment than those in German lands.

Callenberg: The Halle Mission

As the German Pietist movement revitalized and reshaped the spiritual landscape of German lands in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Pietist founder Jakob Spener revisited the question of mass Jewish conversion. Ultimately, he did little to realize it. Not until Heinrich Callenberg founded a special institute devoted to this objective did the Pietist mission to the Jews begin in earnest. Callenberg himself frequently referred to “these last days.”⁷⁵ He not only sent out some of the best trained missionaries to work on the Jews, but he heightened awareness among sympathetic Germans of the missionary work

that remained for them all to accomplish. Callenberg took personal interest in Sabbatian material for use in his mission and apparently made contact with a conventicle of Sabbatians in Halle.⁷⁶ Stephan Schultz, one of the most prolific contributors to the collection of field notes assembled by the Halle missionaries, often used the general question of the messiah as a wedge to open dialogue with a Jew. He was particularly alert when any mention of Sabbatai allowed him even greater polemical opportunity.⁷⁷ When the Emden–Eybeschuetz controversy erupted in the mid-eighteenth century, Callenberg’s institute took advantage of the renewed interest in Jewish messianism and published an anonymous history of Sabbatai Zevi, the “great deceiver.”⁷⁸

The Emden–Eybeschuetz controversy which erupted in 1750 aroused a great deal of interest in the Christian press. Newspapers and journals followed the events and reported on its latest developments to their readers. Together with the scandal that rocked the Jewish world when the exploits of Jacob Frank’s bizarre antinomian sect were publicized, the metamorphoses of the Sabbatian movement remained lively topics through the end of the eighteenth century. Carl Anton, a convert who claimed to have studied with R. Eybeschuetz as a youth, followed reports of the Emden–Eybeschuetz controversy closely and remained deeply engaged by it. Anton claimed that he maintained contact with Eybeschuetz even after his conversion and insinuated that, beneath the rabbinic facade, Eybeschuetz supported Kabbalistic teachings that came close to the teachings of Christianity.⁷⁹ The inferences, which Anton never drew out completely, that the great rabbi was secretly drawn to Christianity via Sabbatian Kabbalah, were elaborated fully by another follower of the controversy, Christian clergyman M. David Megerlin.

The Emden–Eybeschuetz controversy inspired in Megerlin a deep and abiding interest in the use of failed Jewish messianic movements to stimulate Jewish conversion to Christianity. Megerlin argued that since it would be manifestly absurd for a great thinker like R. Eybeschuetz to infuse secret meaning into the disputed Kabbalistic amulets by referring to such an obvious deceiver as Sabbatai Zevi, the real referent could be none other than Jesus. Megerlin characterized the presumed author of the amulets, R. Jonathan Eybeschuetz, as “no true Talmudic-rabbinic Jew, but a moderate Zoharist, or secret proselyte [to Christianity] and half-Christian.”⁸⁰ On the centenary of a fictitious debate between Christians and Jews, he issued a call for a similar meeting in which the rabbis would be compelled to answer certain questions and would be presented with a list of twenty-five false messiahs.⁸¹ Megerlin urged Christians to take the side of those persecuted by Jews as Sabbatian heretics, for the latter were already well on their way to Christianity. Joseph Samuel Frey, German-born convert from

Judaism who later went on to become a founder of the London Society for Conversion of the Jews, devoted a long chapter in his autobiographical missionary book to "Some Account of Several Imposters Pretending to be the Messiah." He devoted the most substantial section of this chapter, the conclusion of his tract, to Sabbatai.⁸² Frey repeated the reply attributed to a Jew of Aleppo, who, when asked whether he believed in Sabbatai, replied that "he believed him to be the Messiah; and that he was so far of that belief, that, if he should prove an imposter, he would then turn Christian."⁸³

Lines between Judaism and Christianity grew more tangled as post-Sabbatian outgrowths continued to proliferate. Collective subversive conversions, such as that of the Frankists, and the many cases of Sabbatians who remained Jews but syncretized Christian elements into their belief systems assured the continued existence, and even broadening, of areas of social and intellectual congruence between Jews and Christians. By linking failed messianic movements to central beliefs, hopes, and practices of Judaism, Christian missionaries contributed new impetus to the individual motivations for conversion. Jewish messianism provides another context for understanding conversion in post-Reformation German lands. The invention of multiple identities by famous failed messiahs such as Reubeni, Zevi, and Frank expanded the possibilities for self-renewal and reinvention which form the core experiences of conversion. In the following chapter we will begin to follow the destinies and hear the voices of individual converts as they reflected on the momentous experience of changing their identities and seeking a place between two very different worlds.

WRITING THE DIVIDED SELF

Convert Autobiography

The sole design of the Author is to furnish the public at large, and his jewish brethren in particular with the means of judging for themselves of his character whilst amongst his own people; of his motives for embracing the christian religion.

Frey, The Converted Jew, introduction

[I write because] I am seeking my son who is still a Jew.

Austerlitz, Die Gewissheit, 4

Conversion narratives figured prominently among the elements of successful conversions in many traditions.¹ They served to consolidate the convert's inner transformation by adopting the language and metaphors of the new and previously forbidden religious tradition. They enabled converts to give concrete testimony to the momentous changes they had experienced, to reconfigure their past, and to reorient their future lives along new lines.² In the case of converts from Judaism to Christianity this biographical reconstruction often entailed a profound rejection not only of their personal Jewish pasts, but of the Jewish religion and the Jewish people who remained a living testimony to that past. As they completed their passage through the rites and rituals of conversion, individual converts encapsulated the entire development of early Christianity in its centuries-long disengagement from its Jewish antecedents. This process entailed a complex relationship to the Jewish past, nostalgia and reminiscence often mingling with scorn and hatred. The conversion narrative testified to the difficult task each convert faced in bridging the two worlds successfully.

Converts from Judaism in early modern German lands produced an extensive corpus of autobiographical material, greater than any other group of converts from Judaism in this period. The relative paucity of autobiographical material written by English converts from Judaism during the same period, stands in strik-

ing contrast to the volume produced by converts in German lands. This may not simply be a reflection of one group's innate reticence versus another's volubility. English Jews just wanted to pass quietly into English society, and most did.³ German Jews who wanted to enter German-Christian society had to try harder, to overcome much greater resistance, to prove that they had overcome their "innate" Jewish characteristics. Moreover, they wrote in a fertile cultural tradition and in a fitting historical moment. Protestant autobiographies proliferated in the early decades of the Reformation in German lands, stimulated by Luther's own conversion account. Their characteristic declarations of independence from the shackles of papism provided models for converts who perceived themselves to have become free from the bonds of Judaism. The large number of conversion narratives written in German in the early modern period attests to the fact that these programmatic statements had become *de rigueur* for the convert, part of the rite of passage out of the old life and a passport to the new.⁴

Conversion narratives about the passage from Judaism to Christianity in German lands vary in genre, from full-length autobiographies, essays, and biographical sketches authorized by the convert, to sermons preached at their baptisms, to briefer statements scattered in their literary works. Even conversion stories that did not make it into print often found an indirect route to public awareness through the books of more prolific converts.⁵ Out of these uneven, fragmented, and often unreliable pieces, a collective portrait begins to emerge. These texts, along with other material written by converts, constitute a unique testimony to this otherwise obscure chapter in Jewish and German history. A close reading of these narratives remains our only means of touching upon some aspects of this critical juncture in the individual and collective lives.

Literary Paradigms

Several literary traditions converge in the autobiographical writing of the converts. Conversion narratives belong, in one sense, to the tradition of confession. Reserved at first for the baptismal font as a means of renouncing a convert's past life, confession only later became required after every transgression, to reduce the burden of guilt and to achieve atonement. Not unlike psychoanalysis, the modern "talking cure," bringing the past out of obscurity became the first step toward a future in which that past would no longer be the dominant and controlling force. In the early sixteenth century, Luther reopened the discussion over the obligation to confess and to whom. Impelled by a heightened awareness of the role of confession in Christianity, early modern converts cast their own past as a secret now revealed, using the process of writing to assert control over the past and expiate for it.⁶

The Western autobiographical tradition, in the forms available to Jews in early modern German lands, also figured prominently in the shaping of conversion narratives. While the conversion experience served as the matrix for one of the oldest and strongest traditions of autobiographical writing, it was also one of the most problematic. The real subject of conversion narratives was the new religion, and the entire genre served a didactic purpose. *The Confessions* of Saint Augustine provided the Christian model for conversion autobiography, in which the past life figured as a foil for the new life of the convert. While Augustine served as the model of a penitent Christian, the literary paradigm for the narratives of conversion from Judaism to Christianity lay in the story of Paul's mystical experience as the catalyst for conversion.⁷ Augustine and Paul represent two different models of conversion, as process and as event. The process model envisioned the convert on a lifelong journey of coming closer to God; the event model depicted an abrupt, sudden, and complete break from the past, a singular change marked indelibly on the soul.

Medieval conversion narratives tended to emphasize, in addition to the standard theological justification, an experiential "event" which explained and facilitated the sudden reversal of faith. The famous medieval convert known as "Hermannus quondam Judaeus" (reputedly) authored a classical autobiographical narrative in which the hero's conversion from Judaism was presented as the fulfillment of a dream.⁸ In the early modern period, very few converts credited such spiritual experiences as their primary motivation for conversion, yet the language of dramatic "event" persevered in their accounts. Johannes Pfefferkorn wrote of himself as "formerly a Jew, now a Christian in the third year of my *Geburt* (birth)," revising the number of years with each subsequent publication. Convert Antonius Margaritha similarly referred to the publication of his book "in the ninth year of my *Widergepurtt* (rebirth)," signifying a decisive break with his past and spiritual rebirth as a Christian. Christian Gerson signed himself "widergeborner Jüde" (a born-again Jew); Samuel Friedrich Brenz wrote in the "thirteenth year after my rebirth."⁹ While none of these converts claimed an instantaneous spiritual epiphany, the construct and language of spiritual experience and rebirth, whether an illumination, a revelation, or an ecstatic-mystical sensation, affirmed for the convert and for his audience that a deep structural change had occurred. The emphasis on a radical spiritual break psychologically facilitated the often extreme reversal of identities, from persecuted to persecutor, from apostate to zealous apostle—a change poignantly dramatized in a medieval narrative such as that of the convert Petrus Alfonsi. In his *Dialogue with Moses the Jew*, Alfonsi the Christian polemicized against his former Jewish self.¹⁰ Such extreme reversals of personality are rare in the conversion accounts of the early modern

period. Unlike their medieval predecessors, most early modern converts offered no account of revelations, dreams, or other spiritual events precipitating their journey to the baptismal font.¹¹ Lack of an affective component of conversion signified that the inner identity had not changed suddenly and profoundly. Yet the Christian expectation that conversion follow the extreme model remained firmly in place.

This expectation accounts for one of the paradoxes that characterize many of the autobiographical reconstructions of early modern converts: they affirmed the central place of their former Jewish identity within their Christian lives, forging a continuum on which both selves could coexist, yet many averred that the transformation came as a complete surprise. Seventeenth-century convert Friedrich Albrecht Christiani asserted that he had no inkling that he would have been amenable to conversion even a short time prior to its occurrence: "I was so zealous for my Jewishness that had someone told me then of my prospective conversion, it would have appeared as strange to me as it seems incredible to others."¹² Convert Gottfried Selig, then a young Jewish student, recalled the first time he had seen a Jew being led to baptism. "It happened one day that a Jewish girl passed by their house, dressed in black and accompanied by a number of Christians leading her to church to be baptized. A neighbor asked him later whether he liked the procession. He replied that it looked like they were leading a criminal to the place of execution."¹³ Convert Paul Hirsch wrote of being "torn from" Jewish darkness, which, through God's grace, he exchanged for the evangelical light.¹⁴ These phrases had become the programmatic locutions for conversion; it is difficult to discern any individual spiritual or mystical experiences in them. Early eighteenth-century convert Friedrich Albrecht Augusti recalled that neither his father nor the other members of his family could have foretold his change of religion; even stepping into a room with a crucifix had been a great ordeal for him. When he traveled through Poland or Prague, he recalled feeling great antipathy toward any Christians he encountered and thought of himself as their opponent whose mission lay in discrediting their religion. He had owned a manual of anti-Christian refutation which his sponsor retained as a reminder of his hostility to Christianity before his conversion.¹⁵

Some converts described complete ignorance of Christianity; others recalled parental cultivation of an active hatred of the Christian world prior to their decisive encounter with it. Joachim Christian Franck recalled that long before his Bar Mitzvah he had been taught to hate Christians. In the sermon preached at the baptism of his Jewish protégé, Friedrich Koch stated, "You were raised with hatred of Christians."¹⁶ Joseph Samuel Frey wrote that his tutor "took every opportunity to inspire us with prejudices and hatred against the Christian reli-

gion,” while his mother “was a most inveterate enemy to Christianity, because her brother had embraced the Christian religion.”¹⁷ The first seeds of attraction to Christianity or doubts about Judaism attributed to a well-placed word or text were often the result of more proximate or pragmatic causes that were left unstated: debts, enemies, spouses, or other unspoken pressures from which conversion offered an escape. In many cases, attraction to Christianity worked simultaneously with repulsion from Judaism. Close family members, such as siblings, parents, or parents’ siblings who converted, often served as acknowledged or subliminal role models.¹⁸ Joseph Samuel Frey had a maternal uncle who had converted to Christianity, yet he never attributed his own thoughts of conversion to the example of this close relative.¹⁹ Gottfried Selig, who converted c. 1740, had an uncle who was baptized in 1713, an aunt in 1721, and several baptized cousins, but he did not attribute his own path to conversion to the example of these obvious models.²⁰

The insistence of so many converts on the abrupt nature of their transformation, contrary to their own presentation of the facts, is striking.²¹ They were clearly attempting to conform to the Christian ideal of a perfect conversion, as well as to refute the Jewish conviction that the souls lost to conversion had been tainted from the start, that conversion fulfilled a destiny first manifested in earlier acts of betrayal of the community or rebellion against its standards.²²

Early modern conversion narratives may have employed the vocabulary of sudden conversion, of absolute change from one thing into its opposite, yet they rarely conveyed a sense of true transformation by inner illumination. Nor did they describe a process of “drift and defection.” This multi-generational process, the product of a gradual drift away from the Jewish tradition and into the upper levels of the larger society, has been carefully analyzed for English Jews by Todd Endelman, and it is similar to the trajectory followed by many nineteenth-century German Jews. In the case of early modern converts, the reversal usually occurred within a single generation, sometimes affecting more than one family member. A chance meeting with a Christian missionary at a vulnerable moment, or a momentous historical event such as the messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi, brought the convert to the conclusion that Jewish teachers had erred in their interpretation of Scripture and history.

Even as they affirmed the convention that their conversions had been sudden and drastic, early modern converts sought increasingly to integrate their Jewish pasts into their life stories. Thus, early modern conversion narratives constitute a treasure trove of autobiographical writing which illuminate Jewish lives, unintentionally, as it were.²³ Rather than presenting themselves as models of Chris-

tian learning or piety, the converts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries emphasized their Jewish pasts as their most valuable asset. Their stories introduced the books they wrote on matters of Jewish interest, advertising their background to their Christian readers. Eventually, the autobiographical narrative became such an integral feature of books written by converts, that when the converts did not provide their own narratives, their Christian editors or publishers would compensate by providing a biography of the convert-author to satisfy their readers. Christian Reineccius, for example, appended a description of convert Antonius Margaritha's "Jewish family, conversion, life and writings" to his reissue of *Der ganz Jüdisch glaub*. Despite Reineccius's repeated affirmations of the usefulness of Margaritha's book to contemporaries, its early eighteenth-century editor worried that the absence of a "life" of the author would diminish the value of his edition of a sixteenth-century convert classic. John Felix wrote that he could be brief concerning his autobiography because his spiritual sponsor, Superintendent Kern, had already published the material as a separate treatise.²⁴ Modern readers cast doubt on the authenticity of Hermannus's medieval conversion narrative, *because* it contained almost no positive Jewish content.²⁵ In this respect, early modern conversion autobiographies occupied a transitional place, rejecting the medieval model of conversion as a radical metamorphosis, but not yet embracing the candor that would characterize such writings in the nineteenth century, in which conversion was frequently acknowledged to have been a purely instrumental act.

Many printed conversion autobiographies originated in the sermon preached at the baptismal ceremony. Such sermons usually contained brief biographical sketches of the converts, based on information which only they could have provided. These were subsequently published as they were preached, with little revision other than the change to the first-person voice.²⁶ Johann Adam Gottfried distinguished between his *Taufactus* (the official proceedings of his conversion), which was printed several times although it was not very popular, and a literary reworking of it, his "Übergang und Bekehrung," which, he claimed, his public eagerly awaited for years.²⁷

In some cases it is even unclear whether the words we are reading are those of the convert or a ghostwriter who was more fluent in the vernacular. The second edition of Margaritha's *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* claimed that the language had been "corrected and improved" by the author himself, implying that Margaritha had not done the original editing. Margaritha beseeched his Christian readers not to judge him by his poor writing. "I have sometimes repeated things, sometimes not completed the sentence according to the art of German rhetoric

but he (the reader) should remember that I am not well versed in the German tongue."²⁸ More candid than most, the "Lebens-Geschichte" of Gütgen Steinhardin admitted on the title page that the work was "gröstantheils selbst gefertigte" (mostly prepared by herself), but that it had actually been prepared for publication by her spiritual mentor. Perhaps the admission of editorial shaping appeared to be less of a compromise of authenticity in the case of a female author, who would not have been expected to produce a literary account. Paul of Prague "reviewed and revised" his statement, "Acknowledgment of Christianity," which he had prepared for his baptism. Friedrich Koch interwove the voice of his convert-subject with that of his own conversion sermon, to produce a book in which the two voices intermingled.²⁹ Shalome ben Shalomoh's published "account of his Conversion" advertised that it had been "delivered Viva Voce, to the Church, . . . being taken from his mouth." The second edition contained some embellishments, "forgotten by him when he delivered himself to the Church and others whereinto God hath since instructed him."³⁰ The anonymous editor introduced the posthumous "autobiography" of Abraham, son of Moses Levi Hertz, later J. C. Lebrecht, claiming that he had taken the narration directly from the lips of the convert before his death.³¹ Paul Christian's "self-described" autobiography, was written entirely in verse, a difficult feat for a new convert without assistance.

Collectively, then, the narratives constitute a unique layering of material shaped by both the imagination of the convert and the vision of those who played an instrumental role in converting him or her, mirroring two distinct sets of expectations. The narratives invoke the familiar image of a triptych in which the convert stands at the center, between his Jewish past and his Christian future. Each component contained many layers of ambivalence and ambiguity, mutual attraction and repulsion. Written with transparent ulterior motives, limited in scope, and artificial in construction, the hermeneutic of skepticism with which any autobiography must be approached is compounded by the particular problems and circumstances that shaped these.³² Despite the limitations inherent in narratives geared to theological expectations, these nevertheless form a chapter within the histories of early modern European and Jewish autobiographical writing, and should be considered within their multiple contexts.³³ It is precisely because these conversion accounts do not fit easily into the medieval or modern patterns that they merit closer attention. By the late eighteenth century, conversion was becoming a more common choice for Jews. Many of the lifelong inner conflicts that accompanied modern conversions were already being faced by these converts in the age of transition.

Jewish Childhood in Conversion Autobiography

Edmond Jabès has defined the difference between “memory,” as a continuous, undifferentiated, and disorderly flow of past images, and “recollection,” a doubling back following an initial rupture to retrieve the past and reassemble its shards into new configurations.³⁴ While every writer of autobiography forges the “past” out of the elements of memory, the task of re/collection looms greatest for those who experienced the most profound rupture from the world they left behind. Conversion was just such a deep break with the past. Converts found a way to include their past, their Jewish childhood, into a new narrative that they constructed to explain their lives. While they tried to subvert their Jewish voice, the deepest layer of their identity, to the dominant overlay of Christian narrative, it sometimes erupted, both into their writing and even into their lives.

It was not the distinctive personal aspect of their childhood which every convert sought to retrieve and incorporate into his autobiography, but rather the elements that made it a *Jewish* childhood: their experiences of Jewish education, worship, or ritual training. Most narratives begin with the moment they were given their Jewish names or circumcised. Paul Christian, born Malachi ben Samuel, begins his story by contrasting his circumcision with the more efficacious baptism he experienced later. One convert who began his life story with his Jewish birthdate, 13 Adar, some twenty-three years earlier (c. 1744), admitted that he did not know the corresponding Christian date.³⁵ Most convert autobiographies contained at least a cursory statement about the convert’s Jewish education. Some provided more detailed accounts. Seventeenth-century convert Friedrich Albrecht Christiani wrote: “My parents raised me in Judaism, educated me in the Jewish laws and customs, with the view that I would continue in rabbinic studies. Once I had completed the fundamentals at home, they sent me to the *Synagoge* (House of Study) of Posen, where I ultimately advanced so far that I not only understood the script of the Old Testament in the Hebrew language, but I could read the rabbinic commentaries completely, and I was very knowledgeable in the books of the Talmud.”³⁶

Ludwig Compiègne de Veil, born Daniel, to the distinguished Weil family in 1637, wrote that he studied Hebrew up to the age of sixteen and only then began to study the Talmud, which he continued to study through his nineteenth year.³⁷ John Xeres, who converted in 1709, recalled, “I was Born there to a Father so Zealous for his Religion, that, being able to support the Charge of such an Education, he designed to make me a Rabbin. Accordingly, I have been brought up under the most famous of our Doctors, and tho’ I have not yet been raised to

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 8. Unconverted (*left side*) and converted Jews (*right side*) illustrate the book of convert Friedrich Albrecht Christiani, *Jüdischer Glaube und Aberglaube* (Leipzig, 1713). The dog returning to its vomit may allude to Christiani's subsequent reversion to Judaism. Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

that Degree . . .”³⁸ The converted protégé of Friedrich Koch recalled his Jewish schooling, from learning to read at age six to his being called upon to speak in public as a young prodigy at age ten. He recalled his Bar Mitzvah portion and lecture in detail, and his subsequent pride in being chosen to study far from home in a yeshivah in Frankfurt a.d. Oder.³⁹

Joseph Samuel Frey recalled, “Before I was three years old I began the Hebrew alphabet, and when but six years of age I could perfectly read any chapter of the first five books of Moses . . . When I was nine years old, the holy book of God was shut up and in its stead the productions of men, as the Mishnah, Gemara etc. were . . . eagerly studied by me . . . for they were nourishment to my earthly and sensual affections.”⁴⁰ Ernst Augusti wrote a nostalgic account of his father’s education at the knees of *his* father, beginning with reading Hebrew at age four and being questioned on the Bible and the Psalms each week thereafter. “Even if this manner of the father’s teaching was flawed in that too much was learned by rote, it had the advantage of awakening his faculty of reasoning early on.”⁴¹ Later, when he recounted his father’s years in a yeshivah in Cracow, he described movingly how the entire community joined to support his needs. He contrasted this depiction with a strong criticism of Christian society for not supporting its scholars in a similar manner.⁴² In many cases, the education of these young Jewish men led to their being qualified for positions as functionaries within the Jewish community: “I was a teacher, rabbi, preacher—among the Jews.”⁴³

In their autobiographies, male converts boasted of a solid Jewish education; sometimes their later efforts at scholarly Hebraism support these claims. The course described by Christiani appears to have been standard fare for Jewish boys. That he persisted in the study of Talmud to age sixteen meant that he had shown some promise, since his parents did not force him to end his studies earlier to seek his livelihood. Had he manifested greater abilities, he might have continued his studies at a larger yeshivah.

In emphasizing that their Jewish education defined their youth, converts refracted the existing traditions in Jewish writing, such as the “chain of tradition” literature, and contemporary German-Jewish autobiography.⁴⁴ Unlike Haskalah autobiographies of a later century, convert autobiographies did not center on complaints about the shortcomings of the system or of their teachers. The experience of *kefrah*, “apostasy,” from the ancestral religion to the religion of reason characterized autobiography from the age of the Enlightenment.⁴⁵ The educational system served the *maskilim* as a symbol for everything that ailed the traditional Jewish society that they rejected. In convert autobiographies prior to the Enlightenment, the defining moment was an actual, rather than a metaphorical, abandonment of the father’s religion. Unlike maskilim, converts presented

their conversions as the apex of Jewish learning, not the result of disgust with an inadequate educational system. However, this idealization of Jewish education may have arisen out of pragmatic considerations. A significant number of converts entered university careers as teachers of Hebrew, rabbinics, and cognate subjects, for which their own claims of proficiency often constituted their sole credentials for employment.

How reliable were the testimonies of the converts concerning their own Jewish education? With the exception of Carl Anton, who made much of the fact that he had studied under the celebrated R. Jonathan Eybeschutz, most do not mention the names of their teachers. Often, even the rudiments of their personal histories are so self-consciously arranged that we have no choice but to question all statements that cannot be confirmed by other evidence. Many converts from the early sixteenth century claimed to have been “rabbis” before their conversion; but their books about the Jewish religion often belie such claims.⁴⁶

One eighteenth-century convert was even challenged concerning his credentials shortly after he published his account. Friedrich Albrecht Augusti (formerly Joshua ben Abraham Hirschel), who converted in Dessau in 1720, claimed that he had been a rabbi in Sonderhausen. His critic countered that he had only been a schoolmaster and possibly a *shochet*, a ritual slaughterer, as well.⁴⁷ The title page of Johann Christoph Gottfried’s (b. 1684, Breslau) work claimed that he had formerly served as a Jewish rabbi.⁴⁸ In describing his Jewish childhood, Dietrich Schwab, drew on an analogy from nature. “The nature writer Elianus writes in *Natürlichen Histori*, . . . of the elephant, . . . who grasps a green branch with its trunk to wipe itself. As soon as the sun or the moon break through and it sees their real light, it throws away the broken branch. This story reminds me of the guilt of my birth as a Jew, but now by the grace of God, I am an enlightened Christian.”⁴⁹

Where no possibility of a career as a professional Hebraist existed, as in the case of females, converts tended to evaluate their Jewish education more harshly. Indeed, the education of Jewish boys in medieval and early modern German lands contained the roots of some of these defections. Young children studied either with their fathers or with very junior students. As soon as they came of age, their parents sent them away from home to study in larger cities. A fourteenth-century German-Jewish autobiography begins with the moment the author left his father’s home in Düren to study in Mainz. The anonymous Jewish author of a seventeenth-century autobiography delivered a scathing critique of the vacuum in the educational system that left him at the mercy of his inept father.⁵⁰ The combination of poverty and a peripatetic life-style rendered students vulnerable to promises of income, shelter, and stability.

The need to praise their Jewish qualifications generated a paradox within the narratives. Intending to set out the insufficiencies of Judaism, the converts found it necessary to extol their Jewish childhoods. Some circumvented this contradiction by reconstructing their Jewish childhoods as paths strewn with signposts of their future fulfillment in Christianity, a technique already in evidence in the medieval conversion narrative of “Hermann quondam Judaeus.”

Following this narrative paradigm, many converts wrote about the ways in which their idyllic Jewish childhood foreshadowed their eventual conversion. Of course, they recognized the signs only once they viewed their lives from a retroactive Christian perspective. Ernst Hess reported that when Jewish children misbehaved, their parents would say, “ey wie ein Jeschu bist du!” (Oh, what a Jesus you are!). Dietrich Schwab claimed that Jews who were angry with their children called them “Yeshu ha-notzri” (Jesus of Nazareth) as an insult. Eighteenth-century convert Phillip Ernst Christfels recalled that when, as a Jew, he had studied the *Zohar* with Sabbatian emissary Abraham Rovigo, he had pointed out to his teacher the parallels to Christian trinitarianism in Rovigo’s exposition. Rovigo reportedly commented about Christfels, “dass dieser Mann gewiss noch ein Min und sich schmadden lassen werde” (that this man would become a heretic and would be baptized). Some converts transformed colloquial expressions of disdain for Christianity into signposts of their personal destinies.⁵¹

For Johann A. Gottfried, the first sign came at a time “when I did not yet know what Christians were. When Christian boys came to play at my uncle’s house in London, I noticed that whenever they won a game with little effort, they would shout something that sounded like “Dschiesus” (Jesus). Since as a young boy of nine I didn’t know what this word meant, I thought it to be an exclamation and used it myself. When my uncle heard me, he brought me in and said, “You blasphemous person! What have you said? Do you know what it means? It is the ‘Tole’ [the hanged one, a derogatory term for ‘the crucified’] whom the Jews martyred and crucified because he was the son of God, Messiah and Redeemer of the human race.”⁵² Thus, an ordinary incident among children at play could be read by the convert as an indication of his future. Joseph Samuel Frey recalled that when a quarrel arose among Jewish boys, “and in particular as to myself, who was always the most unruly,” it was generally said, “let them alone, they will certainly turn Christian, as their uncle did.”⁵³

Another ordinary event, pregnant with significance for the future, occurred after the Gottfried boy arrived in Eisenstadt, where his mother entrusted him to scholars and rabbis who followed a rigorous regimen of Jewish study and ritual observances. One day, while learning with his partner, an incident occurred in which Gottfried spoke disrespectfully to his teacher. The teacher reacted by say-

ing in the presence of the other student, “Das ist ein böser Jung, was gilts, der lässt sich noch schmadden?” (This is a bad youth, the next thing you know, he’ll have himself baptized). The converted adult Gottfried remarked parenthetically, “For thieves and swindlers are not nearly as terrible in the eyes of Jews as a baptized Jew.”⁵⁴ “I cannot tell you how deeply this affected me. Then and there I decided that I would let myself get baptized. The teacher said, ‘We will have no joy from this student,’ not knowing that he was prophesying. But I certainly did not know it then and continued to practice as a Jew while great bitterness against Jesus and the crucifixion were implanted in me. When another teacher expressed a similar idea, ‘This is a *chozef*, an audacious student, he will yet be baptized,’ I began to believe I was a great sinner and became very depressed.”⁵⁵ The final sign of his vocation came when, as a Jewish teacher in Sulzbach, he passed the local church and heard the congregation singing very sweetly. “It struck me that this was another call. My heart was set, although I did not know it yet. You might well ask, how can a Jew, without knowing the teachings of Christ become convinced of the truth of the messiah from hearing a simple melody? This is how the holy spirit begins its work, it is what theologians call *gratia praeveniente* (grace that precedes). There is no other way into the Jewish heart, as Jews have seen the scriptures already.”⁵⁶

Just as converts interpreted incidents in their past lives as early signs of grace, Jews who had known them earlier claimed to have glimpsed in the converts signs of precocious dis-grace. This tradition of retrojection existed even in medieval tales. “R. Judah Hasid was able to see Elijah sitting at each circumcision ceremony. Once, at the circumcision of the son of a wealthy Regensburg Jew, as everyone rose, he [R. Judah] remained seated and silent. When everyone wondered why, he answered that he did not see Elijah enter with the child, instead . . . he saw an old man with a very long beard, from which he concluded that not much good would come of this child and that as he grew he would convert, be baptized and become a Christian.”⁵⁷

While few Jewish converts consciously modeled the depiction of their childhoods on the Christian version of the life of Jesus, for it was a story that they did not know until they reached adulthood, some rewrote their childhoods to conform to the Jewish polemical accounts of the young Jesus. Those who focused on episodes in which they were labeled bad boys as the first step along the path to conversion were modeling their boyhoods on the Jewish polemical version of Jesus’ life, the *Toledot Yeshu*, which described Jesus as treating the rabbis arrogantly; they in turn labeled him brazen and impertinent.⁵⁸ Many variants of this text circulated among European Jews in Hebrew and Yiddish, and converts had become familiar with it.

Secrecy and Doubt

One is not a Jew outwardly only . . . Rather, one is a Jew in secret.

Romans 2:29

Many converts described their progression from Jew to Christian in vivid detail. The first phase of secret doubt about Judaism took place while the future convert was still immersed in the Jewish world, all the thinking invisible, with no overt break from family or community. Pastor Corvino characterized the call to a Jew to convert as “a secret word, a stolen word, a voice which comes in silence” directed solely to the individual so that no one around him could hear.⁵⁹ Christian Gerson recalled that his moment of awakening occurred when, as a Jewish pawnbroker, one of his Christian customers brought a “German New Testament of Jesus Christ, Luther’s version,” into his house to pawn. He professed to have no desire to dwell on its contents, other than a curiosity about the teachings that had “misled” hundreds of thousands of souls. Reading the Christian Bible changed Gerson’s inner life, however. He saw how closely the New Testament relied on the Hebrew Bible, and read the text over and over, “but in secret so that my wife should not notice.” For obvious reasons, Gerson did not reveal his thoughts to anyone, not even his wife, and could not decide how to proceed. “My beloved wife, our child, friends, household . . . my heart was troubled and anxious for weeks, food or drink had no taste for me.” Gerson eventually left home and converted in 1600.⁶⁰ Nathan of Altona (later Johann Adam Gottfried) had been a schoolteacher in Sulzberg, when in mid-term he decided to convert to Christianity. Determined not to lose his job until the vacation break, he found it difficult to teach his students the Talmud with the same conviction as before. Not only had he come to think badly of the Talmud; he no longer had any use for Jewish worship: “My chief concern during those months was to keep my *Uebergang* (conversion) secret.”⁶¹ The inner decision had already taken place, but its momentous consequences could not yet be manifested; many obstacles remained to be overcome.

Paul Christian read the New Testament in Yiddish, in concealment and secrecy.⁶² It caused him such distress and anxiety that he wished he had never read it. “My heart became full of doubt. No man can believe the pain and ache that assailed my heart. I had no rest day or night. . . . What should I do? To whom should I speak of these things?” Several years went by before he acted on his doubts.⁶³ Marcus Moses claimed that his initial doubts arose when he found errors in *Rabbinen Zeit-Rechnung* (rabbinic chronology) that set him wondering whether all rabbinic teachings might be in error.⁶⁴ His spiritual guide then described how

Marcus hid his New Testament and Catechism so as not to let his intentions be known to his fellow Jews. This state of limbo lasted ten weeks, until arrangements could be made for him to leave the Jewish community.⁶⁵ Joseph Guggenheim came to a decision to convert after sixteen years of persuasion by the persistent missionary Johann Caspar Ulrich. Even then, Guggenheim insisted that his plans be kept secret from his wife and the local Jews of Lengnau. He asked for an additional period of five to six years of secrecy so that he could persuade his wife and his congregation to come with him into the Christian fold.⁶⁶ In this case, the potential convert used the period of secrecy to forestall his final decision indefinitely.

During this phase, converts with one foot already planted in the Christian world, but showing no external signs of a change of heart, recalled some of the final humiliations they suffered as Jews. Gottfried knew he had to find a Christian in whom to confide but feared trusting the locals with his secret. When he traveled to a nearby village and revealed his secret to a farmer to whom he had lent money, the farmer balked. He had many business ties to Jews, and if they suspected that he was involved in a conversion, they would reject his business and label him a seducer. Only after several approaches could Gottfried convince the farmer to inform the “spiritual men” at Nuremberg that he would arrive to undergo baptism when the term was over in September. To his complete amazement, they did not greatly encourage him in their reply; they did not think him sufficiently sincere.⁶⁷ While negotiations were being conducted, Gottfried had to put in his daily appearance at the synagogue in order not to be considered a “Posche=gottlosen menschen” (a sinner and blasphemer) among the Jews. If they had suspected his plans, they might have tried to prevent him from leaving.

Abraham Jacobs became interested in Christianity when a Lutheran pastor who came to study Hebrew with his father, a rabbi in Frankfurt, slipped him a New Testament, along with some surreptitious words of encouragement. Jacobs read some pages of the book every night in secret, after the family went to bed, and began visiting the Christian’s house. Someone betrayed his secret, and when his father burst into his room one night to find him reading the New Testament, “he snatched it out of my hand and gave me three or four blows to the head.” When Jacobs informed his father that he wished to convert, the father “instantly called his servant and turned me out of the door with nothing on but my night gown.”⁶⁸

The liminal period during which the convert had already decided on breaking with the Jewish community but had not yet formally become a Christian demonstrates the lack of a neutral place in early modern society. Many converts described moments of their final humiliation as Jews, more hurtful now that they

had already decided to cast off the religion that accompanied these restrictions on personal status. Claus Andreas of Osteroda, formerly Daniel Jacob Bon, wrote of traveling to Hannover to seek instruction in the Christian religion, only to be held up at the Osnabrück gate, dragged to the head sentinel, and summarily impressed into military service, as a *Kriegesdienst*. One likely motive for his quick conversion, following an instruction period of only four weeks, was the promise that he would be released from military servitude as soon as he was baptized.⁶⁹ When Gottfried finally arrived at Nuremberg to seek baptism, he was turned away from the Frauenthor, because, as a Jew, he was forbidden to enter the city. He waited in a garden outside the city limits for special permission to enter.⁷⁰

The potential child convert Simon Abeles of Prague dressed in Christian clothes and covered his “Jewish style” haircut with a baroque cap so that he should not draw the attention of Jews as he lingered among Christians.⁷¹ When Samuel Joseph Frey went to Rostock to seek out the man who had greatly influenced his decision to convert, the guard informed him “that no Jew was allowed to remain in that town for a single night.” He applied to the magistrate for permission to remain overnight as a potential convert. The magistrate examined him thoroughly and ordered him to learn a trade if he wished to remain longer than a day.⁷² This requirement also posed a humiliating paradox: “The minister of the church would not receive me as a member until I should have completed my apprenticeship . . . but the trade would not allow any . . . master to receive me before I was baptized. . . . No Jew could be bound apprentice in Germany.”⁷³ The period between the moment when the potential convert had made up his mind and when steps had been taken to draw him into the Christian fold was described by converts as a time of intense isolation. They could not know in advance that loneliness would continue to haunt them later as well.

After a potential convert had made a private decision to be baptized, his or her sponsors required a public renunciation to the Jewish community. The theological value of these conversions and the substantial investment of time and resources on the part of the sponsors meant that the converts could not simply be quietly absorbed into society at large. The break had to be made known to both the Jewish and the Christian public, staged, sometimes in the synagogue, in a public and premeditated fashion. John Felix, formerly the esteemed Rabbi Seelig Bunzlau, waited for the occasion of a public disputation, on the subject of Isaiah 53, which was scheduled to take place at the synagogue of Weickersheim on the Sabbath, 25 February 1758, to announce that he was converting. He left the synagogue “to the sounds of the wailing and howling of the Jews,” to enter the bosom of the church. The title page of his epistle describes his conversion as taking place “publicly in the Jewish synagogue.”⁷⁴ Gottfried left on the Sabbath,

in his coach, before it had turned quite dark, as Jews assembled for the last Sabbath prayer; the rumble of wheels on the cobblestones of the Jewish quarter on the Sabbath informed his people that he was departing from them forever. Just in case they might temporize, he left them a note written in "rabbinic language" explaining that he was leaving the Jewish religion.⁷⁵

Joseph Samuel Frey, inflamed by the comments of a kind Christian traveler, wrote and sealed a letter to him on the Sabbath. "My conscience was now awakened, and it loudly told me that I was no longer a Jew, for I had broken the Sabbath . . . From this time I must date the commencement of a new period in my life."⁷⁶ When a judge affirmed the legitimacy of baptismal proceedings for Abraham Jacobs over his father's objections, "My father rent his overcloth, saying, 'Thus I tear thee off from me and all thy relations,' and he departed without speaking another word."⁷⁷ Joseph Guggenheim, thinking he was on the verge of baptism, allowed his beard to be shorn.⁷⁸ When he took too much time to decide whether or not he wanted to convert, his impatient mentor, Johann Caspar Ulrich, wrote to the provincial governor that strong steps needed to be taken to make sure that Guggenheim understood the necessity of making a final choice; otherwise he would remain a half-Jewish, half-Christian charlatan.⁷⁹ For converts whose confrontations did not come about prior to the baptism, they sometimes followed in hastily arranged religious disputations.

Some converts remembered that intermediate and indeterminate period between Judaism and Christianity, as a time of first transgressions. Gottfried remembered not only that first wagon ride which violated the Sabbath, but relishing foods he had never tasted before and the first time he crossed himself as he had seen Christians do so many times.⁸⁰ Daniel Bon, too, vividly recalled the taste of new foods. The most wrenching change he recalled was putting aside his tefillin, which he had regarded with greatest sanctity and which he had worn without missing a single day until his baptism.⁸¹ These testimonies underscore the radical break made by converts from a world steeped in Jewish tradition to one of Christian tradition. If they experienced a phase of agnostic drifting or rational skepticism, it could not be expressed anywhere within a traditional community.

The converts often had to arrange for themselves formal instruction in Christian principles. This involved finding willing teachers and housing and agreeing upon a time period and sometimes even on the contents of their lessons. In some cases, fearing that a potential convert might experience a change of heart or a change of circumstance, instructors would rush the process. Bon's sponsor hurried him to baptism in four weeks. Even he admitted that this was too short a time in which to unlearn all the ways to deride and blaspheme against the Christian religion and to learn the truth concerning the real messiah.⁸²

Many converts had to contend with emissaries from the Jewish community or family members entreating them, and sometimes even threatening them, to return to the Jewish community. Gottfried woke up the day after his dramatic departure to the announcement that a Jew was waiting to see him. It turned out to be a relative of his, Baruch Jofe of Fürth. While the relative could not openly make his pitch, he communicated in a code that the imminent convert understood at once. He told him in Hebrew to think of the “Joched umjuched,” the One and Only God. “He wanted me to reject the Trinity.” Gottfried replied that he had thought about it, and “the one and only God wanted me to believe in His Son.” Gottfried wanted to show his visitor that he did not undertake this *Übergang* (conversion) out of bad feelings toward the Jews, but out of true conviction. He expressed this sentiment in his initial note to the community as well. When Gottfried showed Jofe the biblical prooftexts that had convinced him to convert and told him that his baptism was scheduled for eight days hence, the relative promised to return shortly, armed with the necessary refutations.⁸³ Joseph Guggenheim, conflicted for many years over whether to convert, was spirited away by his brother and brother-in-law as soon as he announced his decision; the tug of war over his soul continued for many years.⁸⁴

The determined convert faced obstacles from beyond the Jewish quarter as well. In Gottfried’s case, the pastor of the church where he was supposed to be baptized forgot about his arrival, thus delaying his anticipated date of conversion even further. To compound the cool reception he received from the Christians, Gottfried met a recent convert from Judaism who tried to convince him that this recent delay was a divine sign that God wanted him to remain Jewish. As time passed, Gottfried’s new acquaintance intimated that he must have had a pious father who interceded from on high to prevent his son’s defection. This talk from a recent convert who clearly regretted his conversion almost turned Gottfried back to the Jewish fold. The ambivalence that greeted his conversion in Christian quarters, in stark contrast to his own expectations, may speak to a shift in the reception of Jewish converts taking place by the mid-eighteenth century; as the number of converts grew, the social and economic burdens associated with providing for them became more than many municipalities could bear. Indeed, after a long delay, the magistrate in charge of welcoming proselytes finally informed Gottfried that he had rejected Gottfried’s request to be converted in Nuremberg because the city had just accepted a learned Jew from Fürth. The magistrate suggested that he travel to Dr. Pfeiffer in Erlang. At last, the eager baptismal candidate, who had expected that the deed would be accomplished the day he arrived in Nuremberg, received proper instruction in the fundamentals of Christian theology; his baptism took place after Pfeiffer was satisfied that

he had truly mastered the basics, some year and a half later. On Ascension Day, in his twenty-third year, Nathan of Altona became Johann Adam Jacob August Christian Conrad Gottfried.

The Process of Conversion through the Eyes of the Converts

The converts' own descriptions of the baptismal ceremony depict a ritual which incorporated many signs and symbols of transformation, including the changing of their names, as well as a symbolic change of attire. According to one sixteenth-century description, the baptismal candidate was seated next to a large tub of water, sufficient to immerse him up to his shoulders when he kneeled. Around the tub, curtains were hung to create sufficient space for the Jew to undress for the baptism and dress again afterwards. They would be thrown open while the candidate was immersed in the water and then drawn closed again. The Jew, dressed only in a loose robe and shirt (in the excitement of the day, he had left his trousers at home) went behind the curtain, removed his shoes, threw off his robe, climbed into the tub, threw off the shirt, and knelt in the water. The curtain was lifted so that the entire congregation could clearly see and hear the proceedings. The baptizing cleric took Johannes (the former Jew in this sixteenth-century account) by the head and said loudly: "I baptize you in the name of the Father (here he pushed his head into the water and pulled it right out) and the Son (here he did the same) and the Holy Ghost (he did it a third time)," and the baptized Johannes said, "Amen." Then he pulled the curtain forward again, and the brand new Christian climbed out of the water, dressed, and returned to the middle of the room as before.⁸⁵ Converts were given special white linen baptismal robes to symbolize their new lives as pure newborn Christians.⁸⁶

On the day of a Jewish conversion, the church would be full, the local dignitaries present in full regalia, all heightened pomp and circumstance. The choir sang special cantatas and psalms, sometimes even a special *Taufgesang* (baptismal song), composed to honor a particular convert.⁸⁷ The preacher offered a sermon to the capacity crowd, taking the opportunity to contrast the new person with the old, the New Testament with the Old, Christian grace with the Jewish state of damnation. The teaching of contempt for Judaism formed a central theme of the proceedings. In fact, the church designed the entire ceremony not only to move the heart of the convert, but to strengthen the Christian identity of the entire audience.

The Devil and the Jew

After the sermon, the convert would abjure Judaism in a formal *Tauf=Eyd*, (baptismal oath), followed by an exorcism of Jewish demonic spirits. In a mid-

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 9. Young Jews at a baptism ceremony. Note the pomp and elegance.
From Johann Nathan Holländer, *Die Wahrheit des einzig und allein seeligmachenden
Christlichen Glaubens* (Frankfurt am Main, 1738). Reproduced courtesy of
the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

eighteenth-century conversion to the Evangelical Church, the preacher asked, “Do you renounce the Devil? And all his works? And his entire essence?” Such pronouncements often referred to the Jewish synagogue as the synagogue of Satan and to the convert’s bloodthirsty ancestors who had damned him before birth by saying “his blood be upon us.”⁸⁸ Daniel Bon heard a similar invocation at his baptism: “I adjure you, you impure Jewish spirit, in the name of the Father,

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 10. Christ versus the devil at the baptismal font. Note that the devil enticing the subject away from the font (*on the right side*) leads to the blind Jewish figures (*bottom left*) depicted performing a circumcision before the open book of the Law. From Johannes Pfefferkorn, *Der Juden Spiegel* (Cologne, 1507). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. The letters INRI, acronym for “Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum,” appear inverted in this edition.

the Son and the Holy Ghost, that you take leave and depart from this servant of Jesus Christ, Amen . . . Depart you unholy Jewish spirit, and make space for the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁹ Bon commented on this part of the proceedings, “Concerning the agitation I felt upon hearing this, I will remain silent.”

At his baptism, Johann Holländer chanted, “I am Your beloved child despite the Devil, the world, and all sin.”⁹⁰ Christian Gerson was asked, “Do you renounce the Devil and all his works, and Jewish error, superstition, and blasphemy?”⁹¹ Moses Aaron of Cracow renounced his circumcision, along with all other Jewish “superstitions.” At his baptism in Schweinfurth, the preacher announced, “I see before me a person who had been bound to Satan for many years. Now he is free.”⁹² Pastor Corvino praised God for having brought three Jews into the true faith, “Although Satan also wanted them for his share.”⁹³ Even infant converts of Jewish parents had *Teufelsbannen* (devil’s banns) read at their baptisms.⁹⁴ Bon wondered why these, the most ancient church customs concerning pagan neophytes, continued to be observed in the case of Jews. Several decades after Bon’s observation, when Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig agreed to be baptized (a decision he later reversed), he set the condition that he not be “baptized as a pagan, but as a Jew.”⁹⁵

In his account of a conversion exorcism, Johann Spiess noted the stage directions accompanying each pronouncement. “Here, the three witnesses to the baptism, together with the convert and myself walk from the altar to the baptismal stone.” And: “After this answer, he held his head over the baptismal basin and was sprinkled by me three times with water on the middle of his head.” Staged as a drama, the exorcism enacted the radical restructuring that would take place in both the inner, cognitive and emotional, as well as the outer, social and legal, world of the convert. The ceremony degraded the convert’s Jewish past to facilitate his severing his ties with that past and with the people associated with it. The convert’s past had to be deprecated and destroyed before he could be reborn into the new community.⁹⁶

Ironically, exorcism, designed to integrate the convert into the Christian community, served to mark him as different before a large assembly and to create additional barriers against smooth transition. No person present at such a ceremony could forget the associations created between the convert, his Jewish past, and the idea of possession by a satanic or demonic force. Bon remarked that although the entire proceedings lasted for three or four hours, no one seemed impatient or bored. The audience absorbed the performance and its multiple messages in rapt attention.⁹⁷

Name Change

In the part of the ceremony immediately preceding the actual immersion, the convert was asked to choose a new name by which he would be known as a Christian. Joseph Samuel Frey remarked, "It is a practice in Germany of long standing, for a converted Jew to receive new names when baptized."⁹⁸ Some converts took the names of their spiritual mentors; others, their godparents. Others chose names with religious significance, such as Paul or variations of the word *Christian*. Names signifying the spiritual freedom, grace, and bliss which they were about to enter were also popular among converts. Joseph Samuel's mentor chose the surname Frey "which signifies the same as *free* in English, . . . and added to my former name—Joseph Samuel, those of Christian Frederick; the former expressive of the religion I embraced, the latter of his good wishes, namely that I might be rich in peace."⁹⁹ In some cases naming became a bone of contention between the sponsor and the convert. In the conversion sermon for Marcus Moses, the pastor of the church, Matthia Roth, mentioned that although the convert had set his heart on the new name Constantini, his mentor had decided on Friedrich, because the event had brought him such joy. In the end, a compromise must have been reached, as the new convert was called Christian Friedrich Constantini.¹⁰⁰ Moses Marcus kept his Hebrew name after his baptism, one of the few converts able to do so; other Jews named Moses, such as Moses Aaron of Cracow, were told that they were being addressed by their Jewish names for the last time.¹⁰¹

After choosing his new name, the convert knelt by the *Taufstein* (baptismal stone) and accepted baptism, dressed in a *Westerhembd* (special frock). "Then a young boy brought a laurel wreath to crown my head, and I was told to be a fighter for Jesus Christ and for the Evangelical truth." At the conclusion of the ceremony, the convert's old clothing was removed, and a white garment, the "clothing of angels," was brought out to signify the purity of the newborn soul, or the spiritual wedding between the new Christian and the church. While the onlookers witnessed the convert bathed in holy waters, they were instructed to envision that the convert was really being washed in the blood that poured from the wounds of Christ.¹⁰² This high point of the ceremony provided dramatic re-enactment of the Christian primal scene: a repudiation of Judaism, a symbolic death, and the birth of a new Christian.

During the months of preparation leading up to the baptismal ceremony and throughout the ceremony itself, all parties focused intensely on the convert. The sponsors made every effort to secure the most prestigious godparents for the convert. These often included the highest-ranking aristocracy or royalty; when prominent lay persons could not be found, members of the local clergy would

attend in full regalia. Local noblewomen generally sponsored female converts. In his history of Nuremberg Jewry, the chronicler Würfel listed the godparents for every convert he recorded, producing a veritable “Who’s Who” of local society. One seventeenth-century convert from Judaism even had a list of godparents who could not attend, but whose “sponsorship” had been mailed in.¹⁰³ Descriptions of baptismal ceremonies never failed to emphasize the great multitudes that gathered, the splendid sermons that were preached, and the expense to which the sponsoring parish went to ensure a glittering and well-attended spectacle to mark the momentous event.¹⁰⁴ The date of the baptismal ceremony often coincided with a church holy day or saint’s day to ensure maximum attendance, and perhaps to spare the expense of preparing a separate celebration.¹⁰⁵ The baptismal ceremony of Metz-born Jew Ludwig Compiègne de Veil on 12 June 1655 may have been more elaborate than most, but not by much:

There were present as godfather and godmother
 The King, our Lord, and the Queen
 It was the Bishop of Soissons
 Who baptised him at the font
 Of people, an infinite multitude
 watching this ceremony.¹⁰⁶

Particularly during times when regular attendance at the church had waned and enthusiasm among the masses had dulled, baptismal ceremonies for converts provided a special opportunity for renewed affirmation of the power of Christianity.

Fathers and Sons, Mothers and Sons

Every early modern conversion from Judaism entailed a breaking away from the past, not only from the religion of the parents, but from all links with the entire family and community. In this respect, the early modern converts provide a striking contrast to those of nineteenth-century Germany, who often waited for the death of a parent or a grandparent before making public the intention or fact of a conversion. Some nineteenth-century converts baptized their children, but not themselves, in the hope of giving them an easier future. Abraham Mendelssohn-Bartholdy did not tell his parents of his children’s conversion because he knew it would distress them. David Veit wrote in 1795 to his friend Rahel Varnhagen of his intention to travel immediately after his conversion, so that his family would never be aware of it if he returned to Germany. Their sensibility and strategies form a striking contrast to early modern converts, who often fought bitterly with their parents and even denounced them in public.¹⁰⁷

The medieval story of the convert Hermann implicitly chastised his father for

sending young Hermann to recover an unsecured loan from a bishop. By sending his impressionable son to a churchman, the father had placed his son's soul in jeopardy. In the early modern period, psychological tension between parents and children remained an enduring current within conversion narratives. For some, conversion constituted a form of rebellion against a powerful father. Other young men converted in the course of a search or yearning for a father figure. Missionaries often acted as surrogate fathers, and the new parishes compensated for inadequate homes.¹⁰⁸ Other times, conversion constituted a response to painful ostracism by the Jewish community. In his autobiography, Moses Marcus, Glíkl Hameln's grandson, did not mention his father's excommunication by the Jewish community as the reason for his conversion, but it may have contributed to it. In a similar case, Christoff Mendel's father, a wealthy and influential individual, Mendel of Buda, was stripped of his honor by the Jewish community.¹⁰⁹

Conversion stories in the early modern period often began with young men leaving home. Some went to study in a distant yeshivah, others to embark on their first apprenticeship or business venture; yet others went to live with distant relatives because death had robbed them of parents who could provide for them. The conditions of living on the road, detached from the certainties and comforts of home, rendered them vulnerable to enticement by missionary-minded Christians. In the early seventeenth century, eight-year-old Malachi ben Samuel was sent at eight years of age from his home in Lithuania to Moravia, "to distant foreign lands, so that I learned several foreign languages." He spent several years at Dressnitz, then Prague, and later in Poland, a typical trajectory for a bright student in search of the best Jewish education. He later traveled to Constantinople and Salonika to study Kabbalah, all before he turned eighteen. When he wrote to his father of his religious doubts, his father "took it very badly, and became very ill over it, as anyone could imagine . . . and sighed often over his son, as David over Absalom." The father did not reveal the contents of the letter to the rest of the family, for fear of upsetting the boy's mother. When one of his brothers learned the reason for his father's distress, he wrote to the potential convert, "Think, my dear brother, of the distress of your mother, who brought you into this world with great pain, raised you with great effort. What has she done to deserve this? You would be killing her, along with father." These words produced the desired effect, at least for several years. Malachi served as a rabbi in Posnan, in Poland, but his heart was not in it, and eventually, in 1621, he converted, taking the name Paul Christian.¹¹⁰

Abraham Brody, an impoverished Talmud student, begged for his weekly expenses, occasionally resorting to petty thievery. Discontented with this life, he ultimately converted, married a Christian woman, and became a successful grain

merchant in Sweden. “When I was an itinerant Talmud student, I once spent a weekend in Bützow accompanied by a fellow-student. That was about four years ago and I was then called Abraham Brody, but I have since joined the Church and my name is B____. I . . . spent the Sabbath with Rabbi David. . . . On Sunday I followed the custom of the Talmud students making the rounds of the homes in order to gather some money for living and travel expenses. . . . My companion and I traveled on but we were unable to find suitable employment. . . . Please don’t think that on account of my conversion I am not to be trusted; on the contrary, my heart is filled with joy whenever I meet a Jew.”¹¹¹

Johann Adam Gottfried, mid-eighteenth-century convert, described a typical situation in which a son, seeking a substitute for a father who had died, eventually wound up in the embrace of Christianity. “My Jewish parents lived in Altona near Hamburg, and at time of my birth, were renowned throughout Jewish world for their great wealth.” But they lost everything.

My father died when I was young and we left our land. Shortly after the death of my father, and approximately in my ninth year, my mother sent me to a rich uncle in London to learn diamond cutting, his metier. He laughed at me, said I was too weak, and sent me back to my mother in Altona. Because she could not subsist there, she took me with the other children to Eisenstadt in Hungary, not far from Vienna where she had wealthy relatives. I went to study with another uncle, R. Koppel Frankel, in Fürth. I was called as *Praeceptor* (teacher) to the Jews in Roth im Anspach; I had to teach all day. After several years, I came to be Praeceptor in Sulzbürg, where my circumstances improved. From then, until my twenty first year of age, when I went over to the Christian religion, I was in good circumstances.¹¹²

Johann Polycarp Besser’s father, Judel Aaron, died when he was six years old; his mother sent him from home at age ten to seek his fortune. After much wandering through German, French, and Danish cities, he met a man of the cloth in Holstein, who introduced him to Christ’s *Lebens-lauff* (life story); when his potential sponsor died suddenly, Besser continued to wander for some years, until his baptism in 1725.¹¹³ At age fifteen, Koch’s eventual protégé had been sent to a distant yeshivah, where he was very successful and earned the title “Chober” (*chaver* = fellow). The boy’s father sent him to Berlin to further his studies, but once his father died, his mother asked him to leave scholarship and enter the family business. Rebellious against his mother’s call to return home, the young man went to study in Prague. But, according to Koch’s account, the “gates of rebelliousness” had opened, and he began to entertain doubts about the Jewish texts he had once cherished.¹¹⁴

Parents who had their children baptized along with them often raised young Christians who had to grapple with their own vague Jewish memories, as well as an overwhelming need to justify the lives of their fathers. Biographies written by such sons form a separate subgroup of convert narratives. They tend to be less informed by particulars of Jewish life, but, one generation later, their identities as children of converts and child converts themselves continued to complicate their lives. The autobiographies of both Stephan Isaac and Friedrich Albrecht Augusti exemplify the complex relationships in such families. In the Isaac family the mother stood at the center of the family conversion drama along with the father. Women often converted to stay with their children, since the law usually awarded custody to converting fathers. This prompted the reluctant conversion of Johannes Isaac's wife, mother of Stephan. When Friedrich Augusti's father died, the boy was young, and his mother sent him off on business. He did not see her subsequently for long periods of time. Later, when Augusti discussed the force of his intention to convert, he recalled that nothing could stop him, not even his mother whom he loved. In Augusti's description of the difficult period that followed his decision to convert, in which doubts assailed him, the image of his mother haunted him.¹¹⁵

Abraham Hertz (b. 1706), son of Moses Levi Hertz, a "man of learning," went to study in a yeshivah in Prague after his parents died when he was eighteen years old; he remained in the yeshivah for five years. In 1728, he became a children's tutor in Nikolsburg for three years, then for another three years in Hungary. From there, he went to Belgrade, where he was captured by the Turks, together with a Protestant Christian whose faith and fortitude inspired him. Although ransomed by the Jewish community in Smyrna, Hertz later acted on his promise to his dying friend and converted.¹¹⁶

Even in Jewish families in which several baptisms occurred, they did not all take place at the same time. Many converts yearned for the families they had left behind. In the early eighteenth century, Christian Gottfried Austerlitz wrote a book on the theme of the ultimate conversion of all Jews.¹¹⁷ He frankly admitted that he hoped his message would find its way to his son, who was still a Jew: "suche jetzo an meinen Sohn, der noch ein Jude ist."¹¹⁸ Johann Polycarp Besser wrote a treatise on the conversion of the Jews in which he indulged in dreaming of how good it would be if "all our children" still living in error could be brought to Christianity. Besser suggested that the severity with which the Jewish community maintained its segregation from former members contributed to the difficulty of attracting and retaining converts. "I know with certainty that many Jews are frightened off by the knowledge that if they would become Christian, Jews would deem them dishonorable and without heirs, and utterly distant from

their kin who remained in Judaism. One should weigh the impact of ban, curse, loss of one's good name, forfeiture of all one's goods, on the fragile soul which ought to be nourished first with milk."¹¹⁹

Other converts tried to reach out to their parents. John Felix, formerly Seelig Bunzlau, wrote a "letter to his father, Benjamin Schimerle, who still lived among the Jews of Bunzlau in Bohemia."¹²⁰ Claus Andreas of Osteroda, formerly Daniel Jacob Bon, addressed an epistle to his deeply revered parents, his father, Jacob Bon, his mother, Sarah Wolff, his beloved five brothers and two sisters, in the hope of persuading them to follow him into Christianity.¹²¹ He hoped to impress them with the solemnity of his conversion proceedings. He greeted them in peace, "Shalom," as though the distance separating them at present could be easily overcome.

Converts as Apostles to their Jewish Brothers

Augustine's formulation concerning the Bible of the Jews and the Bible of the Christians, "In Veteri Testamento est occultatio Novi, in Novo Testamento est manifestatio Veteris" (In the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New Testament there is a manifestation of the Old), paralleled the relationship between Jews and Christian missionaries. Just as Christianity saw the New Testament hidden within the Old, so Christian missionaries saw a new Christian apostle hidden within each Jew. Every Jew was a potential Christian, and the purpose of the mission was to make manifest the Christian within each Jew. The continued existence of the "old," the Jewish form, could be justified for concealing the seed of the "new," the Christian, within.

Convert autobiographies mirrored the Christian anticipation that a convert should not be content with his personal salvation but should strive to serve as an apostle of his newfound faith. Even converts who left little other literary material wrote the obligatory autobiography, so that their lives could illuminate the dark path taken by their blind Jewish brothers, to make manifest that which remained hidden. Friedrich Albrecht Augusti observed, as a justification for his own biography, "The living example of great men . . . leaves a greater impression than their writing."¹²² For Augusti, autobiography represented a more authentic form to convey the missionary message than any other.

The very act of writing a conversion narrative invited emulation and positioned the convert as an archetype. Christian mentors encouraged converts to write their own conversion histories and reprinted those that were regarded as particularly compelling, or useful. The life story of Friedrich Albrecht Augusti, for example, was reprinted, often "re-edited and retold," and was apparently widely read.¹²³ The value of the "life story" of the convert sometimes exceeded

that of the life itself. This explains the surprising circumstances surrounding the second edition of convert Friedrich Albert Christiani's "Lebens=Lauff." Christian Reineccius published it years after the convert had reverted to Judaism.¹²⁴ Reineccius believed that even the author's relapse did not invalidate the fundamental message of the "Lebens=Lauff,"—its call to Jews to convert. The story transcended the life.

Many of the converts addressed explicit invitations to former coreligionists to embrace their examples. Johann Polycarp Besser wanted his life story to serve as an instrument for the salvation of other Jewish souls that would otherwise be doomed to perdition. He pleaded with Christians to expend more effort on the conversion of Jews, since a single converted Jew could become the instrument of conversion for many thousands, as had been the case with Paul the apostle.¹²⁵ Christian Gottfried Austerlitz wrote that since his conversion, the blindness and stubbornness of the Jews had aroused in him a condition of perpetual sympathy for the Jews. In accordance with Paul in Romans 2:28, he affirmed his continuing love for the Jews, all the while trying to persuade them to accept the message of the gospel for their own good. Austerlitz affirmed that God does not reject the Jews because he hates them. He is continually seeking to take them as converts into his grace.¹²⁶ John Xeres expressed for his former coreligionists "a tender Affection . . . and an ardent Desire of procuring your Salvation."¹²⁷ Many converts wrote epistles to their former coreligionists and family members, enjoining them to follow their example.

The dual audience for the writings of converts is often attested by two introductions to their work, one directed to Christians and one to Jews. Italian convert Paolo Medici's book, *Riti e costumi degli ebrei confutati* (Rites and Customs of the Jews, Confuted) offers a characteristic example. To the Jews, Medici wrote out of 'tender compassion' to reveal to them from Jewish sources how they had been led to vain superstition and obsolete customs. In the introduction for Christian audiences, he wrote that Leon Modena's *Riti* had prompted him to pen a corrective to a work that deliberately glossed over absurd rituals and embellished others without basis.¹²⁸

Bridging the Irreconcilable Gap

Just as the church regarded every Jew as a potential convert, so it regarded every convert as a potential bridge to other Jews, another Paul, an instrument in the future mass conversion of Jews and a herald of the Second Coming. Paul remained a particularly compelling exemplar, reminding both critics and proponents of the mission to the Jews that one individual convert could create a whole Christian universe, even though the majority of the Jews remained obdurate.

This argument contained an implicit response to those who grew skeptical or discouraged by the small number of actual conversions.¹²⁹

The attribution of special responsibilities and powers to the convert reinforced the convert's own difficult personal passage into a new social and religious world. Many developed a conception of themselves as a bridge between the two religious communities, modeling themselves on other converts rather than directly on Christian personalities. They saw themselves as apostles to the Jews and, at the same time, defenders of the Jews against some of the worst anti-Jewish calumnies and misconceptions prevalent among Christians. Like children of divorce, they dreamed that they could bring about the ultimate reconciliation between their two "parent" faiths. Jews would come to recognize the truth embedded in their own Scriptures, while Christians would abandon their deeply held negative stereotypes and acknowledge the role of the Jews in the salvation history of the world. Converts forged an important role for themselves *as converts* in the furtherance of Christian goals.¹³⁰

Jews who contemplated conversion would often turn to recent converts for advice and information, and their former coreligionists felt duty-bound to help. In addition to the spiritual rewards of creating new converts, veteran converts eagerly attempted to expand their own narrow social circle, as they hovered on the margins of both Jewish and Christian society. Many of the stories elaborated around the "child-martyr" Simon Abeles credited the Bohemian child with seeking out the homes of a recent (Georgio Kawka) and a veteran (Joannes Tanta) convert, who plied him with clothes and toys and sent him on for further instruction. The account referred to the veteran convert as the "Saul" of Abeles, the Paul-figure responsible for his conversion.¹³¹ Joseph Guggenheim was catechized by another convert, Christian Gottlieb, formerly Jehiel Hirschlein of Buchau am Federnsee, who had converted in Zurich in 1746 and become a zealous proselytizer among the Jews.¹³²

F. A. Augusti proposed a similar role for the literary form of converts' lives. By setting down their life stories, converts who had conducted themselves admirably through this change in their lives and had succeeded in the Christian world could serve as models for other potential or wavering converts. Only the conversion narratives themselves would encourage more Jews to convert, despite the deplorable social and economic conditions in which many converts languished. Augusti prepared for publication a small work, the first of many he planned to publish as a series, under the title, "Pious Converts' Consolation and Encouragement to remain Steadfast in the Faith." He hoped to show why his heroes converted, how they sustained themselves as Christians, and how they remained faithful Christians to the end of their lives.¹³³ With these models he hoped to

appeal to his brethren as well as to “faltering proselytes.” While both Augusti and Friedenheim anticipated later plans for making Jews and converts alike productive that became popular at the end of the eighteenth century, they offered no concrete suggestions for such improvements.

Not only did Augusti plan to use the general experience of converts to attract more Jews to the Christian faith, he directly influenced several Jews to convert. In every convert autobiography, success in effecting other conversions marked a successful life as a convert. It was a sign that the conversion had “taken,” a proof that the convert had served as a true Paul for his people. Augusti converted Adam Joseph Zoref of Schleussingen, a young man who had supposedly left his father’s bad financial circumstances at age sixteen to become a soldier in Gotha. He soon revealed that he had left his father’s house to convert. In 1749, Augusti also baptized a Jewish student, Raphael Josef, who was later called Ludwig Hartmann Immanuel.

Not only did living converts inspire other Jews with their lives and stories, their literary legacies contributed to the library of material available for Jews contemplating conversion to Christianity. As one converter, Matthias Roth, said, “In order for Jews to convert, their hearts must first be opened. This can be done through the words of Christ or through the words of earlier converts.” In addition to the New Testament and the Catechism, he gave his protégé Marcus Moses several works by converts from Judaism.¹³⁴ Joseph Samuel Frey translated sermons, Luther’s shorter catechism, and other works into “German Hebrew” for the use of Jews. He would linger near the synagogue in Berlin, holding missionary conversations with Jews on their way to and from worship, and eventually founded the London Society for the Conversion of the Jews.¹³⁵

Autobiography as Justification

Some converts composed their conversion narratives during the earliest stages of the conversion process, as its first literary fruits. Others represent cumulative justifications, the effort of years or decades of living as successful converts. Johann Adam Gottfried distinguished between his baptism, as a one-time event, and his true conversion, a process which occurred in several stages over many years, one of very few converts to draw that distinction. He wrote his conversion autobiography fifteen years after his baptism. He introduced his story by claiming that he had “prepared and printed several works which no one asked of me,” while he had withheld this one which had been much sought after. “What does one expect from a proselyte?,” asked Gottfried. “First, to know what persuaded him to take on the Christian faith. This question was asked of me countless times. My *Taufactus* (baptismal proceedings) has been issued several times, but it is not so

well spread that everyone knows my *Uebergang und Bekehrung* (conversion narrative). I should have written right after my formal conversion but I have come so much farther in the past fifteen years with the realization that I was not a self made convert, that I would have had to revoke an earlier version and replace it with this one instead. I have lived long enough to see that the end of my conversion justified the beginning, so that now my readers can get a sense of something complete. I affirm the truth of every sentiment, I live and die by these and will say *Ja* and *Amen* on my deathbed.”

In his writing, Gottfried repeatedly engaged the theme of his gradual spiritual evolution. On the title page, his autobiography describes the journey as “Conversion from Judaism to Christianity, and his further development since his holy baptism.” He later described his progress from a literary acknowledgment to a full spiritual knowing. “In retrospect, I cannot really call my conversion a ‘Bekehrung,’ a conversion, but an ‘Erweckung,’ an awakening. Even during my Christian schooling years, Satan distanced me from Jesus by appealing to my pride. As a Jew, I knew only fables and absurd subjects; now that I studied Latin, logic and reason, I thought so highly of myself. In fact, I was more distant from Jesus than when I was a Jew.” Christians who never reach an “awakening,” he calls *maulchristen*, those who acknowledge Christianity with their mouths but not with their hearts.¹³⁶

Augusti, too, described his conversion not as one step but as a series of progressive stages of faith strengthened. Paul Hirsch wrote his *Sefer Megalleh Tekuphot*, directed at other converts, after twenty-five years of basking in evangelical light; Christfels, after eighteen years. Joseph Samuel Frey wrote his memoir after a decade of life as a Christian and included the stages of his spiritual development which followed upon the initial conversion.¹³⁷ For some, the motivation for writing their life stories long after the initial conversion took place was to defend their integrity after enduring a lifetime of skepticism and rejection. According to Augusti, convert John Felix’s epistle was not published until after his death, in 1760, because only then could the editor, J. Jan, testify that the convert had remained loyal to his new faith until the end.

The long and colorful biography of Friedrich Albrecht Augusti written by his son is similarly imbued with apologetic intent. Augusti converted in Dessau in 1720, and ultimately became a pastor, a position which he filled for over half a century until his death. The fact that, after fifty years of living as a devout Christian, his father’s conversion required an impassioned defense speaks volumes about the level of suspicion to which the converts were subject even decades after their conversion. Ernst Augusti opened his biography by explaining why it was perfectly reasonable for a convert to be asked the reasons for his con-

version. "When a Jew leaves his miserable destiny among his brothers for gain, his hypocrisy will eventually be revealed." Nevertheless, Augusti implied, a long life as a virtuous Christian ought to constitute sufficient retroactive proof of a convert's honorable intentions.¹³⁸ While he approved of the narrative as a model for others, he deplored the need to use it as a justification for conversions that had taken place long ago.

Joseph Samuel Frey wrote what might be considered the most sophisticated analysis of his autobiographical work: "The reader is particularly requested to keep in view the *nature* and *design* of the work. It is a Narrative, and not a Confession of Faith, nor a Defence of Christianity, nor an Argumentative Discourse to convince and persuade the jews to embrace the christian religion; the sole design of the Author is to furnish the public at large, and his jewish brethren in particular with the means of judging for themselves of his character whilst amongst his own people; of his motives for embracing the christian religion . . . By these means, those who doubted . . . had it in their power to ascertain the truth."¹³⁹ Frey understood precisely the nature and function of the narrative. By delineating them so carefully, he hoped that his public would be able to read and appreciate his narrative without judging it against inappropriate standards.

Journey of a Lifetime

Alongside accounts of their spiritual journeys, many converts described actual travels undertaken during their quest to leave the Jewish and enter the Christian world. Le Roi, nineteenth-century chronicler of the Protestant mission to the Jews, interpreted the accounts of actual wandering as doubly significant. Travel in the real world symbolized the inner spiritual turmoil that characterized Jews throughout the period of their exile; the Wandering Jew of legend reflected the condition of all Jews. Moreover, travel propelled Jews from the confines of the world they had known into closer proximity with Christians, thus facilitating and furthering the divine plan for their conversion.¹⁴⁰ Eighteenth-century convert Carl Anton roamed the world for five years after his stint as a yeshivah student in Prague. A serious illness during his sojourn in Constantinople caused Anton to begin to question his religion. After he recovered, he traveled to Wolfenbüttel where his spiritual journey culminated.¹⁴¹ Sixteenth-century convert Paul Altdörfer recounted the places he had visited throughout his life, with his conversion as the final destination of his life's journey. "After having traversed land and sea for almost thirty years as a Jew . . . (I have visited Jerusalem twice, Asia minor, Palestine, Syria, and . . . Africa, Constantinople, Thrace, and the best known cities on the Black Sea,) I decided to embrace the religion of Jesus

Christ.”¹⁴² For many converts, geographical migrations served to mediate and shape their spiritual peregrinations.

In early modern Europe, the burgeoning interest in exploration and travel took Europeans on a search for ever more exotic destinations and observations. European travelers generated an enormous body of travel literature for an insatiable public. The autobiographies of converts that contain vivid descriptions of travel, or those which emphasize the exoticism of the Jewish world, can be situated within this broader cultural context. The tendency of converts to lead peripatetic lives, along with their need to produce literature for a livelihood, produced a literary hybrid in which exotic voyages served as the setting for spiritual journeys. The itinerary of Friedrich Albrecht Augusti provides a rich and colorful example of a travel story embedded within a convert’s “life.” Accounts of Augusti’s travels within the larger narrative created a sense of authenticity by providing a profusion of vivid detail. Whereas most conversion narratives located one particular moment within the convert’s life as the decisive turning point, Augusti’s biography contained many dramatic highlights. He did not credit any single particular event or idea with providing the critical impulse toward conversion. Punctuating his narrative with a series of dramatic events and impressions, Augusti structured it as a life of adventures rather than a gradual awakening or a sudden illumination.

Augusti’s final incident merits careful analysis, for it provides a view of the constraints which bound the convert narratives. During his stay in the home of court Jew Wallich, the Prince of Schwarzburg, Wallich’s patron, died. Augusti accompanied Wallich to offer condolences to the heir, the next prince. In the course of addressing the bereaved, Wallich referred to the departed as “the most blessed Prince.”¹⁴³ His son, the new prince, immediately accused the Jew of hypocrisy, arguing that according to tenets of the Jewish religion, the Jew was not allowed to regard any Christian as blessed. Wallich tried to extricate himself by saying that he had heard his rabbi teach that Judaism did not regard all “goim” (Gentiles) as evil, that some could be pious. The prince asked him to bring the rabbi, who read from *Sefer Hasidim* (The Book of the Pious) that when a Christian lives piously, observes the seven Noahide commandments, and treats his Jewish subjects fairly, he cannot be denied a share of the world to come. Satisfied, the prince then introduced them both to the local spiritual “superintendent” Reinhard. Reinhard, a Hebraist, greeted the Jews warmly, engaged them in theological debate, and ultimately drew Augusti into his orbit. After this rare example of religious confrontation on a private level, after all Augusti’s travels, his biographical detail, and moments of revelation, Augusti’s narrative culminated with the

discussion between himself and Reinhard concerning the interpretation of chapter 53 of the Book of Isaiah. In the end, Augusti's story reverted to the standard polemical convention of the problematical biblical proof-text.

Forging a Convert Identity

A matter-of-fact acceptance of the link to their Jewish past and its central place in their life stories characterizes the autobiographies of converts in the early modern period. Converts from Victor von Carben and Johannes Pfefferkorn in the early sixteenth century to Carl Anton in the eighteenth gloried in their distinguished rabbinic pedigrees. Pfefferkorn boasted that his uncle in Prague who had tutored him, Meir Pfefferkorn, was the most learned rabbi of the age.¹⁴⁴ Paul Staffelstainer, formerly Nathan Aaron, described himself as descended from the tribe of Aaron.¹⁴⁵ Paul of Prague wrote that he was the scion of "an excellent old family, great people in Judaism who regarded themselves as sincerely pious, who were held in highest esteem by the Christian potentates, and deemed honest by Jews and Christians alike."¹⁴⁶ Carl Anton claimed that his father, Gershon Moses Cohen, descended from the author of *Matnot Kehunah* and from Obadiah Bertinoro, his mother from rabbis Hayim Vital and Yom Tov Lipman Heller.¹⁴⁷

Gottfried boasted of the rabbinic luminaries in the Margolis family, including Jacob Margalith, "head of the Jewish community here in Regensburg" and correspondent of Reuchlin; Isaac Margolith (b.ca. 1530), head of a yeshivah in Prague; Moses Mordechai, who annotated the *Zohar Hadash* and commented on Psalm 72; Samuel Margolith, and others, still living.¹⁴⁸ Johann Polycarp Besser wrote proudly of his family's priestly and rabbinic pedigrees.¹⁴⁹ Christian Friedenreich signed his name with the designation "Rabb. Conv.," rabbinic convert, rather than the standard Jud. Conv.¹⁵⁰ Lotharius Franz Fried, filled with loathing for the Jews he had left behind, boasted that while contemporary Jews descended from slaves, "I, however, if I have been correctly informed . . . am descended from the high priestly pedigree of Aaron . . . precursor of Papal holiness in Rome."¹⁵¹ Such illustrious pedigrees served to counter assertions that converts had descended from tainted families.¹⁵² Yet, while they invoked their Jewish pasts, converts needed to tread carefully. They could not refer to their Jewish ancestors in too laudatory or nostalgic a tone. Phillip Ernst Christfels referred to himself by his Hebrew name, Mordechai ben Moshe, *zekher zaddik le-veracha* (Mordechai, son of Moses, may the memory of the righteous be a blessing). When his Christian acquaintances chided him for referring warmly to his Jewish father's memory, Christfels defended himself by saying that he referred to his father's honesty rather than to his religion.¹⁵³

Converts rarely patterned their present and future trajectories on Christian models. Instead, they tended to shape their life stories like those of other converts, rather than those of Christian figures. Moses Marcus cited the example of another convert, Johannes Isaac; theologian August Pfeiffer compared Friedrich Christiani to a list of other learned Jewish converts: Paul of Burgos, Nicholas Lyra, Johannes Isaac, Paul Weidner, Christian Gerson, and Julius Conrad Otto.¹⁵⁴ The baptismal sermon of pastor Peter Rehbinder opened with a similar list of “useful” converts, a refutation of the argument that all Jewish converts were insincere.¹⁵⁵ Some converts took pride in families that had produced other noted converts from Judaism. Johann Christoph Gottfried boasted of being from the notable German-Jewish family Margalioth, which had produced the sixteenth-century convert, Antonius Margaritha.¹⁵⁶ Members of the de Weille family listed many converts among their ranks.¹⁵⁷

German converts, like Iberian conversos, saw themselves as theologically central to the apocalyptic conciliation of Jews and Christians, a tendency perhaps best conceptualized in the thought of Isaac la Peyrère and Johannes Kemper. Some regarded themselves as superior to Old Christians because of their Jewish ancestry. An early nineteenth-century convert, Isaac da Costa of Amsterdam, recounted the entire history of the Jews from the perspective of converts in his *Israel and the Gentiles*.¹⁵⁸ Abetted by solicitous missionaries like those in Halle, converts created a sense of community, history, and identity distinct from the larger Christian community. The Jewish component remained firmly embedded within that identity.

THE PROFESSIONS OF CONVERSION

I had learned no particular profession, I had not distinguished myself in any special science, I was not even master of any language in which I could make myself perfectly intelligible. It occurred to me, therefore, that there was no alternative left but to embrace the Christian religion and get myself baptised.

Autobiography of Solomon Maimon

The conventional view that converts originated from the most destitute and desperate margins of Jewish society, a notion fostered by the Jewish community, conveys a distorted image. Equally mistaken is the notion that conversion automatically propelled the convert up the socioeconomic ladder. Both these assumptions rest on an interpretation of conversion as an opportunistic means of advancement into a previously unattainable place in society. While this picture may have been valid for some times and places, converts in early modern German lands often followed the opposite trajectory. They tended to come from respectable, although not the highest, positions in the Jewish world. Regardless of their origin, they rarely progressed further than the margins of their new faith community after their conversion. Unlike the nineteenth century in England, Poland, and even Germany, where conversion removed impediments to marriage into upper social classes, including the nobility, until the late eighteenth century in German lands this was not the case.¹ Typically, converts remained within a tightly confined social circle, often marrying other converts. The first female convert from Judaism recorded in Nuremberg married another convert; other converts both in Nuremberg and beyond followed this pattern. Converts to Protestantism tended to marry children of Christian clergymen.² Both patterns of spousal choice indicate a poor record of reception as social equals in Christian society.³ Economic and professional integration proved to be an even greater challenge for

most converts. Many converts came from a poor but respectable social stratum of Jewish society; they often ended up in similar circles as Christians.

Professions before Conversion

A considerable number of converts served as second-rank religious functionaries prior to their conversions. The claim of some to have been rabbis often glorified their actual positions as *melammedim*, schoolteachers. In the early modern period, this occupation was among the least desirable in Jewish society. The poor salaries, the long hours, and the utter lack of professional training contributed to its low social status. One mid-seventeenth-century German rabbi, Judah Mehler Reutlingen, described his attitude to the position of schoolteacher that he took as a result of poverty and wartime circumstances: "It was necessary for me to teach youths . . . for a salary. . . . Those days appeared of very long duration to me . . . because of the heavy burden that was always upon me in teaching the boys. Although it is the work of heaven, it is, nevertheless, acceptable before the Lord to escape from this livelihood, particularly for someone who is occupied with wife and children. God heard that this livelihood was hateful to me."⁴

Victor von Carben, who converted at an advanced age, described himself as "formerly a Jew and rabbi [teacher?] of the Jewish Scripture."⁵ Jacob Melammed from Cornitz in Podolia served as a schoolteacher in the Ashkenazic community in Hamburg before he converted in 1676.⁶ Mordechai Shemaya, later Phillip Ernst Christfels, taught students at the yeshivah in Fürth.⁷ Yom Tob, later Theodore John, of Prague "was a teacher" among the Jews at Treves.⁸ Joseph Samuel Frey became a tutor in Hesse to six small children when he was eighteen. He held the job for three years. "In this occupation I was employed only six hours in the day. I was at a loss how to spend the remainder of my time."⁹ One convert described taking a position as a tutor as a last desperate attempt to maintain an economic foothold within the Jewish community. J. A. Gottfried, born in Altona as Nathan, admitted that after his family's money had been lost and his own business had failed, he had become a private tutor to Jews in Anspach and Sulzbach; he subsequently converted.¹⁰

Aside from those who worked as teachers, many other converts emerged from the social class which Deborah Hertz called the "lower social stratum of religious intelligentsia."¹¹ They often served as the only local repositories of Jewish lore and law, although their own meager schooling placed them far below the established scholarly elite.¹² Abraham Oppenheim served as rabbi of Arenheim in Gelder-Land and assistant rabbi in Coblenz before he converted and took the name Friedrich Wilhelm Christoph Tauffenburg.¹³ Abraham Jacobs claimed that

his father was a rabbi in Frankfurt, and that he “was raised to succeed him in that great office.”¹⁴ Others served as cantors, an important position in communities too small to support a rabbi. Cantors, sextons, scribes, and similar community functionaries, regarded as the local ritual experts, served as repositories of wisdom on their particular subjects. Some labored to preserve the customs, local history, and folklore of the community. Like Catholic choirmasters in Central Europe, these secondary religious functionaries could lead the services and play a variety of religious roles.¹⁵ Antonius Margaritha used his intimate knowledge of the prayer services as brother of a cantor as the basis of his *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*. Before his conversion, Friedrich Albrecht Christiani returned to his parents’ home when his education ended at age sixteen. He remained there for two years and then left to become cantor in the tiny new Jewish community at Bruchsaal.¹⁶ At the age of twenty-one Joseph Frey became a cantor, to supplement his income as a schoolteacher. The prospects of the latter job only slightly less bleak than the former, he later embellished it to impress his Christian readers: “At the age of twenty-one I received a second honorary degree to be a leader of the synagogue, to read the public prayers and the law of Moses.” This additional honor did not bring sufficient income or satisfaction apparently, because Frey subsequently “spent a whole year in obtaining the knowledge of the Jewish method of preparing the knife for killing fowls or beasts . . . None but those who have learned these ceremonies can judge how difficult they are to be acquired, so as to be a master of them all. At length I likewise obtained this degree of honor.”¹⁷ Johannes Pfefferkorn held the position of butcher, which ranked below that of ritual slaughterer. Convert Christoph Wallich served the Jewish community as “best scribe,” as well as “most excellent cantor,” which put him in a position to know intimate ritual matters.¹⁸ Wallich persuaded his patron to allow him to serve as a docent for all matters pertaining to synagogue ritual among the Jews. He provided living tableaux and exhibits for the entertainment of his patron’s guests and for local university students, an ingenious way of turning his Jewish expertise into a livelihood.

Positions as secondary religious functionaries corresponded to the converts’ fair but not outstanding Jewish training. They formed a class of individuals who worked often at great distances from the communities that had nurtured them, separated not only from parents but from wives and children as well, isolated, indigent, and generally treated with disrespect.¹⁹ In a later period, these individuals might have fled the bleakness of their destinies by emigrating or advancing socially and economically as new opportunities for Jews to enter society began to open. But in the seventeenth century, there were precious few ways out of their predicament. In an age when even the most prominent rabbis complained

of penury, surely it is no coincidence that so many from these ranks proved vulnerable to the blandishments of missionaries.²⁰

Of course, not all converts shared the same professional background. Some claimed that they had lived in wealth and comfort. Joseph Guggenheim served as *parnas* (communal lay leader) of the small Jewish community in Ober-Lengnau and Ober-Endigen, a position to which he ascended as soon as he returned from his yeshivah studies in Metz.²¹ Some converts modeled their entire conversion along the lines of a sacrificial act, going to great lengths to document the respectability, financial security, kinship ties, and other worldly benefits they had foregone in order to convert. “[I] compared the state of worldly prosperity enjoyed by my parents, and the credit and honor which I had acquired amongst the Jews, with the low and miserable condition in which I now found myself.”²² Others admitted to escaping the bleakest of economic circumstances. Solomon Moses of Gunzenhausen had served as *Knecht*, domestic servant, to Gabriel Fränkel in Fürth. When he could no longer tolerate the harsh treatment meted out by his master, some friends advised him to convert to Christianity, which he did in Nuremberg in 1710. He learned a trade and lived there until his death, “old and satisfied.”²³

The Price of Conversion

What became of the converts in the course of their journeys into new worlds? The enticements of economic opportunity notwithstanding, certificates and letters permitting recent converts to beg for alms attest to the emptiness of such enticements, at least for the first generation. Even those who, lured by promises of instant celebrity in their new world, made the transition from secure positions within the Jewish community felt the disappointing jolt of unrealized expectations.

After the initial excitement of the baptism had subsided, how successfully did the converts integrate into Christian society? As the baptismal ceremony, with its pomp and celebration, receded into the background, many converts experienced bouts of loneliness, depression, and regret over their decision.²⁴ With rare exceptions, once completed, converts could never reverse the results of baptism. Converts were sometimes subjected to active harrassment by their former Jewish coreligionists. To remedy the situation, legislators passed laws through the seventeenth century forbidding Jews to despise, insult, or persecute converts.²⁵

Christian Gerson described the convert's sense of personal loss: “My wife, with whom I had lived in marriage, with love and fidelity, and with whom I had two sons, I left at her request . . . all my relatives, all my disciples . . . all my Jewish neighbors and acquaintances . . . have become implacable enemies. . . . My

money and my property, my esteemed name . . . I gave it all up because I truly believe in Christ.”²⁶ Eighteenth-century convert Abraham Jacobs of Frankfurt deliberated long and hard before making the decision to convert. Only after the deed was done did its consequences begin to make themselves felt. “Now my dear Christians, what sorrows did I undergo! What anxieties did I labor under! Torn off from the tenderest of fathers, and most dear relations, and scoffed by all the Jews, left in the wide world without anything to subsist on or a known freind [sic] in whom I could place my confidence . . . My relatives and former friends practiced every method which they thought would do me . . . injury and all the Jews made their daily sport and game every time I was seen in the street.”²⁷ Jacobs resolved to leave Germany and seek a better life in England, but a life of penury greeted him there too. He wrote his *Life* as a response to advice “to put this pamphlet into print as a means of earning a subsistence.” The son of prominent Hungarian Jew Mendel of Buda, Christoff Mendel, converted to Christianity, envisioning that his influence would lead him to continued prosperity. But he used his many connections to no avail, ultimately landing a position teaching Hebrew at Ansbach.²⁸ Polish Jew Joseph bar Zadok, who traveled through German cities seeking instruction in Christian theology, converted to become Paul Joseph in 1611 in Altdorf. He earned his living in Nuremberg by tutoring youths who wished to study Hebrew. When he fell blind, he had no one to care for him, since his wife could not live in Nuremberg and its environs. He eventually converted to Catholicism, to the chagrin of his Protestant benefactors in Nuremberg, perhaps in the hope of receiving better social services. He died in great misery and loneliness.²⁹

Some converts described physical symptoms of their anxiety concerning their conversion. Stephan Isaac recalled the tension he felt in the course of his deliberations and the symptoms of stress that assailed him when he came to question some of the tenets of his adopted faith: “Through these and other unpleasant quarrels, and other nastiness, I fell into a deep melancholy, and finally into physical weakness as well. I did not know from where it emerged, that I had now definitely noticed that my matters had no basis in God’s word.”³⁰ Joseph Guggenheim, who had spent close to two decades agonizing over his decision to convert, finally made his decision in 1757. Shortly thereafter, he apparently suffered a nervous breakdown. “He began to scream and bellow like an animal, and to speak in a confused manner.” After several more delays, as the process of conversion went forward, he experienced further agonies. Separated from his family, “he began screaming for his wife and children night and day.” Never entirely at peace with his decision to convert, Guggenheim spent the rest of his life drifting in and out of madness, between periods of theological deliberation undertaken in his more

lucid moments.³¹ Guggenheim's mental condition never gave his sponsor pause; his emotional vulnerability simply made him all the more tempting a target.

It is interesting to note that Moses Mendelssohn appeared to have suffered similar symptoms of anxiety when faced with the open challenge to conversion. After being challenged publicly by Lavater in 1769, "The general strain of the affair aggravated his physical and psychological condition. Mendelssohn suffered long term consequences . . . ceased to write sustained philosophical works. When asked what he did during his long hours of enforced idleness he replied that he counted the roof tiles on his neighbor's house."³² While Mendelssohn's anxiety stemmed not from fear of conversion but from reluctance to enter into public theological debate, the pressure on him indicates how difficult the entire business remained for even the most sophisticated German Jews.

New Professions: Professors and Beggars

Even celebrated converts who had prestigious patrons in high places found themselves isolated and impoverished once the novelty of their conversion had worn off. The best and the brightest among the converts often ended up taking positions in the lower clergy or tutoring university students in Hebrew, while the less well-connected became or remained paupers. Their socioeconomic status deteriorated in Christian society from what it had been in their previous Jewish community. Convert Johannes Isaac, whose son often claimed that he had left a wealthy home, was obliged to petition repeatedly for basic support even after his appointment as a Hebrew professor in Cologne. The protocols of the city council for 7 November 1552 granted him 30 *thaler* "because he is poor," until some additional sources of sustenance became available. A week later, the *Rentmeister* granted him "a garment," because he was not well clothed. Several months later, Isaac again requested a "secure stipend." This time he received a grant of 50 *thaler*, because the scholars had spoken so well of him. He was told that if he had higher expectations, the magistrates would be happy if he tried to obtain the money elsewhere. Yet his announcement that he would leave the city to travel, so that he could sell his books, met with suspicion. The city appointed two special supervisors to ensure his return. Several months later he complained that he could not support himself on his stipend; he asked for a house. The city designated one for him, at a rate of 5 or 6 percent interest. The irony of this reversal of roles, the city lending to the former Jew at interest, appears to have been lost on the participants.³³

The interests of converts converged with those of nascent universities in the seventeenth century. In the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War, many Protestant states in Germany established new universities or rebuilt existing ones. Many

now included departments of oriental languages, rabbinics, and other subjects for which converts were in demand. Catholic universities felt a similar pressure to maintain standards of Hebraic literacy.³⁴ The life of university faculty in the sixteenth and seventeenth century is difficult to imagine today. Throughout the early modern period, most professorships guaranteed little in terms of livelihood and prestige, and many universities were in fact little more than local high schools.³⁵ Professors were often responsible for finding their own students, who paid them pittance for private instruction. Converts who entered the ranks of the clergy, and even those who did not, were expected to facilitate the acquisition of Hebrew by Christian students by becoming tutors of Hebrew associated with universities. Converts came to occupy a professional niche previously occupied solely by Christian clergymen. Teaching in the universities gave them a chance to use their knowledge of Jewish matters without necessarily belonging to the clerical establishment.

The convert Paul Altdörfer wrote a letter of application to Bishop Friedrich von Wirsberg (modern Würzburg), in which he presented himself as a suitable candidate for a professorship in Hebrew.

As the reputation of the University which you have established under episcopal auspices, has spread, . . . and because I have spent most of my life on the writings of the Hebrews, . . . if it please your Highness, I would like to interpret the Psalms or another Old Testament book, everything according to the commentaries of the Kabbalah, wherever it is useful. I will not conceal any of the mysteries, with which the Hebrew language is replete. To know them is important above all else in order to protect Christians against the infidels, (Jews and Mohammedans) as well as the heretics (Protestants and Calvinists). I spent three full years in Constantinople, heard the most eminent rabbis, and with great diligence, I studied the commentaries of the Chaldeans and the Arabs . . . in order to achieve a complete mastery of the Hebrew Language.³⁶

Altdörfer's letter explicitly stated his expectation of being rewarded with a university post for his conversion, although he had no qualification beyond that of any yeshivah student after several years of study. His vague statement of intention to publish some biblical work indicates what converts in his position could be expected to produce. Converts who had served as Jewish tutors and schoolteachers, positions considered menial within the Jewish community, converted with expectations that their Jewish professional background would become their ticket to employment teaching Hebrew to Christians. Until the mid-seventeenth

century, this expectation was often unrealized. In the century and a half from 1500 to 1650, slightly more than 5 percent of professors of Hebrew were converts; the rest were Christian Hebraists.³⁷ During the period of university expansion after 1648, more opportunities became available for able convert candidates, but the window of opportunity opened only briefly.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the close association between converts and Hebraica teaching positions began to erode. While the expectation that converts undertake theological training remained, opportunities for academic employment diminished. When “Rabbi” Copilia converted in 1736, taking the name Christian Fürchtegott Liepmann, he performed so splendidly at his conversion examination that many sponsors and audience members agreed that he should proceed to study theology. This wish was realized with the help of the local prince, who underwrote his upkeep for several years of theological study.³⁸ Convert Johann Adam Gottfried encountered many disappointments along the path to conversion, but none greater than not obtaining an academic post of the type that had previously been the preserve of converts. Almost as soon as he arrived for instruction in the Christian faith, he began to study Latin in preparation for a theological career.³⁹ But after his conversion, he descended into penury. “What put me into such dire circumstances was that I had decided to study Theology. I made this choice because that is what I had done as a Jew. I would have been much better off if someone had suggested I study something other than Theology. Instead of having a good occupation, I was now in perpetual need. I went to school in Neustadt a.d. Aisch; they graciously gave me a place to live, took care of my needs. Because of their good teaching, I had good background in Latin after one year.” Gottfried became a competent theologian, producing several books on religion and reason, that according to his own testimony, sold well. But he complained, nevertheless, that no Christian had steered him into a more useful occupation than the one he had already been pursuing as a Jew.⁴⁰

In his second year of Greek and Latin studies, Gottfried left to attend the University of Tübingen, in order to obtain the post of reader in rabbinic language, which had recently fallen vacant as a result of the death of the convert who had held it previously. When he arrived, Gottfried was informed that the position had been eliminated; it would be subsumed under the duties of the professors of Oriental languages, who would henceforth teach rabbinics as well. Gottfried tutored private students for two years, hoping that a real position would materialize; when it did not, he took his recommendations to Stuttgart, only to hear the same thing—the prospective position was being abolished. Gottfried marshaled considerable political pressure to acquire the job which he considered his

according to the law of tradition of converts, but the university proved intransigent. Gottfried described his state of mind as being one of unbelievable pain, all his hopes for the future crushed.⁴¹

Another conventional career path for converts was to become clergymen. Spiritual sponsors of Jews for conversion often exerted great pressure on converts to enter the religious professions. The greatest triumph and proof of true conversion would be to turn the former Jew into a Christian cleric. The conservative faculty of the university at Cologne offered such opportunities to converts such as Victor von Carben and Johannes Isaac. The cases of the son of Christian Gerson and of the convert Augusti provide later examples from the Protestant camp. One nineteenth-century historian of the Christian mission, Christian Kalkar, concluded that it was well known that a great number of German clerical families were descended from converted Jews.⁴²

As the prestige of the clergy diminished under the atomizing force of the Reformation, numerous treaties reapportioned the denominations of political subjects as so many spoils of war. Opportunities for Jewish converts on the lowest rungs of the clergy broadened, particularly in Protestant denominations. By the mid-eighteenth century, the status of clergymen of all denominations had declined: "Some posts were for sale, others were auctioned off, but few were desirable: the pay of the clergy was invariably small, their social status low, and their life dreary."⁴³ As time passed, fewer and fewer converts made this career choice.

For converts who intended to do something else with their lives, the expectation that they enter the ranks of the clergy produced conflict and tension. Stephan Isaac, converted when he was a child in 1542, set his heart on studying medicine, as his ancestors had done.⁴⁴ Stephan supported himself by teaching Hebrew, which his father had apparently taught him; he substituted as a Hebrew teacher at the university. Because he showed intellectual promise, Catholic Church officials did not allow him to complete his medical training; his sponsors coerced him into becoming a Catholic priest, against both his own will and that of his father.⁴⁵ In his account, he accused the clergymen of Cologne of causing a deep rift between him and his father, and he recalled that his clerical mentors continued to harangue him about his father's religious beliefs, deepening the fissure between father and son until his father's dying day. Isaac's story offers a perfect illustration of Cologne Dominicans trying to mold a convert in the image of earlier converts and co-opt him in their fight against heresy. But in an age of religious upheaval, when other career choices beckoned, this strategy did not serve them as effectively as it had in the past.

Converts who could not find posts as teachers, priests, or pastors, often suffered from lack of social support and were not easily integrated into Christian

society. As Percival, Lord of Egmont, recorded in his diary in 1736 concerning the unfortunate converted grandson of memoirist Glikl Hameln: "In the evening I went to the Wood Street Counter to relieve Moses Marcus, a converted Jew, whom Smith the engraver had cast into prison for lb. 8 because he was not paid for the copper plates of the book Marcus is publishing. Moses said five guineas would get him out, which I gave him. The poor man has a family to subsist, and nothing to live on, but teaching languages and composing books relating to the Jewish religion, which he is well qualified for, understanding his own Hebrew, Latin, Italian, and English."⁴⁶ The converts occupied a more important place in the theological lives of missionaries and pastors than in the social world of their parishioners.

"Teaching languages and composing books" served as the traditional recourse for converts who could not find regular employment at universities. As the number of converts purveying books on Jewish subjects to Christian audiences grew, competition stiffened among converts for choice topics. With the passing of time and the increasing publication of such books, more and more converts grew concerned that too many works of this type already saturated the market. M. Friedrich Tauffenburg, formerly Abraham Oppenheim, felt obliged to mention his competition when he published his book on the Jewish oath. He accused one fellow convert-author of incompetence, and another of plagiarism. "A certain 'conversus Judaeus' named Christfels wrote a book about this subject, but made errors in the formulae." Tauffenburg hastened to state his superior qualifications as a rabbi among the Jews. He accused another converted Jew, named Ernstburg, of trying to plagiarize this very work; however, Tauffenburg succeeded in procuring injunctions against him.⁴⁷

By the eighteenth century, just as the number of converts from Judaism began to rise noticeably, the economic condition of converts had become linked to the larger discourse on poverty and productivization of socially marginal groups. Christopher Clark has shown that the Prussian government in the eighteenth century saw converts as just such a socially marginal and economically useless group. When it turned its attention to the economic integration of similarly classified marginal populations, such as orphans and other ethnic minorities, the famous mission in Halle claimed that its activities would be useful to the state, stressing that conversion from the Jewish religion went hand in hand with conversion from Jewish occupations.⁴⁸ Converts themselves agitated for more economic diversification and for the opportunity to learn other trades. Eighteenth-century convert Caspar Joseph Friedenheim, himself a teacher of oriental languages, did not hesitate to chastise the Christian community for not doing enough to find occupations for the newly converted. He cited lack of eco-

conomic opportunities as the primary reason for the mission's failure among the Jews. He did, however, praise his own Würzburg prince for providing converts with access to military and civil service.⁴⁹

Many converts found themselves in a sorry predicament; if they started out wealthy, Christians would say, "They are doing this in order to acquire greater privileges and freedoms, to increase their trade and commerce." If they were poor, Christians would say, "Who knows whether it was really a matter of the money, because he will be richly endowed with 'godparent' gifts so that he can continue his haggling and petty thievery some more."⁵⁰ Christians disdained converts who begged for alms and envied those gainfully employed. When Joseph Samuel Frey arrived in Prentzlow, in Prussia, after undergoing various tribulations and after completing a long apprenticeship, he was fortunate enough to find employment at a time when many Christian journeymen lacked work. "In this situation I met with so much envy and ill will from the journeymen, that I was obliged to change it for another . . . much more laborious."⁵¹

As eighteenth-century reformers called for economic restructuring of the Jewish community, the small number of Christian voices arguing that Christian policies, rather than anything inherent in the Jewish religion, fostered usurious and exploitative economic tendencies, gained new strength. Occupational training began to play a greater role alongside theological study in the preparation of converts for baptism. Converts often became the most vocal champions of occupational retraining as a component of convert education. Augusti and Friedenheim were the first eighteenth-century converts to feel sufficiently confident to criticize Christian society and governments for not doing enough to ensure that converts would find respectable professions. Both Augusti and Friedenheim blamed the low rate of conversion and the high rate of recidivism on the economic and social plight of the converts: "How many Jews will convert when they see the shame and poverty that are the lot of the converted? True, Christ said, 'Leave everything to follow me,' but he never said sacrifice yourself to hunger." In a nostalgic note rare in convert treatises, Friedenheim even compared the Christian world unfavorably to the Jewish community he had left behind. "Before, everything was *gemeinschaftlich* (communally oriented); each person got what he needed. Everyone knows Jews do not engage in hard labor or teach their children trades. So long as they are Jews, if they are poor, they get alms from the rich. True in my fatherland, where *neugetaufte* (newly baptized Jews) abound, and particularly in Würzburg, the capital, the Christians help a great deal. My gracious Prince gave them many positions in civil and military service. But how is it that so many are permitted to languish elsewhere in bitterest circumstances, as experience has taught me?"⁵²

Gottfried Selig likewise compared the two communities, to the detriment of the Christian: “No Jew would turn to us just for money. The poorest beggar among the Jews lives better and earns more per week than a new convert among the Christians.”⁵³ Convert Johann Besser berated contemporary Christians for their uncharitable attitudes towards recent converts from Judaism. “You may ask why Christians should expend the time, effort and expense on the Jews, who are implacable foes, when there are still so many within the evangelical church who remain wicked, stubborn, unrepentant sinners; there are poor and needy people whose physical and spiritual needs remain unmet among our own. You Christians ask, ‘Why should we concern ourselves with outsiders? Why transfer care of their poor to our community?’”

Christians, Besser reproved, should care for all poor and needy people, including converts, without distinction. By distinguishing among the poor, Besser argued, Christian society undermined the ability of the converts to integrate. Christians behaved “worse than the Turks” in this respect. Overjoyed with new Muslim converts, loving and honoring them, the Turks helped to establish them in Muslim society. The contempt that Christian society heaped on many baptized Jews showed a total lack of Christian love, sympathy, and mercy. Unbaptized Jews saw this and took note.⁵⁴ For some converts, the expression of such unflattering contrasts conveyed their sense that the problem had reached crisis proportions. They took advantage of their new freedom to articulate their disappointment with the Christian reception of converts.⁵⁵

Augusti became an advocate of “total” conversion of Jews, encompassing both their spiritual and their economic lives. His own difficult experience as a new member of Christian society, at a time when no government agencies gave thought to the economic future of the converts, provided the basis for his critique. Most converts from Judaism, he maintained, were inexperienced at any type of manual labor. They lacked the necessary social links to craft guilds; thus excluded from apprenticeships, some were left to take up the pilgrim’s staff. They wandered from one land to the next, depending on the charity of strangers; here they were accepted, there repelled. They suffered from hunger and need, mocked by Jews and scorned by Christians. Under such conditions, it was no wonder that all parties regarded the status of converts as lamentable.

Contemplating their plight, some mid-eighteenth-century converts saw in occupational training not merely an expedient to help the converted, but a means of attracting more Jews to the Christian fold. Convert C. G. Austerlitz, at the end of a treatise on the future mass conversion of the Jews, advised: “Most Jews are poor people, and thought must be devoted to means of support for those who come to our religion. It would be a good idea, in cities with large Jewish popula-

tions, to provide *Armen=Schule* (schools for indigent Jewish children), give them pious and talented teachers who can teach them all manner of arts and crafts, not to mention winning them over to Christianity. Old Jews who cannot work could easily be taught some type of manufacture, and there is no harm if this is all done in the most open way.”⁵⁶ Austerlitz offered the example of a poor Jew who wanted to hire out his young son as a servant to a Christian preacher. The preacher refused to employ him. Austerlitz questioned the preacher’s decision. Many poor Jews came to Christians seeking some temporary favor. Austerlitz advised, “They all [the Jews] claim they have no desire to engage in religious dialogue, but I know that many of them can be brought with softness, love, and great patience, to better thoughts.” Austerlitz exhorted Christian teachers and preachers to be particularly aware of such opportunities. He urged that civil rights should never be extended to Jews, for this would only “harden their pride and resolve to cling to their superstitions”; it would diminish the number of opportunities to exploit Jewish need for Christian missionary purposes.⁵⁷

For some converts, the announcement that they wished to learn a trade constituted proof of their sincerity and their desire to challenge the traditional occupational choices for converts, those of beggars or professors. Frey recalled: “In order to convince them that I sought nothing but the truth, I sought nothing but the least emolument from any Christian, but to learn a trade, that I might obtain my daily bread by the labor of my own hands!”⁵⁸ Frey’s sponsors decided that he should apprentice himself to a shoemaker for three years. After his apprenticeship and some period of work, it became clear that his physical strength and mental inclinations were not sufficient to achieve success in this craft. His master suggested that he apply to a school where “persons are educated to become schoolmasters.”⁵⁹ Frey had come full circle, back to his first profession as a young Jew, when he had been a teacher of schoolchildren.

Convert Daniel Bon noted that, after his conversion released him from forced service in the army, he faced the prospect of being lost in the world. Hunger, need, and a life of begging alongside other converted Jews seemed the only prospects. The resourceful Bon, trained as a *shochet* (Jewish ritual slaughterer), decided to put his trade to use by becoming a butcher, “Christian style.” He apprenticed himself as a domestic in the home of his sponsor to learn *koche-kunst* (the cooking arts). His great initial success led to a 50 *Reichsthaler* stipend for further study, granted Bon by his sponsor in addition to an earlier baptismal gift.⁶⁰

Upon his conversion, John Felix, the former Seelig Bunzlau, went into service in the household of the countess of Weichersheim. After some time, he decided that he could not make a career out of personal service. Felix needed to convince his sponsors to help him acquire a profession. Felix, the man who had made

his dramatic conversion announcement in the synagogue, now defended this request by arguing that his position as rabbi and teacher had been infinitely more comfortable and respected among the Jews than his current status as a Christian domestic. His travails served as proof that he did not convert for material comfort but out of sincere conviction. Felix succeeded where converts like Stephan Isaac had failed; his sponsors sent him to the Berlin Academy to study *chirurgie* (surgery).⁶¹

Professional prospects for converts began to improve just at the time that more doors opened for professing Jews as well. Medical faculties admitted more young Jews than ever before. A Jewish intellectual class emerged, advocating greater rapprochement between Jews and Christian society without the necessity of conversion.⁶² Converts remained at the forefront of the effort to limit opportunities for professing Jews, their serious rivals for the limited numbers of positions open to outsiders, positions previously monopolized by converts.

CONVERSION AND RUPTURE OF THE FAMILY

When I was set loose from their snare [the snare of the rabbis], mercy and grace accompanied me, that my little fledgling also willingly flew from its nest with me. It did not open its mouth, it followed me obediently and willingly, and did not shed even one tear over its mother, did not even ask after her, who wickedly persisted in her Jewish error. It is truly a wonder from God, that children, and especially such young children, part from their mother without all the wailing and crying, against their natures.

Staffelstainer, Warhafftig widerlegung, introduction

The conversion of a Jew invariably resulted in profound upheaval and disruption in the immediate family. If one spouse chose to convert from Judaism, the other faced an agonizing decision. A choice against conversion would attract the sympathy of the Jewish community and close kin but would result in severing the marital bond. If the spouse were also to choose conversion, the ties to community and birth family would be permanently ruptured. In the most frequent pattern found in both Jewish and Christian literary sources, the husband initiated conversion, while the wife resisted. In Jewish legal sources, only this configuration led to the status of *agunah* (marital limbo) for the wife. In convert literature, the obdurate Jewish wife was introduced by Victor von Carben in the early sixteenth century as a trope for Jewish obstinacy. It was repeated often by other converts embittered by their wives' refusals to follow them into Christianity. Christian Gerson provides a prominent seventeenth-century example. Both church and state law concurred that no spouse could be coerced into conversion, and both accepted the rights of such women to remain Jewish.

The refusal of a Jewish wife to follow her husband into Christianity created a peculiar dilemma for the married male convert. In their quest to obtain a *get* (Jewish divorce) from the baptized husband, the rabbis found an unexpected ally. The Catholic Church recognized the Jewish marriage as valid by Old Testament

criteria and often required that the husband grant a Jewish divorce before he could marry a Christian woman. This state of affairs, which found the Catholic Church supporting an important aspect of Jewish law, became something of a *cause célèbre* among converts in eighteenth-century France. When an Alsatian Jew, born Borach Levi in Hagenau, converted to Christianity with his two daughters, his wife refused to follow. The French Catholic Church would not allow him to marry without divorcing his Jewish wife, setting off deliberation in Parlement concerning the relative strength of the laws of Moses and Jesus.¹ When Isaac Cohen converted in 1760, in France, his wife attempted unsuccessfully to obtain a divorce from him. She was taken into “custody by the officials of the mission until her mind could be cleared of the rabbinic propaganda that prevented her from joining her husband.”²

While these cases were more prevalent in France, where the Catholic Church exerted total control over matters of personal status until 1789, the most thorough criticism of this anomaly came from the pen of an early eighteenth-century German convert, M. Friedrich Tauffenburg. His treatise on the Jewish oath and its worthlessness with respect to the Christian legal system was directed against the absurdity of requiring Christians to uphold Mosaic laws, divorce in particular. His reasoned complaint is worth citing *in extenso*, as it captures perfectly this dilemma of the converts.

Often, when a Jew went over to the Christian religion, he was coerced to give a divorce in accordance with Jewish tradition to the Jewish wife he left behind. This should not be tolerated! Much abuse results from using the power of Christian authority to coerce a converted Jew to give a *get* (Jewish divorce) according to Jewish law and ceremony, to the wife who was left behind. I have conferred with many doctors and professors of theological law, and none can show me that the convert is bound to divorce his wife according to Jewish law. The current practice means that Christian authorities are ceding a part of their jurisdiction, which ought to be judged in Christian consistories. It prejudices Jews toward their own authorities and strengthens their obdurate beliefs. It can be imagined that when a converted Jew, after his conversion to Christianity still wished to go to synagogue and participate in its ceremonies and erroneous customs, he could not in good conscience do so. Yet until now the converts were forced to do this, and they were mocked and ridiculed by the Jews. In the future, Christian authorities should prevent this practice by all means, so that the Jews should no longer be able to boast that they can coerce the new converts to accommodate to their laws by the power of Christian authority.

Jews should not have the power to grant the type of divorce that they have been doing until now. While the state of marriage was divinely ordained, the ceremony was human. God allowed divorce in cases of adultery and whoring for the stubborn Israelites of the Old Testament. But the New Testament says “man cannot rend asunder,” a rebuke to Jews who allow such easy divorce. Is it just, that even today Jews can divorce their wives for such trivial reasons as the Talmud enumerates, such as burnt food? This cannot be legitimated from Scripture, it is a rabbinic caprice.

When a husband converted, argued Tauffenburg, his wife consoled herself by thinking that she could obtain a divorce by fair means or foul. If women could not be so certain of this, they would follow their men into Christianity much sooner and more often. When a person was still unsure of his decision to convert and had to face the prospect of losing his first love, it was much easier for Satan to reach him and have him return. Thus the Catholic Church inadvertently created an impediment to conversion.³

Children in the Medieval Jewish–Christian Discourse

The custody of children born from a marriage contracted between two Jews after one of them decided to convert to Christianity presented a deeper complication. Christian theologians and legislators debated the rights of a Jewish wife to retain custody of young children under the age of six (older children were generally ceded to the father in both Christian and Jewish law). The remainder of this chapter will focus on some of the assumptions and deep prejudices in Christian society concerning the right of a Jewish parent to custody over children when the church or a recently baptized spouse offered a competing claim. Popular religious images of Jews as murderous threats, not only to Christian children but to Jewish children who manifested an interest in Christianity, influenced both canon and civil law. Jews accused of “Jewish crimes against Christianity” such as ritual murder of Christian children and host desecration were often further punished by having their children baptized to be raised in Christianity.

The deep passions aroused by the issue of child baptism on both sides of the legal and theological debates can best be understood within the context of the symbolic meanings of children in both faith communities. Throughout the High Middle Ages, young boys figured prominently both within each religious community’s image of itself and in its image of the other. The Christ-child formed the quintessential Christian image; every Christian boy was born in that image. When Christians imagined Jews harming the very vitality of the Christian com-

munity, they envisioned it as the violation of these Christ-child surrogates. Two of the central anti-Jewish calumnies in medieval Europe, ritual murder and desecration of the host accusations, centered around the figures of young boys. The ritual murder libel focused on the fantasy that Jews had killed a young Christian boy, almost never a girl or an adult.⁴ Tales of Jews torturing the consecrated host, believed by Christians to be the Body of Christ, often featured the miraculous materialization of a young boy. Medieval variations on these themes circulated well into the eighteenth century. Early modern publishers drew on both recent and centuries-old material which catalogued the gruesome torment of Christian boys, followed by descriptions of the equally horrible punishment meted out to the Jewish offenders. Stark images which emphasized the youth and innocence of the Christian victims and the sinister demeanor of the Jews usually reinforced the power of the text.⁵

Stories of Jewish ritual murder of Christian children began to circulate in the mid-twelfth century. Narratives depicting Jews as desecrators of the host provide even more compelling evidence that Christian society perceived Jews as dangerous to Christian children. The church began to educate lay people to believe in the miracle of transubstantiation of the host into the flesh of Christ in the thirteenth century. The accusation that Jews would spare no effort or deception to obtain these wafers in order to reenact their torments of Christ bolstered the belief in this relatively new doctrine. For the purposes of our discussion, one element of the host desecration narrative is critical: "In some cases the abused host was said to have taken the shape of a child, or to have emitted child-like sounds. . . . In the heat of the accusation an abused host . . . was said to have turned first into a child and then into a young man."⁶

Unlike ritual murder accusations, which were usually made when a child's corpse was discovered, the host desecration accusation did not require a dead child for Christians to imagine that Jews had committed a crime which combined infanticide with deicide. Like ritual murder accusations, host desecration charges began to lose their potency by the sixteenth century, as doctrines of transubstantiation were challenged by Luther and other Reformation theologians. Yet, in German sources, literary representation of the crime continued to be the subject of printed materials. Late fifteenth-century chronicles included the stories, and pamphlets and broadsheets depicting the events were often printed to shore up enthusiasm for a local shrine. A fifteenth-century broadsheet depicting the story of the Passau host desecration accusation narrated and visually presented the dramatic appearance of a child as Jews tortured a host. Long after the accusations themselves began to wane in German lands in the course of the sixteenth cen-

tury, German chroniclers and authors circulated new images and stories of these Christian child-martyrs. As late as the eighteenth century, engravings and texts depicted thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Jewish “crimes” against the host.⁷

Let us consider the central role of the young boy in the following variation on the host desecration accusation. This eighteenth-century retelling was ostensibly based on fourteenth-century sources; it included elements that had characterized this tale for centuries. The narrative opens with a scene of a Jewish man torturing a host in boiling water and oil. Out of the water, “ein schön liebliches Knäblein” (a lovely young boy) arose. Despite the Jew’s efforts to destroy him by shoving him back with tongs, the little boy escaped. Then the Jew’s children, “still small and young in years,” became frightened and ran to their mother saying, “O Mother, Father wants to burn a small boy in the kettle!” While the mother ran to see what her husband was doing, the children ran out into the street and cried loudly, “Come here! Come here! Our father wants to cook a little boy *daheim* (secretly), in a kettle full of hot water.” Jewish and Christian neighbors ran in and saw the brilliantly illuminated small child in a kettle full of boiling water, with the accursed Jew standing over it, trying mightily to burn it. . . . The entire priesthood arrived, and carried the host to the church, where it was regarded with high esteem “until this day.” Many miracles ensued. The Jew was imprisoned; his wife and children, who freely acknowledged everything, converted to Catholicism; in the end the Jew was burned, together with the Talmud.⁸

The miraculous materialization of young Christian boys where none had existed before is most noteworthy. This elemental encounter between the evil forces of the Jew and the innocent Christian centered around the Christ-child figure of a young boy. Where no such figure existed in reality, the popular imagination invented one. Another aspect that relates to our theme is the depiction of the Jewish father as the instigator of the crime, with his wife and children as passive observers. Their more malleable souls sympathized with the Christ-child, and they often converted at the end of the narratives. This characterization of Jewish women persisted in the host desecration stories, although the pattern did not conform to the reality in which women remained steadfast in their Jewishness while their husbands converted. The Jewish child as potential Christian is another critical element in the story which we will revisit.

Even without the specific structure of ritual murder or host desecration, the popular Christian image of Jews as bogeymen who represented danger to their children persisted. As late as the eighteenth century, convert Gottfried Selig recalled with resentment, “When a child runs away or is lost, the parents’ first and greatest concern is that it has been killed by Jews.”⁹ These fears affected the way

Christians judged Jews, not only as parents of children contested by Christian partners, but even as parents of Jewish children.

Against Their Nature: Forcible Baptism of Jewish Children

Sometime between the ages of five and seven years, medieval German Jews initiated male children into the study of Torah. These children symbolized a priestly state of purity, their Torah study sustaining the world in the same way as sacrifices in the days of the Temple. The initiation ceremony employed rituals that simultaneously affirmed their place within the belief community of Jews and warded off the impure world of Christians around them.¹⁰ When Jews imagined Christians striking at the very essence of the Jewish community, they feared that Christians would take their children from them to be baptized.

This fear motivated German Jews during the First Crusade to take the lives of their children as “pure sacrifices,” rather than have them taken by the Christian crusaders for baptism. A Hebrew chronicle of the First Crusade related the terrible story of two men, Isaac ben David and Uri bar Joseph who had been “saved to hell, for the enemy had befouled them under duress.” They alone survived after the crusaders had killed their entire community two days earlier. Of his baptism, Isaac explained: “It is known to God that I listened to the enemy only so that my children would not fall into their hands, that they would not survive in their error [be baptized], because they are young and do not know the difference between good and evil.”¹¹

The Jewish fear that Christians would snatch their children to be raised out of the Jewish faith was well-founded. In a number of instances during and after the Crusades, Jewish children were taken and baptized either against parental will or after the parents’ death. In one noted case, a Jewish boy baptized under duress later resisted efforts of his family to return him to Judaism. He grew up to be the monk William of Fly.¹² The pattern extended into later crusades. In one instance, during the shepherds’ uprising, the *pastoreux* killed a Jew, Salema Abenadret, in the French city of Montclus, while his children were “converted to the Catholic faith.” These children could not live among Jews, although adult converts from Judaism could serve as their guardians.¹³ A story with roots in the pre-Crusade era, of the baptized Jewish boy who ascended to become Pope, only to return to his Jewish roots at the end of his life, still circulated in the eighteenth century.¹⁴ In the case of this literary reworking, the historicity of the story is less important for our purposes than the real terror that its telling aroused in Jewish parents.

Instances of mass baptism of Jewish children aroused even greater Jewish fears. During the Black Death, adults of entire Jewish communities were burned at the

stake, and their children taken to be baptized. In Basel, 600 Jews were burned, accused of poisoning the wells, and 140 Jewish children were taken to be baptized.¹⁵ In fifteenth-century Vienna, the Hussite uprising led to anti-Jewish violence. Some Jews were expelled; others died as martyrs, their children taken forcibly and converted. Husbands and wives were held captive separately, so that each could be convinced that the other had already converted.¹⁶ Sixteenth-century Yiddish translations of the Hebrew Crusade chronicles written in German lands reflected the enduring Jewish fear of child baptism. While the anonymous translator construed the narrative portions of the Hebrew chronicle into an almost identical Yiddish idiom, one of the few meaningful departures from the Hebrew text provided a justification for the mass suicides of the Jews. They thought that they would not be able to withstand the torture *and the fear that their children would be baptized*.¹⁷

The baptism of newborn Jewish children by Christian midwives, nurses, and maids was recognized by the church and constituted another source of dread for Jews. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the seizure and baptism of Jewish children were still widely sanctioned and practiced in Western Christendom and deeply feared by Jewish parents. Removal of Jewish children for baptism was seen as particularly apposite vengeance for charges that Jews had ritually murdered a Christian child. In 1475, Süsslein, a Jewish woman of Trent, reacted immediately to news that Christians had fabricated evidence to accuse them of ritual murder by crying out: “Oh woe to me, they will take away my sons and baptize them. If only I did not have sons I would feel no pain.”¹⁸

The practice of baptizing Jewish children against the will of their parents was not limited to German lands. Houses of catechumens in Italian cities often served as houses of detention for unwilling Jews over whom the church held some slight claim.¹⁹ Unwilling spouses and children of willing converts, for instance, could be “offered” by the willing spouse. If the willing spouse was a man, as was often the case, his unborn children could be taken from their recalcitrant mothers at birth. Siblings could “offer” siblings even during the life of their Jewish parents; grandparents could hold this power over grandchildren. When the Jewish community refused to find and deliver these prizes to the converters, they were severely punished.²⁰ Secret baptisms of Jewish children by Christian nursemaids, physicians, midwives, or young Christian playmates could lead to the abduction and conversion of the unknowing subject years later. In Italy, these “abusive and degrading” practices (the term is Cecil Roth’s) continued well into the nineteenth century; they were celebrated with great pomp, as though the church had won the salvation of these souls by dint of persuasion.

In Portugal, in 1493 and again in 1497, the crown promulgated forcible removal and baptism of Jewish children as a method of provoking mass conversions of their Jewish parents. The Portuguese crown ordered that all Jewish children (up to the age of twenty-five!) be removed from their parents and baptized. Parents who followed suit would recover custody of their children; those who refused would never see them again. In the first incident, the children were shipped to the island of São Tomé; the second took place right before Passover of 1497. The first episode “succeeded” in producing a large-scale conversion: “Fathers feared for their wives who would remain widowed among the enemy; mothers withheld themselves [from martyrdom] in the hope that they would be able to see their children again.” The second episode, some five years later, provoked widespread criticism and resistance, not only from Jews but from Christians as well. Two sixteenth-century chroniclers of King Emanuel’s reign, Damião de Góis and Hieronimus Osorio, criticized the actions and sympathized with the victims. Some Christians volunteered to hide Jewish children from the royal dragnet. While some contemporary Christians criticized this policy as “inhumane and unchristian,” no protests could change the *post facto* status of the converts: they were baptized Christians.²¹

The Christian assumption that Jewish parents would go so far as to kill their children, rather than see them baptized, became a fact after the Crusades in medieval German lands. This perception became the basis for the literary topos of Jews as *Christian* child murderers: the Jewish children they were killing were “Christian” innocents.²² One later convert, Gottfried Selig, observed that on the first Friday night after the birth of a son, Jews celebrate with a party called “Yeshua ha-ben, Ben Zakhar, or Shalom Zakhar. . . . It is noteworthy that the rabbis have chosen this name [the first] as it means Jesus the Son.” Selig implied that Jews subliminally acknowledged Jewish baby boys to be born in the image of Jesus.²³ Jewish children who manifested an interest in Christianity, if killed by their parents, would be received in the afterlife by their baptisms of blood as Christians. This motif dates back to late Christian antiquity. One of the oldest German literary works to deal with Jews presented them as attempting to prevent the baptism of their children by violent means.²⁴ The motif was preserved throughout the early modern period within older medieval folk traditions which came to be collected in popular illustrations, songs, and poetry collections.

The Prague story of the Jewish child Simon Abeles (1682?–94), allegedly killed by his father because he wanted to convert, and revered as a Christian martyr although he had never been baptized, circulated in exquisite and lengthy detail in German sources through the eighteenth century. The narrative premise as-

sumed that once the Jewish father discovered the child's intention to convert, he preferred to deprive the child of life rather than allow him to be baptized.²⁵ An eighteenth-century convert repeated as a fact that when Jewish children showed signs of wanting to go over to the Christian religion, the Jews would "mattir-dam" the child—they permitted his blood to be spilled without penalty. His basis for this statement was probably the story of Simon: "As occurred in Prague with a nine year old boy, who openly declared his intentions to convert: his parents hit him on the head in the cellar and killed him."²⁶

The first sign that little Simon was a Christian at heart and had a strong inner attraction to Christianity, according to his Christian hagiography, was that he played with Christian children.²⁷ The smallest sign of friendly interaction with Christian children could be read by zealous clergymen or even lay observers as a sign that the Jewish child's heart inclined toward Christians. A little Jewish girl who had been "surreptitiously blessed" by a priest in 1693 showed signs of gravitating toward Christianity: She played with Christian playmates, knelt, and even learned the "Our Father" from them. The clergy deemed this sign sufficient grounds to remove her from her parents to be baptized.²⁸ One can only wonder what precautions Jewish parents needed to take to segregate their children, and how this compounded the sense of otherness and alienation for Jewish children in towns or villages with very small Jewish populations.

Baptizing Jewish Children: Questions of Consent

While even Christian sources provide ample and unapologetic substantiation of the Jewish fear of coercion or kidnapping of young children for baptism, the practice aroused heated debate. It concerned the core of Jewish existence in a Christian-dominated world, as well as the meaning and purpose of baptism itself. The permissibility of accepting Jewish child converts related to the larger question for all Christians of whether consent and awareness constituted prerequisites for baptism. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the appropriate age for parents to offer their children as oblates (for life in a monastery) and for children to be confirmed after infant baptism became a subject of considerable debate. The controversy issued from a renewed awareness of the importance of consent and maturity in accepting young people into religious communities. Thomas Aquinas, himself an oblate at age six, protested that the age of oblation should be deferred until twelve for girls and fourteen for boys and, similarly, that Christians should not take below-age Jewish children to be baptized without parental consent.²⁹

The notion of age of consent was rooted within the concept of natural law that granted parents custody over their children. Aquinas was one of the lead-

ing medieval proponents of the idea that natural law was common and basic to all people, whereas church law served as a guide for Christians only. The baptism of underage Jewish children without parental consent went against natural law, yet the practice was sanctioned by the church.³⁰ While an exact date for the church's first acceptance of Jewish children for baptism against the will of their parents is not known, it was certainly the practice throughout the medieval period. Peter Browe cites a case from mid-ninth-century Arles, in which a community of Jewish parents who resisted conversion by coerced sermons had their children removed from them by the bishop, who "persuaded" fifty-three of the children to accept baptism.³¹ Christian theologians tried to reconcile the apparent conflict between religious law and natural law by claiming that the state of Christian grace was the most natural human state. Children, who stood in closer touch with the natural state of man, were born with the tendency to prefer the truth, Christianity. Jews were adults in the grip of a demonic power that prevented them from reaching this truth. The same force impelled them to keep their children from reaching out to Christianity. By the time Jewish children reached the legal age of consent, the natural impulse toward Christianity would have been stifled. Both princes and churches employed this argument to coerce Jewish children to attend missionizing sermons in central Europe through the sixteenth century.³²

In the first decades of the sixteenth century, Reformation theologians awakened a new awareness of the importance of family relationships in Christian society. They charged that the bonds between Christian husbands and wives, parents and children, had been seriously weakened by the idealization of celibacy championed by the Catholic Church. "Families placed their sons and daughters in cloisters between the ages of five and seven, and for some children the cloister became a cruel life."³³ The renewed debate over ages of awareness and consent for Christian children revived scrutiny of the policies concerning the baptism of Jewish children. In the first years of the sixteenth century, a debate erupted in Germany, stimulated by an actual case, over the legitimacy of taking Jewish children and baptizing them against the will of both parents. In 1504, a seven-year-old Jewish boy was left as security while his captured father went to arrange his own ransom. A formal contract stated that the boy would be well treated and would under no circumstances be baptized. Soldiers charged with his care left the child with the rector of Freiburg University. Shortly thereafter, the rector announced that the boy wished to be baptized. The university, responsible for the rectory, opened a debate over whether this baptism could be permitted, since it went against tradition as well as the terms of the contract. The town council intervened in support of the baptism, and neither the father nor the soldiers

could prevent it. A furious controversy ensued in Freiburg am Breisgau over the conflict between the natural right of Jewish parents to raise their children as they thought best and the right of the civil authorities to supersede parental rights in a case where baptism would clearly be in the best spiritual interest of the child.

In a remarkable legal opinion, jurist Ulrich Zasius summarized centuries of scholastic opinion on each side of the debate, ultimately deciding in favor of baptism and overriding consideration of parents' natural rights. The winning opinion held that the religious education of subjects was the domain of the ruler; if parents, Jews, were not raising their children in the proper Christian way, then the ruler had the right to override parental objections. This opinion was consonant with the literary development in which Jews served as a trope for unfit parents. Well-intentioned sermons equated Jews with children who needed to be led and educated to do right. One cleric counseled his parishioners that their misbehaving and deceitful children should be reminded of the shame and humiliation that befell deceitful Jews, creating a parallel between wayward children and Jews.³⁴ As "children," Jews could not make responsible decisions concerning the spiritual fates of their own children.

Zasius concurred with this tendency to negate parental rights of Jews over their own children. His opinion was remarkable, however, in that it reversed the burden of the previous centuries' rulings on this question. Wilhelm Güde, who has analyzed Zasius's opinion closely, argues that Zasius was influenced by ulterior motives, such as his desire to secure a position at the university. Moreover, Zasius knew that the practical decision had, to all intents and purposes, already been made, since the baptism under consideration had already taken place. The baptism could not be reversed after the fact, regardless of his decision, so his opinion should be read as a justification, rather than a completely theoretical discussion. The overweening prejudice demonstrated by Zasius in an anti-Jewish excursus also betrayed him as far from an impartial jurist.

Zasius's work may not have broken new ground in terms of argumentation, but it constituted a *summa* of Christian thought on coerced Jewish child baptism. Prior to Zasius, material pertaining to this question remained buried within the larger framework of monumental legal structures: canon law, theological *summas*, and codes of civil law. Zasius was the first to undertake a thorough study of all the Christian sources on this subject. The number of works which Zasius was able to marshal for his study, *De Iudaeis Quaestiones tres . . .* (Three Questions on the Baptism of Jewish Children), demonstrates that it had been a matter of perennial concern throughout the medieval period. His scrupulous search and retrieval of decisions and pronouncements on both sides of the issue marked the awakening of a new interest in the question of Jewish child baptism.³⁵

Significantly, the episode which stimulated Zasius's treatise came immediately on the heels of a failed attempt to pin ritual murder charges on a nearby Jewish community in the Freiburg am Breisgau region. In that case, the corpse of a Christian child was found. The Christian father of the victim, a convicted criminal, claimed under torture that he had sold the boy to the Jews of Waldkirch. When he later confessed to murdering the child himself, the case folded, and the imprisoned Jews were freed. As the day of their release was the Sabbath, the Jews decided to wait until it was over. In the interim the man was executed. After his death, local witnesses claimed that in his last moments he had reversed his story once again and blamed the Jews. The Jews of Waldkirch were later rounded up on trumped-up charges that a Jew had been selling jars of blood. They were brought in and tortured but were ordered to be remanded into Imperial custody in Ensisheim. Together with Imperial officers, Jews from other towns devised a plan to free the captives after the furor had blown over. Then the Freiburg authorities "caught" a Jewish emissary who had come with funds to try to secure the release of the Waldkirch Jews. This "fortuitous discovery" reinforced the age-old popular prejudice that the Jews were actually guilty, but Imperial corruption was at work to release them. Mary Minty has linked the child baptism case of 1504 to the thwarted ritual murder case. The converted Jewish boy served as appropriate retaliation for the ritual murder of the Christian child, for which, Christians believed, the Jews had not yet paid. The cases were seen by Christians to be mirror images of one another.³⁶

Jewish Child, Christian Parent

The discourse that encouraged the baptism of Jewish children against the wishes of both parents became even more influential in cases where one parent was baptized and agreed to the baptism of the child or children against the wishes of the other parent. The expectation that converts who were parents would bring their children to the baptismal font with them was often part of the admission price to Christian baptism. It would demonstrate their commitment and sincerity. In such cases church and court claimed that even small children belonged to their fathers and could be baptized.³⁷ When the father of the Mayr family of Frankfurt am Main converted, he took his young children with him, except for the baby. When his wife failed to follow in his footsteps, the authorities took the baby, less than a year old, from her.³⁸ Convert Christian Gerson managed to persuade his brother to follow his example, but to Gerson's dismay, neither his wife, his mother, nor his sister would convert. With the assistance of the Jewish community of Windecken, his wife hid their only son for five years. The superior forces of Gerson's Christian allies eventually found and seized the child, and he was bap-

tized shortly thereafter.³⁹ These cases were far from unique. Children baptized against the wishes of one or both parents were not uncommon among Jewish baptisms to Christianity.

A seventeenth-century Jew named Samuel Metzel converted to become Henricus Wenceslaus. He had four very young children, “still in their Jewish blindness,” and their mother regarded the award of the children to him as kidnapping. She pleaded with the authorities that as the one who had carried, given birth to, and nurtured them with pain and effort, she had maternal rights: at least half the children should be placed in her custody. But the bishop exercised his spiritual right over the children, “*ex literis tuis de conversione infidelium*,” and, in the hope of coercing the mother to join the father, awarded custody of all four children to the father. A great outcry arose among the Jews at the verdict. What the bishop and the father did not know then was that the mother was guarding the secret of a pregnancy, and she went into seclusion to prevent the child’s existence from coming to the notice of the father. When some months later he visited her without prior notice and discovered the child, a Christian midwife, Ludmilla, was dispatched to the still recuperating mother, with instructions to use her wiles to baptize the child. When the mother realized what had happened, she jumped out of her childbed, screaming that a woman’s baptism was worthless. But, as convert Lotharius Franz Fried later editorialized, even Zipporah, the wife of Moses, could perform a valid ritual act if necessary. The authorities came to remove this “Christian baby boy,” who was baptized with great pomp and ceremony after two months. The broken-hearted mother eventually converted as well, and so, concluded Fried triumphantly, seven baptisms resulted from one convert.⁴⁰

The wife of Mordechai Shemaya of Fürth sought refuge with her small children in Amsterdam after her husband converted in 1701. When the community there could not offer her the support she needed, she left her daughter in hiding with a Jewish family in a small village. Eventually, she returned to Fürth with her infant son. When someone notified her converted husband of her presence, he immediately sought the aid of the local magistracy to reclaim the child. Once the wife had “abandoned” the child to her husband, he had the child baptized immediately.⁴¹

According to a story retold by convert Paul Kirchner, when the Jewish cantor in Dix, near Cologne, became very ill, he asked his Christian neighbors to bring a priest to his sickbed. At his request, and over the protests of his wife, a priest was brought in. The man was baptized and eventually recovered from his illness. He subsequently demanded that his children and possessions be brought to him. The Jews, who initially denied knowing the whereabouts of the family, were co-

erced to comply under threat of expulsion by the government of Cologne. The priest tried to convince the woman to convert, but she refused and was released. The man was then awarded custody of all his children and the remainder of his belongings, "because they belonged to him."⁴² In this story, retold by a convert, the removal of the children was just punishment of the stubborn wife. She had initially tried to prevent the priest from visiting her sick husband and now refused to follow her husband into baptism. When Joseph Guggenheim suffered a nervous breakdown following his decision to convert, he was ordered to be brought in a straitjacket if necessary. His wife and children, who did not share in his decision, were ordered to be placed under guard, so that even if Joseph himself were lost as a convert, "at least his children could be saved for Christianity."⁴³

The Jewish community often intervened vigorously to represent a mother in resisting the baptism of a child after the father had converted. So long as the parent hesitated, the community worked to prevent the final step. Once baptism was a fact, the children would be hidden and dispersed, so that the converted parent would not be able to locate them. Christian sources always characterized efforts of the Jewish community to prevent baptism of Jewish children or to try to reclaim the children in the most negative terms. The hagiography of Simon Abeles recorded that the Jews bribed a Christian housewife who hid him with "30 weisse Meintzer Groschen," an explicit allusion to the thirty silver pieces of the Judas story.⁴⁴

In 1602, convert Ernst Ferdinand Hess, who had converted some twenty years earlier (just when the case of Stephan Isaac was being argued), published a second vitriolic book on the Jews, *Speculum Iudaeorum*. His earlier work, *Der Juden Geissel*, had provoked a storm of Jewish protest because of its allegations of Jewish anti-Christianity and his recommendations on the withdrawal of rights from Jewish subjects of local rulers. His response: Jews ought to lose all their rights; they ought to be treated by Christians in the same manner as the "bloodthirsty" Turks treat Christians. His prescription focused on one issue, the kidnapping of children for the purpose of religious conversion. When poor Christians come under the rule of Turks,

They count all Christian children and bring them together. Of these, one tenth, the most handsome, healthy, and strong, they take away. If one father has two or three children taken, the enemies of God think nothing of it. . . . The grieving parents must be robbed of their children and find their comfort in God. They never see them again for once they are led away, they are educated, circumcised into the Turkish faith, they are taught horsemanship and given the best military training.

This is what I recommend to all Christian authorities who have Jews living in their lands. The commissars should order that Jewish children be counted every year or two at the least, and a tenth should be taken and led to Holy Baptism. These souls should be led out of the demonic rage of the devil and be offered to God as there is more joy in Heaven over the conversion of a sinner than over ninety nine pious people. Why should Jews continue to be free to the devil to curse God and his people? The *genomene* (taken) Jewish children should be educated in schools, where they would study to become scholars and teachers; Christian readers can see what good will come from this. Not only would these children's souls be saved, but many other Jews' as well. For those that do not adapt to school, we can emulate the ways of the Turks and train them to be soldiers, where we can use them to fight the Turks.

Every Christian should entreat his Prince to adopt the above described means. They should carry on their shoulders the poor, innocent, small, unknowing Jewish children to the good sheepfold, the good and true Christian church. Pastors and other men of spirit should encourage their congregants to do this.⁴⁵

Hess's astonishing recommendation is the only one I have come across in this period to advise the systematic kidnapping of Jewish boys. Hess wrote this book to retaliate against the Jews for their reaction to his first book, *Der Juden Geissel*. In this fantasy of revenge, the Jews became surrogates for the Turks, as though both presented an equal peril to Christendom. The Jews had long been accused of being in league with the Ottomans. Hess's equation of the two reflected the sixteenth-century preoccupation with Jews as a political threat.

The extent of German-Jewish parental fears that their children could be taken from them to be raised Christian is illustrated in a comic episode in the seventeenth-century *Zikhroynes* (Memoirs) of Glikl Hameln. Her son's tutor, a Polish Jew, concocted a plan that exploited this fear, in order to extort funds from the parents of his German-Jewish pupils. He fabricated a letter from the children to their parents requesting an immediate payment of funds:

For I must tell you, mother dear, that the Jewish community of Lissa is greatly in debt to the church powers and cannot pay either capital or interest. The community sees no other way out, save to hand the children of the German Jews over to the church powers by way of a pledge. And then their German parents may ransom them as they can. . . . So I beg you for a bit of money; do not forsake your child, and let me not fall into hands from which it will be hard to get free.⁴⁶

In the same seventeenth-century Hamburg inhabited by Glikl, Johannes Müller, pastor of St. Peter's Church, gave serious thought to the question of whether the authorities ought to remove Jewish children from their parents. His book *Judaismus oder Jüdenthumb* devoted a chapter to the question, "Whether one should take Jewish children by force and baptize them against their parents' will?"⁴⁷ Müller cited Zasius and recounted the incident that led to Zasius's deliberations, but his conclusions were different. "Gratia non tollit Naturam" (Grace does not supersede nature), it cannot override natural parental rights. The authorities do not even have the right to confiscate Jews' material possessions; clearly they have no rights over this precious asset. The word of God, rather than brute violence, should be the compelling force that brings Jews, with their children, to the baptismal font.

Müller's opinion notwithstanding, the questions of what constituted the age of consent for baptism and what defined force continued to be debated as Jewish and Christian communities came into repeated conflict. As the eighteenth century progressed, both courts and church officials deemed the decisions of (older) children to be the overriding factor. Abraham Jacobs's father brought a lawsuit to prevent his son's baptism after the son had been "seduced to Christianity" by a pastor who came to the house seeking lessons in Hebrew. "For my father argued that the Doctor enticed me to it by fair promises; that I was so young, being under nineteen years of age, I knew nothing of the religion I was going to profess." After answering questions before the judges, they rendered their verdict: "Go and prosper and may your father follow [your] example."⁴⁸ In another eighteenth-century incident, two young Jewish men, ages eighteen and twenty-two, who had already received four weeks of instruction, returned to their instructor, Pastor Corvino, with a *landsman*, fourteen years of age, named Marcus Abraham. At great sacrifice to themselves, Marcus's parents had sent him to study for the rabbinate in Hamburg. When that did not prove satisfactory, they instructed him to go to Frankfurt; when that also did not work out, he was told to return home. On the way, he met the two trainees, one of whom was a first cousin. When they told him of their intentions and invited him to follow suit, he left their company immediately. He later changed his mind and returned. Corvino found him to be diligent and talented; he was certain that "something good" would come of him, because an older brother had converted to Christianity fourteen years earlier.

When news of this turn of events reached his home, Marcus Abraham's father was in Amsterdam, but his mother sent her brother to do everything in his power to bring her son back. The Jewish community petitioned the authorities, charging that the boy had been taken against his will. The judge ordered that the boy be examined by a panel of two Jews and two Christians. According to Corvino's

account, the boy was pressured by his uncle to reply, when questioned, that he wished to remain in the Jewish religion. However, when he appeared before the judge, just as his uncles said, "He wants to remain Jewish," the boy simultaneously cried out, "No, I wish to become Christian!" The judge then sent the Jewish relatives out and examined the boy himself. Satisfied that Marcus had acted of his free will, the judge sent the boy to a Christian orphanage. Corvino baptized all three young men, on 14 May 1719, and published a triumphant and vitriolically anti-Jewish sermon.⁴⁹

A prominent case in early eighteenth-century Berlin concerning three young Jewish girls, aged eight through twelve years, dramatized the dilemma. The girls purportedly insisted that they be baptized into Christianity despite the usual parental and communal objections. Although the Lutheran pastor they approached initially turned them away, they remained adamant. Pamphlets celebrating their miraculous conversion emphasized the moral quandary: "Marvelous and Divine Conversion of three girls, aged 8 to 12 years, from the Jewish to the Christian religion, as they presented themselves to the Evangelical Lutheran preacher of Berlin . . . and persisted with great zeal and wonderful determination. Along with the question: Whether one can accept them and raise them in the Christian religion against the will of their parents, without violation of paternal rights."⁵⁰ The very young age of the girls was in this case interpreted to be a miraculous sign, superseding regular considerations of parental rights.

By the mid-eighteenth century, new concepts stemming from the age of the Enlightenment entered the discussion over the rights of parents to their children in cases of conversion. In 1753, possibly stimulated by a recent actual case, an anonymous author completed the circle of argumentation opened by Zasius, with a treatise on "The Right of a Converted Jew over his children raised in Judaism."⁵¹ Terms such as *Gewissen* (conscience) and *Gewissensfreiheit* (freedom of conscience) abounded in the treatise, and the author adopted elaborate pretenses of impartiality. Some of the propositions set forth bear the stamp of radical Enlightenment ideas. For example, "In a land where freedom of conscience prevails, the right of parents over children does not extend to their right to coerce their children to a particular religion. If the parents hold different religions, one allows the children to be instructed in both faiths equally, until they reach the age where they can decide for themselves."⁵² When two parents of different faiths each claim the right of freedom of conscience to raise their children in the faith they deem most true, "the rights and claims of conscience on both sides carry equal weight. The Christian authority cannot assign greater weight to one than to the other."⁵³

These passages, ostensibly judging the two religions as equals, would indeed

have marked a turning point in the heavily freighted debate over conversion and child custody, had they not been embedded within a larger structure that betrayed its predisposition to Christianity at every turn. It referred to Judaism as a superstition, to which it deemed Christianity superior, because it “was most fully consonant with natural law.”⁵⁴ The *Landesherr* (local authority) generously granted freedom of conscience to his subjects even when this diminished the plenitude of his own rights, but, as a Christian, he was under no obligation to favor another religion. The treatise assumed throughout that the converting spouse was the father, while the one who persisted in Judaism was the mother, the most prevalent pattern in the literature.

The author briefly listed arguments in favor of the rights of the Jewish mother to raise her children as Jews, possibly based on actual court proceedings. First, the woman contracted marriage under the condition that her husband remain Jewish. His conversion to Christianity automatically conferred upon her the right to separate but should have no bearing on her legal right to continue raising her children. Second, the woman could not in good conscience continue to live with a man she now regarded as an unbeliever. The rights of religious toleration and freedom of conscience that had already been granted her by the local authority could not be revoked. It remains her legal right to separate from her husband and retain her children. Third, it would violate the mother’s freedom of conscience to cede her children to a husband who would raise them in a religion she deemed execrable; it was her right to raise her children in the religion she deemed to be true.

The rebuttal of these arguments occupy the remainder of the treatise. To the first argument, the author objected that no such condition in a marriage could be valid, because it violated the principle of freedom of conscience. No one could guarantee what his future opinion of religion would be. To the second argument, the author replied that the sole impediment to the continuation of the marriage was not the man who acted in accordance with his conscience, but the woman whose adherence to Judaism required her to reject her now Christian husband; his conversion did not require that she become Christian. This was the crux of the response to the third point as well. Each side had an equally valid claim on the basis of freedom of conscience. The only way to decide, therefore, was on the basis of assignment of fault for the breakup of the marriage. The partner at fault was the one who must bear the consequences: that partner must forgo the right to their children.

The author argued for the absolute right of fathers over their children, echoing the central role that the first Reformation leaders had established for fathers in German families.⁵⁵ “Let us take the case of a husband who separated from his

wife because he converted out of the Jewish superstition into Christianity. He had raised the children with his wife who remained a Jewess. . . . Two scenarios are possible. In the first, the man wishes to divorce his wife because he is no longer happy with her. Alternatively, the wife is the one seeking separation because she does not wish to remain with her converted husband, although he is willing to consider her his wife and resume marital relations with her.”⁵⁶ The treatise argued that faithlessness in the wife of a believing Christian had never been recognized by the church as grounds for divorce. Any Jewish woman who nevertheless wished to end her marriage under such circumstances lost all her rights to her children, since she was the sole cause of the marriage’s failure. While no authority could force her to live against her conscience with a man she regarded as an unbeliever, she could not be awarded custody of the children in such a case.

Jewish child baptism and the age of consent remained sources of burning contention between Jews and Christians in German lands, as in other European states, through the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ The struggle over the souls of Jewish children mirrored the larger conflict between the two communities of faith. The accompaniment of converts to the baptismal font by their children raised the stakes for individual conversions considerably.

CONVERSION, LANGUAGE, AND IDENTITY

I think that for any man a change of religion is as dangerous a thing as a change of language is for a writer. It may turn out a success, but it can also have disastrous consequences.

Simone Weil, "Lettre a un religieux"

Conversion and Language

The requirement that Jews who turned Christian shed not only their old religion but also their Jewish language and speech patterns betrays the extra-spiritual dimensions of Jewish conversion in German lands. Language, speech, sound, and even intonation had acquired singular status in early modern thought concerning collective cultural character. Long before the aesthetics of "looking Jewish" became a marker for identifying Jewishness, those of "sounding Jewish" became the most significant sign of Jewish birth.

As ideas of collective character began to coalesce, sound and language came to be considered one of the most important markers of identity.¹ In the sixteenth century, individuals with common backgrounds were thought to produce distinctive sounds, each somehow reflective of the essence of their collective traits. According to one sixteenth-century treatise on music, the Italians bleated, the Spanish wailed, the Germans howled, and the French sang.²

Europeans reserved the most degrading characterizations for the sounds produced by Jews, particularly common in descriptions of Jewish prayer. Early sixteenth-century German dramatist Hans Folz described the sounds made by Jews in prayer as "devilish."³ Johann Moscherosch's *Wunderliche . . . Geschichte Philanders*, a preeminent work of the genre, depicted Jewish misdeeds and offered detailed descriptions of the tortures applied to them as punishment. He depicted Jewish cries of agony as inhuman, demonic, "exactly like those heard in a synagogue." One early seventeenth-century broadsheet tellingly reinterpreted the yellow circle that Jews were required to wear on their clothes, from a visual sym-

bol of their otherness to an aural signifier of their immutable Jewishness. The caricaturist suggested that the circles represented sounds emitted by Jews. Since all Jews belonged to the devil, they were constantly screaming “O O” in fear of the place to which they were destined to go.⁴

Early seventeenth-century traveler Thomas Coryate observed that while most Jews did not look like the stereotype, “To looke like a Jewe is not true,” they sounded like it. He described a Jewish Torah reading “not by a sober, distinct, and orderly reading, but by an exceeding laud yailing, undecent roaring, and as it were a beastly bellowing of it forth.”⁵ In seventeenth-century Hamburg, the leading Lutheran clergyman, Johannes Müller, protested the existence of the Jewish community on the grounds that “In their synagogue there are loud murmurs and cries.”⁶ An early nineteenth-century German dictionary suggested that “the word *synagogue* be replaced by *Judenschule* (Jew school), for like a school of unruly pupils the Jews’ house of worship is a ‘place where people gather and mumble in an unlovely manner.’”⁷ If Europeans regarded distinctive sound patterns as in-eradicable components of Jewish identity, language, intonation, and gesture were believed to be even more closely linked.

The role of language as a marker of collective character emerged at different stages in different cultures. In German lands, the Reformation, Luther’s German Bible, and the rapid dissemination of printed material contributed to the heightened sense of a German cultural identity.⁸ Within early modern German lands, by the late fifteenth century the sense of international Empire had begun to disintegrate, and the sense of a German cultural entity to replace it. In 1486 the title of the Empire was formally changed to the Holy Roman Empire *of the German Nation*. German Renaissance humanists promoted renewed interest in German history and contributed to the rise of German pride.⁹ The publication of Tacitus’s *Germania* in 1497 contributed to the emergence of the conception of Germans as the *Urvolk*, the original European people, and their language as the *Ursprache*, the original language of humanity.¹⁰

The search for the original language of humanity led to some bizarre medieval experiments. One horrendous test was attributed to the Emperor Frederick II: “In an effort to discover what language men would naturally speak if reared in complete seclusion and denied the hearing of all spoken words, he caused newborn infants to be reared by foster-mothers who were ‘to suckle and bathe them but in no wise speak to them.’ For . . . he desired to know whether or not they would speak Hebrew, which is the original language, or Greek or Latin, or Arabic, or the language of the parents from whom they were born . . . but the infants died.”¹¹ The philosopher Leibniz, like the Renaissance Kabbalists, originally believed that language and nature were one, and that Hebrew was the most ‘natu-

ral' language, the one which corresponded to natural phenomena most closely. Leibniz later transferred the designation of the language of creation to German.¹²

Notions of linguistic superiority developed alongside those of superior traits, such as loyalty and honesty, which Germans believed made them easy prey to "cunning" Latins like the French, Italians, and Spaniards. Language came to symbolize social, occupational, physiognomic, and other elements of collective identity. The polemics of the Reformation and the widespread power of inexpensive printing contributed to the homogenization of the German vernacular. As the German language became consolidated as a marker of identity, its power to exclude those who did not share it grew apace. In the mid-fifteenth century, a lawsuit was instituted in Magdeburg against a defendant whose name was unknown to the plaintiff. Instead, he provided a description: "He has a long face, a long nose, he looks like a Jew and also speaks like one."¹³

Throughout the medieval centuries, Hebrew had been associated with the Jews, and magical, secretive powers were attributed to it.¹⁴ Judeo-German, the Yiddish spoken by German Jews, was associated in the popular imagination with thieves' cant, with perceptions of Jews as criminal, deceitful, and degenerate.¹⁵ As notions of sound were refined into theories of language, conceptions of Jewish sound were carried over into beliefs concerning Jewish language.

The close association of Jews with their language and sound patterns accounts for the insistence and expectation of their German converters that they remove these markers of Jewishness as proof of true conversion. Every religious community is also a speech community, with unique words, concepts, and sensibilities. This element of solidarity is especially important when a religion is attempting to establish its distinction from others, or when its adherents constitute a persecuted minority. Early Christians employed a distinctive vocabulary, which employed new terms or used established terms in novel ways, cementing the bonds of the new "speech community." The denominalization of German society in the sixteenth century promoted greater awareness of the importance of language as an aspect of religious identity.¹⁶ Early modern instruction for conversion from Judaism entailed erasing aspects of Jewishness beyond the theological, including the linguistic and aural. The persistence of distinctly Jewish forms of language and speech, like the religion itself, came to be seen as part of the larger riddle of the stubborn persistence of Jewishness and its resistance to domination. Language became part of the complex of Jewish identity, to be set against Christian identity. To divest a Jew of his Jewishness, one needed first to cure him of his Jewish language habits. Language became the key to unlocking the whole gamut of stereotypes about Jews, intruding upon the realms of theology and spirituality.¹⁷

Many converts nourished expectations that the process of religious conver-

sion would simultaneously alter the entire cluster of associations that went along with their former Jewish identity. Converts devoted a considerable amount of time and effort within their reeducation to the study of language. Success in either Latin or the vernacular came to be seen as a component of a successful conversion. In their conversion narratives, many converts referred interchangeably to their new status, “uns Teutchen,” and “wir Christen.” They had become one with Christians and Germans at the same time.¹⁸

The language acquisition of new converts took on one more likeness within conversionary imagery to the birth of a new soul. After the decision to convert, but months before baptism, converts first learned to read and to write “like a child,” a description provided by Ernst Augusti. He compared his father’s first immersion in the German language to a child’s first steps and apologetically explained that in all his father’s earlier travels, other than his “Judenteutch,” he had learned little of the German language. Members of the local clergy alternated shifts to teach him full-time. He was deemed ready for baptism after three-quarters of a year.¹⁹ His career as a preacher seemed all the more worthy of admiration, according to his son. “If this had been accomplished by someone who was groomed from youth . . . but he had to begin learning German in his manly years.”²⁰

Especially for converts desiring a clerical position, which in Catholic lands meant mastering Latin, the fragmented German political situation meant that even greater importance was attached to language.²¹ Proficiency in language weighed heavily on the newly converted; their autobiographical statements betrayed a high degree of self-consciousness concerning their use of the German language, which had become an indicator of their level of conversion. In the early sixteenth century, Antonius Margaritha “beseched every good Christian reader not to judge him harshly because of his longwinded writings . . . I have sometimes repeated things, sometimes not completed the sentence according to the art of German rhetoric . . . The reader should remember that I am not so learned in the German tongue.”²² Because of the enormous effort, apologized Margaritha, “I have undertaken to write nothing more in German. Only two short treatises, if God gives me health and strength.” Margaritha’s *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* was re-edited and refined in subsequent editions during his lifetime, and later editors continued the effort to clean up his German.²³ Lotharius Franz Fried begged his readers’ forgiveness: “Coming from circumcision, my quill is not always sharp. I hope my readers will not stumble over my writing. Like Moses, my diction is slurred; may the reader be my Aaron.”²⁴

Convert Christoph Wallich excused his linguistic shortcomings thus: “If the translation doesn’t quite attain German grace, at least the meaning should come

through.”²⁵ Carl Anton translated some rabbinic tales into German, “and adorned them [in correct idiomatic writing] as much as my strength in German language permitted.”²⁶ He later noted to his potential Jewish readers that he had not translated the stories according to the miserable Judeo-German, but into pure German, which necessitated certain changes because of the differences between the languages.²⁷ Anton’s perfunctory and casual description of German as a pure language, compared to the Judeo-German (Yiddish) spoken by the Jews, is noteworthy. It testifies to the profound and widespread acceptance of the German cultural judgment that German was “pure,” while Yiddish stood, debased and corrupted, in contrast. When a convert continued to sound Jewish, it was necessary to assure the audience at his conversion that a true conversion had nevertheless taken place. The editor/translator of Shalome ben Shalomoh’s conversion account assured the reader that “tho’ his Speech was rude, yet it is not doubted . . . but he had those Divine Impulses on his Soul, whereby he could not but desert Judaism.”²⁸

Converts not only apologized for their failings if their German was not perfect: they proudly announced their achievement if they had mastered it. In the seventeenth century, Christian Reineccius praised Friedrich Albrecht Christiani’s *Teutsche Mutter=Sprache* (German mother-tongue) as “very accurate, fine and graceful, something which is seldom found among the Jews.”²⁹ Converts displayed their familiarity with their adopted language by frequently citing “common sayings” among “us Germans.”³⁰ Gottfried Selig apologized to “Christian scholars” for writing words pertaining to Judaism the way they appeared in the original, “in their corrupt pronunciation.”³¹ He suggested that this might come in handy for discussions with Jews. When criticized by some of his readers for not providing enough material on “Jewish gibberish,” for not providing the coarsest of Jewish expressions, Selig replied that there were many dialects among the Jews, and he could only provide the most common.³² Moreover, his intention was not to antagonize the Jews, as some readers might suppose, but only to improve them.

Hebrew: Language of the Jews?

The relationship of Jews to language in early modern Europe is complex for several reasons. In the late fifteenth century, humanists in Italy, most notably Pico della Mirandola, reclaimed the study of Hebrew and inaugurated the era of Christian Hebraism. Christian Hebraists argued for a separation of the language from its association with the people. Hebrew was necessary for Christians for the purpose of getting close to their own texts, and they strove for mastery without mediation of Jews. This goal took a long time to achieve. Most Chris-

tian Hebraists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries relied on Jews or converted Jews as tutors. No sooner had the city of Nuremberg expelled its Jews in 1499 than Andreas Osiander requested the town's permission to retain the Jewish schoolteacher of nearby Schnaittach to teach him the Hebrew language.³³

Pico's accomplishment reversed the millennium-old linkage of Hebrew with the Jews by insisting that divine truths, Christian truths, inhered in God's original words. The language could be divorced from the Jewish people and put to good use by Christians searching for the *Hebraica veritas*. In German lands, Johannes Reuchlin articulated this line of argumentation most forcefully, in the face of determined opposition. Reuchlin lamented in 1506 that the Hebrew idiom within Christendom would be lost if expulsions of Jews from Iberia were followed by expulsions from German lands. Yet it proved much more difficult to overturn the traditional linkage between Jews and Hebrew in German lands than it did elsewhere, and Hebraists never completely succeeded in severing the language from the Jews. In the sixteenth century, knowledge of Hebrew in German lands still sufficed to taint the bearer with the suspicion of Jewish parentage. Hebraist Johannes Boschenstein (1472–1540) spent years trying to convince Christians: "We were born of Christian parents, but because we were somewhat acquainted with the Holy Tongue, which is so unusual in our land, we are hated by . . . ignorant people."³⁴ Reformer Martin Bucer defended his family from the accusation of Jewishness on several occasions. Not until the eighteenth century could one convert declare with assurance that "the Hebrew Old Testament could be found not only in every Jewish home, but in that of every parish priest."³⁵

If teaching Christians their own truths did not provide sufficient justification for the acquisition of Hebrew to hostile clerics, a new justification emerged which proved more difficult to refute. A paradoxical result of the belief that Jewishness and the Hebrew language were intimately related was the growing realization among Hebraists and missionaries that in order to reach Jews and effectively engage them in missionary dialogue, they must communicate in the Jews' language. This became a primary justification for the Christian study of Hebrew. Theologians and missionaries who had studied the right languages would have greater success than those who had not.

Peter Schwarz/Nigri filled his *Stella Meschiah*, one of the earliest German printed books to use Hebrew print, with standard polemical arguments concerning Jesus' messianic and divine status and the rejection of the Jews by God. He considered it to be a missionary tract.³⁶ A Nuremberg chronicle of 1478 described him as preaching his sermons to the Jews in their own language, "der konnte gut hebräisch, jüdisch reden."³⁷

Sebastian Münster, one of the most competent German Hebraists of his age,

became one of the first to address missionary works to Jews.³⁸ He wrote the earliest such work, published in 1529, in the form of a dialogue between a Christian and a Jew, keeping it rather bland and devoid of much information about Christianity. His later book, reflecting a change in attitude similar to that which afflicted so many other Protestants, including Luther, contained much more vituperative anti-Jewish material. Neither approach would be likely to win over many hearts. But Münster's translation of the Gospel of Matthew into Hebrew, in 1537, became a model for missionary works aiming to reach Jews in their own language. Sixteenth-century theologian Johannes Draconites linked his proficiency as a Hebraist with his success as a missionary.³⁹ The English traveler Thomas Coryate, who described his own efforts at conversion as "more disputation and less conversion," wrote of meeting an Italian, Paulo Emilio, who succeeded in converting some rabbis, considered the most obdurate missionary targets, because he was able to converse with them *in their own tongue*.⁴⁰ Johann Polycarp Besser, an itinerant Jewish orphan seeking a position, heard the friendly Hebrew greeting "Shalom Lachem" and entered the home of his friendly host. The greeter turned out to be a "Doctor of Theology," who invited him to stay for several months and taught him the "Lebens-Lauf" of Jesus, providing the foundation for his subsequent conversion.⁴¹

Converts from Judaism positioned themselves as the ideal mediators between Jews and Christians, able to function both as teachers of Hebrew to Christians and as missionaries to Jews. The expectation that converts reach back to Jews to convert them was linked to the understanding that converts possessed more of a "common language" with Jews than any other missionaries. Margaritha intended to publish some useful and important things concerning the Hebrew language for the benefit of all Christians who had lately undertaken to study Hebrew. He added that he knew such Christians, in several instances, to be more knowledgeable about the language than many Jews themselves. Like other early sixteenth-century pioneers in the use of Hebrew in a Christian society, Margaritha complained that there were not enough printers equipped with Hebrew letters, and even those who owned them had incomplete sets, without the vowel points "as one can easily detect from this book. It is hoped, however, that these letters will soon be made available."⁴²

Johannes Isaac, although already thirty-one years old at the time of his conversion, was awarded an annual stipend to study Latin at Marburg so that he could become a teacher of Hebrew and Aramaic, "to share it [Hebrew] and make it useful for Christians." Christian Hebraists would learn Hebrew according to the same philological categories by which they studied Latin, then considered an indispensable prerequisite, so that their Hebrew teachers would have to be familiar

with both. According to his son, Stephan, it proved a great struggle for him to learn Latin at that age, and he never really mastered it. From the beginning of his conversion, plans were made to utilize Isaac's knowledge of Hebrew to further Christian Hebraism and the Jewish mission. Johannes Isaac's converter, Johannes Draconites, had proposed shortly after the conversion a cooperative effort to enhance his missionary effectiveness. The convert would take "everything that the Rabbis and Talmudists had written of the messiah while Draconites would do the same for the prophecies of Moses and the prophets concerning Christ, and it would all be translated into the German language for the utility of his fatherland."⁴³ Johannes Isaac eagerly added the suggestion that the small catechism be translated into Hebrew as an aid to conversion of Jews, as well as to purify their Hebrew.⁴⁴ Draconites asked Johannes Isaac to translate his sermon on Isaiah into Hebrew, using one convert to bolster his efficacy with others.

When Johannes's son, Stephan, defected to the Protestant church years later, his Catholic enemies insulted his father's linguistic ability, apparently the best they could do to prove that he had not thoroughly converted. His opponent Isselt referred to Johannes Isaac as a "Grammaticum," a sarcastic reference to his lack of expertise in Latin. Although Isaac refused to debate the level of his father's proficiency in Latin, he nevertheless retorted that his father had not mangled the Latin language as badly as Isselt had alleged. Moreover, his accomplishments, for a man who was over thirty years old when he converted, bespoke those of a model convert. Although it took great effort and divine grace, he made such progress that the Hebrew and Aramaic classes he taught in the great universities, especially Cologne, became the most distinguished in German lands. Few who studied with him or read his books were not immensely grateful; his books were published and used widely in the foremost Christian universities.⁴⁵ Isaac's proud defense of his Hebrew background invites contrast to an earlier time when converts tried to deny it.

In their literature, converts made both a symbolic and a literal effort to translate two different religious cultures. They rendered parts of the Christian Bible and liturgy into Hebrew, and Hebrew biblical and rabbinic works into Latin and German, in an attempt to bring the two religious cultures closer.⁴⁶ One of the earliest prominent Jewish converts to Protestantism, Italian [John] Immanuel Tremellius (b. Ferrara, 1510), translated Calvin's catechism into Hebrew, under the title *Hinukh Behirei Yah* (Catechism of God's Elect).⁴⁷ The book made every effort to hide Tremellius's Christian identity at first, referring to him as *Rav*, rabbi. It opened with a warm introductory epistle calling upon Jews to read and believe what was written there.⁴⁸ Many converts in German lands followed the tradition established by Tremellius, using their works to create a Hebrew bridge to

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 11. Ave Maria and alphabet in Hebrew, by “Victor [von Carben] the priest, formerly a Jew.” From *Propugnaculu fidei christiane* (Cologne, c. 1510). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

potential converts. Friedrich Albrecht Christiani was noted for his translation into Hebrew of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which was published several times.⁴⁹ The Hebrew text of Christiani's *Epistle* was written in a warm Hebrew voice to disarm the Jewish reader and to create the impression that converts welcomed novices into a comfortable community.

Converts whose books did not provide full Hebrew texts nevertheless used a Hebrew title page or foreword to draw in Jewish readers. Some merely had the first line of the title in Hebrew translation.⁵⁰ In a typical example, Caspar Joseph Friedenheim's book, addressed to both Jews and Christians, used Hebrew lettering for the first title, "Yehudi me-ba-hutz," while the remainder of the page and most of the book was in German.⁵¹ He occasionally resorted to Hebrew in transliteration, as when expressing his desire that his former fellow Jews convert to Christianity: "O that my brethren might cry out to me: Blessed is Jesus, True King Messiah . . ." (*O das doch meine Brüder auch mit mir ausriefen: Baruch Jeschua Melech Meschichenu Emes*). He concluded with a comfortably traditional wish in Hebrew: "Amen, and may this be the will of our Father in Heaven."⁵²

The use of Hebrew to entice Jews to convert, only to be followed by intense efforts to erase every residue of their Jewish language patterns in German lands, stands in marked contrast to the utilization of Hebrew among converts in Italy, where the Hebrew language was used to ease the acculturation of Jews to the Catholic religion. Liturgy whose content and style was thoroughly alien to newly converted Jews in the Roman *domus conversorum* was translated into Hebrew, in the words of Kenneth Stow, "to assimilate the alien aspects of Christian prayer without having to sustain a strong emotional or intellectual reaction."⁵³ Hebrew was inscribed on the altar of the church designated as the home parish of the Roman catechumens. While the Roman converts themselves initiated the use of Hebrew for this purpose, the contrast is still instructive. A centralized institution like the church in Rome could afford these gestures; in Germany no prince would engrave Hebrew inscriptions in his place of worship to make a convert feel comfortable. While in German lands converts used Hebrew to draw in Jews, in Rome, Hebrew was used after conversion to ease the transition, the reverse direction.

Yiddish as a Language of Conversion

The history of attempts to convince Jews to convert by demonstrating knowledge of their language reached a new level as missionaries in the field became more aware that Hebrew was not the language of daily Jewish discourse. Yiddish came to be recognized by the mid-seventeenth century as the closest thing to a vernacular language of the Jews. Latin references to "hebr[a]eae litterae teutonice

legendae,” Hebrew letters to be read in German, probably predate the use of Yiddish as a missionary language.⁵⁴ The revolution propelled by Luther’s translation of the Bible into German removed the barrier of Latin which had prevented Jews from easily reading the Christian Scriptures.

By the mid-sixteenth century, the first works in Yiddish whose purpose was to subvert Judaism began to appear. Convert Johann Harzuge printed a New Testament in Cracow with Hebrew translation in 1540,⁵⁵ and a first Judeo-German translation of the New Testament by Polish Jewish convert Paul Halicz was published the following year in 1541.⁵⁶ These efforts were apparently independent of two Yiddish translations of the Hebrew Bible which appeared shortly thereafter. In 1544, convert Paul Emilio published a Yiddish translation of the Bible in Augsburg, the same year as the publication of another Yiddish translation in Constance, also by a convert, Michael Adam.⁵⁷ Convert Matthew Adrian translated the Paternoster, “Engelsgruss,” and the Salve Regina to Hebrew.⁵⁸ By the late seventeenth century, missionaries were writing more works in Yiddish. Wagen-seil published a dictionary, undoubtedly intended to aid missionaries in the field, and the institute of Callenberg in Halle followed suit in the eighteenth century.⁵⁹ By the eighteenth century, conversion narratives mention translations of the New Testament into Yiddish more frequently, as having had an important effect on the decision to convert.⁶⁰ Paul Christian linked his first stirrings toward conversion to his encounter with a Yiddish translation of the New Testament. The Christian Bible was *terra incognita* to most Jews, and Paul Christian recalled his shock when he checked out the marginal references to the Old Testament, and they all turned out to be correct.⁶¹

Raphael Josef, a Jew baptized by Friedrich Albrecht Augusti in 1749 credited his initial step toward conversion to the first time he read the New Testament in Yiddish. He bought the “jüdischteutches Testament” under the impression that he was buying a Jewish book. Once he had read through it, he formed many doubts about his own religion—or at least that is how his *Bekehrungsgeschichte* came to be told by his son. “In order to attain his goal [of refuting Christianity], he avidly read the New Testament, which had been published in Judeo-German letters by Christian Möller, in order to be in a position to argue against it.”⁶² This statement seems disingenuous—an attempt perhaps to give Pauline contours to his father’s conversion story. Augusti attributed Reinhard’s effectiveness as a converter to his knowledge of Hebrew and things Jewish, reflecting the more recent attitude that these were requisite for successful missionizing.⁶³ Daniel Jacob Bon noted that his converter, Caspar Calvor, initially welcomed him with Hebrew words. When Bon informed Calvor that he had already learned to read German, Calvor decided that the next step would be to teach Bon how to write it.⁶⁴

When Johann Caspar Ulrich set out c. 1740 to proselytize young Joseph Guggenheim, he sent him a New Testament in Yiddish published by Callenberg's institute; he followed this initial overture with visits and other Yiddish-language works, "In order to drive the stake home to his heart."⁶⁵ Still undecided about whether to convert, Joseph thanked Ulrich for sending him the "Droscho," the colloquial Jewish term for sermon, referring to the conversionary material.⁶⁶ Ulrich stocked many titles published by Callenberg's institute and cited advice from Callenberg to his own missionaries on using the Yiddish-language materials to greatest effect. Missionaries were counseled to remove the Latin-character title pages and introductions in advance of giving such books to Jews, because they would be put off by a work which was written by a Christian for missionary purposes. The books should be offered in tantalizingly small doses at first, one passage at a time, until the Jew asked to borrow the entire book. Once a book was given to a Jew, no further material should be offered unless it became clear that the Jew had read it, because most Jews would be likely to toss such works into the fire. Traveling missionaries should try to use Jews as often as possible to fulfill their business needs and should meet them in their homes or synagogues, greeting them in "Jüdisch teutschen Dialects," and letting them know that they carried Judeo-German books. They were to establish friendly and comfortable relationships before insinuating the idea that rabbis were misleaders of the benighted Jewish masses.⁶⁷ Rumor had it that Ulrich even made arrangements for a kosher kitchen to accommodate Jewish guests who might be potential converts. Jews were to be approached with material assistance in times of need when they were more vulnerable. The expulsion of Jews from Prague in 1745 by Maria Theresa sparked a rush among Callenberg's trainees to reach the dislocated Jews.⁶⁸

Callenberg's missionaries saw the presence of Polish melammedim (Jewish schoolteachers) in German lands as the primary obstacle to mass conversions, because their minds had been poisoned in Poland by Catholic images of true Christianity. One of Callenberg's missionaries suggested that in order to be accepted as melammedim in Germany, Polish Jews should first be made to show evidence that they understood "true"—that is, Protestant—Christianity!⁶⁹ Even when German cities were swarming with Jewish itinerants from further east in the mid-eighteenth century, approximately half the converts originated from the indigenous German-Jewish population.⁷⁰

The missionary campaign in Yiddish provoked a polemical response literature in Yiddish to blunt its effect. Friedrich Albrecht Augusti wrote of reading a book of citations, "Buche der Verzeichnisse," which he described as "attacks and mockery against the New Testament, . . . rendered in an accessible manner, in order to arm the common Jew with arrows against the Christian teachings."⁷¹

Augusti described this book as one among several similar books which he kept as a reminder of his early beliefs.

The use of Yiddish as a language of conversion reflects the centuries-long Christian endeavor to penetrate Jewishness to its “secret core” and to use this information for the benefit of the Christian community of scholars and clerics. The emerging awareness of the private language of the Jews, and the imperative to master it in order to convert Jews from a position of familiarity, reached its peak in German lands in the last decades of the eighteenth century. A combination of acculturation and governmental pressure accelerated the use of German among urban Jews. The perception that Germanization led to conversion died hard among German Jews. One typical traditionalist Jewish reaction to the proposed Prussian governmental reform plan to improve the teaching of German to Jewish students and mandate its use in communal records was, “Worum nit lieber gor schmadn?” (Why not just convert?).⁷²

REVEALING THE SECRETS OF JUDAISM

The Literature of Jewish Ceremonial

Every kind of research includes the idea of a nudity that one exposes by removing the obstacles that cover it over, as Acteon pushes aside the branches to better see Diana at her bath. . . . The scholar/scientist is the hunter who surprises a white nudity and violates it with his look.

Jean Paul Sartre, L'Être et le néant

Converts from Judaism contributed a distinctive chapter to the Jewish-Christian polemic. In early modern German lands, they introduced “Jewish ceremonial life, as it was currently practiced,” a new subject, into the oldest religious argument.¹ Into this rubric they fitted multiple aspects of Jewish ritual law, custom, and popular local practice. On the basis of formal texts such as the Talmud and Jewish legal codes, polemics such as *Toledot Yeshu* and *Nizzahon*, handbooks for ritual practitioners, and oral traditions of varying reliability, they forged a monumental and original corpus of literature on Jewish ceremonial life. This immense endeavor compels us to re-evaluate the role of converts in shaping the images of Jews and Judaism held by Christians, as they attempted to create a place for themselves between two communities sharply divided from one another.

Background: The Church, the Jews, and the Law

Jewish ritual law stood at the center of the conflict between Jews and Christians from the earliest stages of their disengagement. Christianity defined itself as the successor and fulfillment of the Jewish Torah, or Law; Christian sources portrayed Jewish interest in religious praxis as ossified legalism devoid of spirit, degenerated into mere superstition.² The church taught that man could never fulfill the ritual Law to perfection; faith in Christ offered the only means of achieving a state of grace and fulfillment. As far as the church was concerned, Jewish law and

custom no longer served any useful purpose. Rather, Jewish praxis barred the way to acknowledging Christ by misleading Jews into thinking that their ritual piety served God. While “No Jew imagines that there is a symmetric correlation between fulfilling the commandments and the granting of redemption,”³ for Christians, the adherence of Jews to a code of law appeared to be a futile effort to attain salvation, which Christians understood to be accessible only through faith. The vitriolic polemics of the fourth century demonstrated that Jewish observances still attracted some Christians, although these practices were hated and feared by the clergy.⁴ Once the crisis of Judaizing had passed, the church concentrated on integrating pagans and building its own theological infrastructure. Jews and their laws and customs seemed marginal to the enterprise. We would not expect, therefore, to find much attention within Christian thought devoted to the body of Jewish ceremonial except in the most sweeping and condemnatory terms. This remained the case through the early medieval period.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the church grew more interested in Jews as the most conspicuous non-Christian minority remaining in Europe. The long-standing and stagnant debate over the divine covenant in the Hebrew Bible and its interpretation gained new momentum. In their choice of prooftexts, Christian polemicists turned increasingly to the Talmud, which, unlike the Hebrew Bible, had been terra incognita for almost all medieval Christians. This paved the way for the articulation of the first innovative lines of argumentation in many centuries. Converts from Judaism played a central role in the further development of these new realms of disputation. Among their new arguments, Christian polemicists contended that, far from adhering to the Hebrew Bible, Jews secretly subverted it by privileging the teachings of the Talmud. They charged that Jews had deliberately rendered Talmudic texts abstruse and inaccessible in order to conceal them from Christian eyes, and that the arcane veneer of the Talmud served to disguise a diabolical hatred for Christianity and Christians. As for the body of Jewish law and practice, Christian polemicists regarded Jewish ritual in its entirety as a failed system, misapplied, and ineffectual. The Christian position can be regarded as one of “pervasive criticism,” in that it did not attack the particulars of Jewish observance but, rather, opposed the entire concept of ritual law.⁵

The sixteenth-century turn to the intricate rituals and folkways of Jewish life was an unprecedented polemical incursion into a realm that had remained for centuries beneath the field of vision of most Christian theologians, missionaries, and, certainly, lay people. The underlying lines of theological argumentation in the literature of Jewish ceremonial often went unmentioned by its authors. One polemical approach maintained that no person could conceivably observe

all the minutiae of these many laws, proof that the way of the Law was fundamentally flawed and that only Christian grace could bring salvation.⁶ A second line of contention granted that Jews were bound to observe the Law of Moses; contemporary Jews, however, had strayed far from their own ideal. A detailed exposition of their contemporary lore proved that Jews did not adhere to biblical practice. “Anyone who has even glanced at the Book of Moses can see how far the contemporary ceremonies differ from it.”⁷ The literature of Jewish ceremonial advanced the notion that Jewish religion and ritual were manifestly absurd in themselves and contained their own refutations. There was no need to refute Jews by resorting to Christian Scripture, which Jews would not accept. Judaism could and should be refuted on its own terms, on the basis of its own texts, proscriptions, and practices.

In moving the polemic against Jews to the particulars of their customs and folk practices, their foes tapped into ancient anti-Jewish motifs. Pagan authors had assumed that the social differences occasioned by ritual observances expressed Jewish xenophobia, evidence that Jews placed themselves outside the social order.⁸ Another ancient motif contrasted custom with nature, advancing the claim that rituals and customs formed a secondary layer imposed upon the bedrock of man’s natural state.⁹ Early Christian authors portrayed ritual law as a corruption which fostered alienation from the divine. Luther repeated the contrast: *Sola Scriptura*. Scripture provided the sole, divine path to truth, as opposed to “custom,” man-made rules of the medieval church and the popes.¹⁰ Luther likened Catholics to Jews in their departure from the idea of exclusive justification by faith. “The doctor [Luther] said, ‘All religions that depart from the true Christian religion are *ex opere operato*’ (by the mere performance of the act), that is, they teach, ‘This I will do and that will please God.’ But one must hold fast to the rule that every *opera operatum* is idolatrous. Whatever the papists taught is *opus operatum*. At all events, their rules and regulations remind me of the Jews and actually very much was borrowed from the Jews.”¹¹ It is no coincidence that Luther remarked on this parallel after reading the book of a former Jew. “When we were reading at table about the various rites and ceremonies of the Jews in the little book by Antonius Margaritha . . .” Converts who construed Judaism as the diametric opposite of “pure” Christianity influenced Luther’s thinking on the subject of Jews and Judaism.

In choosing to focus their description of Judaism on the manners, mores, rituals, and customs of the Jews, sixteenth-century converts von Carben, Pfefferkorn, Margaritha, and their many emulators were suggesting that Jewishness was not an innate condition, but a set of learned behaviors and attitudes. They implied

thereby that conversion could accomplish a complete transformation. They were in fact suggesting, in defense of their own conversions, that once the malignant layers of Jewishness were removed, the pure — that is, Christian — nature of man would remain.

Origins of the Literature of Jewish Ceremonial

The precise point at which the shift “from theology to folkways, from doctrine to cultural practices,” occurred is difficult to locate.¹² Older strands of anti-Jewish polemic continued to resonate alongside the new. One important source of this shift emerged from the Inquisition in Spain. The inquisitorial definition of Jewishness emphasized the practice of certain rituals and customs, rather than a set of theological beliefs. Although Spanish-style missionary efforts do not seem to have succeeded on German soil, Spanish-trained theologians planted the seeds of new Christian conceptions of Judaism in German lands.¹³ Ronald Hsia located the sudden rise of interest in Jewish ritual in the Trent ritual murder trials of 1475. According to Hsia, the trials of Jews for the murder of young Simon of Trent represented a turning point in Christian anti-Judaism, because they confirmed the centrality of ritual in the imagined Jewish atrocities against Christians. Although the ritual murder libel had always been linked to Jewish religious needs, the architects of the Trent trials went to extraordinary lengths to illustrate that “the very essence of Jewish rites . . . the Seder meal, the Haggadah, and blood symbolism demanded the sacrifice of Christian boys.” No earlier trial had documented this link as assiduously as that of Trent, and none had wider impact in early modern German lands.¹⁴

But trial proceedings, be they Iberian or Italian, although they reverberated deeply within German lands, do not constitute an adequate explanation of the breakthrough in genre, the tremendous volume, and the sustained interest in Jewish ceremonial over the next three centuries. With the significant exception of several Italian works, the literature of Jewish ceremonial appears to be a largely German phenomenon.¹⁵ In its scope, continuity, and long duration, the colorful corpus depicting Jewish ceremonial life remained unique to the literature of German lands.

Several additional factors may be taken into account. Sander Gilman has argued that the campaign of Reuchlin and the German humanists to discredit convert Johannes Pfefferkorn and his knowledge of Hebrew in the first decade of the sixteenth century led convert Antonius Margaritha to create a new field of scholarship, distinguished by genre and level of sophistication, on which to base the authority of converts from Judaism.¹⁶ The emphasis on Jewish cere-

monial arose at the time that the Protestant movement was subjecting Catholic ceremonial and sacrament to intense critical scrutiny. Universities and churches throughout German lands reappraised the role and meaning of ritual acts, particularly the communion of the mass. Even as the reformers changed and stripped away elements of Christian ritual, they heightened awareness of its significance within Christian religious life.

The literature on Jewish ritual thus often served internal Christian purposes, particularly Protestant anti-Catholic polemic. Protestant writers traversed ancient and contemporary pagan societies only to “find” that their practices resembled the pagan elements of Catholicism, the true object of their derision. Jacques Basnage took a similar journey through the history of the Jews only to find practices analogous to those of Roman Catholics. Not all polemical writers exposed their true intentions so blatantly; most works that focused on Jewish ritual in order to criticize Catholicism indirectly required careful decoding by readers who understood the guarded language of confessional polemics.¹⁷ On the other hand, some writers intended to repel Christians who admired the rigor of Jewish ritual. They warned their Christian readers of the onerous burden of the Law, of its infinite regulation of the minutiae of daily living. This argument regarded the system of Jewish ritual as the archetypical anachronism, and it reproached Christian sectarians who advocated a return to specific Jewish-style rituals.¹⁸

Other Christian writers on Jewish ritual found in Judaism a testament to the ancient and authentic teachings of Jesus and his immediate milieu. Protestant theologian Paul Fagius (1504–49) pioneered the study of Jewish ritual for the purpose of elucidating the original practices that had now become objects of serious contention between Christian denominations. He described Jewish table blessings, at first glance only of interest to Jews, to alert Protestants that Jews had continued to observe the rituals of the Lord’s Supper since ancient times. Because the Jews of Jesus’ time lived with a valid divine covenant, their daily exercise of piety and their regular observances still had much to teach Christians who were seeking clarity in the meaning and performance of their own rituals.¹⁹ The fear articulated by Johannes Reuchlin, that the expulsions of Jews that were escalating throughout the late fifteenth century would soon empty Europe of the living bearers of this ancient testimony, spurred an entire generation of Hebraists to redouble their efforts. Their interest resulted in a rise in the number of Hebraically and Judaically literate scholars and an attendant interest throughout the Christian scholarly world in all matters Jewish. For instruction and authenticity, the cooperation of Jews or, better yet, former Jews proved essential.

Minhag Literature in the Culture of Ashkenaz

The sustained interest in the literature of Jewish ceremonial, to which converts contributed an essential share, lasted far beyond the confessional wars. One of the wellsprings of this sphere of literary creativity cultivated by Jewish converts can be found deep within the religious-mental structures of Ashkenaz, the German-Jewish world that the converts had inhabited and left. Emphasis on ritual and *minhag* (custom) formed the core of Ashkenazic culture. Custom, in its ideal form, taught the practical minutiae of observance, intimately bound to the observance of the Law itself.²⁰ Whereas codes of law retained aspects of an ideal vision of Jewish praxis, and responsa generally addressed anomalous situations, minhag often reflected deep-rooted traditions and popular folkways. The texts themselves often contained several layers of practices, difficult to differentiate on the basis of chronology.²¹

No Jewish population produced a minhag literature as rich and diverse as that of the medieval North European Jews. The Jews of Ashkenaz cultivated minhag more intensively, more exclusively, and over a longer period of time than any other within the Jewish world.²² A literary genre whose roots can be traced to the Geonic period, minhag literature laid its foundation in Ashkenaz in the late eleventh-century compilations *Ha-pardes* and *Mahzor Vitry*. It reached its first period of full flower with the school of R. Meir Rothenberg (of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century) that produced a literary corpus which has influenced Ashkenazic practice to this day. One impulse for this profound attachment to the minutiae of custom may have originated in the penitential strand of Ashkenazic culture. In the early modern period, this proclivity continued to exert a strong influence on the custom literature. Yuzpa Hahn of Nordlingen introduced his eighteenth-century minhag collection with a penitential motivation: "There was a great lament then in our streets because of our wicked neighbors, and then I said, 'I will record' [these customs] so that we can mend our ways, and perhaps appease God thereby."²³ Several other motivations prompted the recording of minhag literature, primarily the desire to preserve for posterity the practices of holy communities. Regardless of motivation, German Jews perceived themselves as more steadfast adherents of a greater complex of ceremonial than others. Convert Moses Marcus observed that the Ashkenazic Jews were much more punctilious, "observing a greater number of trifling ceremonies," in their observance of the minutiae of ceremonial than Sephardic Jews.²⁴

By the fifteenth century a new and distinctively Ashkenazic strain of minhag literature had emerged. Halakhists sought to establish the basis for customs per-

taining to Jewish ritual and to eradicate popular practices which had no standing in Jewish law. Minhag attained unprecedented power in the halakhic deliberations of the Ashkenazi scholarly elite. The earlier emphasis on eliminating unattested customs gave way to the reverse practice, whereby halakhists attempted to create legal precedents and rationales for widely practiced customs which had no prior halakhic standing. At the same time, the religious leadership of Ashkenaz split between a professional rabbinate, on the one hand, and a cadre of second-rank religious functionaries, on the other. Professional ritualists with single areas of expertise, the latter became the cantors, scribes, ritual slaughters, and circumcisers employed directly by the Jewish community. They produced a highly specialized and sharply compartmentalized ritual literature, consisting of monographs devoted to the single subject of the author's occupational expertise.²⁵

Ashkenazic authors produced another offshoot of this new and distinctive literary form, the *sefer minhagim* (book of customs), devoted to recording the customs of a given congregation or individual. Minhag literature from Worms exemplifies the genre based on the customs of one community; works based on the practices of figures such as R. Meir Rothenberg and Mahari"l, R. Jacob Moellin, represent another style devoted to the ritual practices of the great scholar.²⁶ In writing and valorizing these works, communities perpetuated memories of their leaders, as well as their collective values. This literature not only paralleled a similarly widespread practice in Christian culture of the time, it also attained particular prominence in the intellectual world of medieval German Jews.²⁷ At the same time that minhag literature reached its height, in the early sixteenth century, among German Jews, the literature of Jewish ceremonial flowered among converts from Judaism. Many of the converts emerged from the same stratum of Jewish society as the second-rank religious functionaries who wrote the minhag books, and, despite their very different motivations, their literature bears strong similarities. Antonius Margaritha patterned his influential book *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* (1530) after minhag literature. Margaritha claimed to have based his "revelations" concerning Jewish customs on a Jewish customal, *Sefer ha-middot*.²⁸ Moreover, Margaritha learned much about the prayer services from his brother, a cantor, and he integrated cantorial instructions into the text of his pioneering translations of the prayer services.²⁹ Since liturgy and prayer services shaped the customs and identity of a Jewish community in significant ways, these are telling details. They help to situate one of the most important works of convert literature on Jewish ceremonial within a Jewish context.

As in any emerging genre, the earliest works about Jewish ceremonial defy easy categorization. The emergence of a new genre does not mean that it was unrelated to its predecessors, for it would seem absurd without some "context

of expectation.”³⁰ Unlike medieval polemical works, these purported to describe actual Jewish religious and cultural practices, gestures, words, or ritual objects, rather than belief systems. A close reading of the texts provides an excellent example of the process which stretches and breaks boundaries of the old classifications, giving way ultimately, but only recognizable in retrospect, to a new taxonomy, new subjects, and new ways of affecting readers.

Writing books about Jewish life remained occupations of immense practical and psychological importance for converts; the latter remained the most significant cohort of authors of this literature. Like their autobiographies, these books bridged their Jewish and Christian selves. Converts did not simply write works on Jewish ceremonial as exotic travelogues into the ghetto written for the benefit of the curious. They undertook hermeneutic enterprises, interpretations of the culture and its symbols, rituals, and traditions that sought to clarify the authors’ defection, both to the world they had lost and to the world they had entered. Although some converts, particularly those who wrote after the genre became well established, avoided the malicious, blatant distortions which characterized the earliest works, an unsavory tinge clung to every treatment of Jewish ritual, suggesting that its contents were somehow primitive, dark, and superstitious.³¹

Despite the occasional veneer of objectivity in the genre of Jewish ceremonial, the books adopt the framework of distorted ethnographic description to score points in a religious polemic. For example, Carl Anton, one of the most favorably disposed eighteenth-century converts, wrote *Kurzer Entwurf*, which at first glance appears to be a mundane, unbiased sociological description. Yet even Anton used the thin guise of science to present tiresome textual polemics. Anton’s descriptions were based on traditional religious-legal texts, rather than sociological observation. Chapter 1 promises, “What the Jews observe with regard to their homes, gardens, fields, vineyards, animals, clothes, servants and household worship.” In fact, it provides a mild, mostly textual anti-Jewish polemic. It is not based on observation in any remotely scientific sense. “How Jews raise their Children” discusses Jewish paternal-filial obligations based on classical Jewish texts; “Jewish gardens” turns out to be a chapter on biblical requirements concerning first fruits; “Jewish food,” a complaint about the many restrictions of kosher food; “Jewish furniture,” on the laws of the *mezuzah*, etc. Anton mocked the discrepancy between certain regulations and their mode of fulfillment by Jews.³² Most other works in the genre do not even pretend to be objective.

The First Wave: The Sixteenth-Century Pioneers

The first convert from Judaism whose name can be linked to the new genre was Victor von Carben (1442–1515). By the time he arrived in Cologne, the city had

permanently expelled its Jews (1426) and become a citadel of Dominican zeal. Both von Carben and Johannes Pfefferkorn appear to have been working under the influence of the Cologne Dominicans. It remains unclear how much of the work appearing under his name was written by von Carben and how much by the Dominican Ortuin Gratius. Gratius may have translated the work into Latin, or he may have played an even greater role in the creation of von Carben's book.³³ Numerous errors of basic fact which any practicing Jew would be unlikely to commit suggest that von Carben was not the sole author of the material attributed to him.³⁴ Errors of this sort are significant not only because of what they say about the extent of von Carben's involvement, but because book after book took excerpts from von Carben's work, thereby replicating the errors many times over.³⁵

The role of Dominicans as ghost authors, particularly that of Gratius, who seems to have made the writings of former Jews his special domain, became the subject of shrill controversy and caustic satire in the debate over the works of convert Johannes Pfefferkorn. During his furious struggle with Reuchlin, humanists who defended Reuchlin consistently accused Pfefferkorn of ignorance of Jewish scholarship and of serving as a shill for the Dominicans, a charge that his former Jewish coreligionists happily endorsed for their own reasons.³⁶ The controversy between Pfefferkorn and Reuchlin ensured all of Pfefferkorn's work a wide circulation among clerics and humanists, propelling the debate about the practical aspects of Jewish religious observance further into public awareness and onto the agenda of intellectual camps in German lands. Pfefferkorn continued to develop this "ethnographic" motif in the German vernacular. His *Treatise on the Jewish Confession* (1508) and *Treatise on How the Blind Jews Observe Easter* (1509) on Jewish observance of Passover represented a significant advance in the development of the genre in that each work covered a single subject.³⁷ While they appeared virtually at the same time as von Carben's books, Pfefferkorn's books were more polished, his scope more comprehensive, and his general impact greater.

Von Carben's *Opus aureum*, on the "errors" of the Jews, contained four sections; the first concentrated on the life and customs of the Jews. This section was also published separately as *De vita et moribus Iudeorum* (On the Life and Mores of the Jews).³⁸ The arrangement of von Carben's material appears to be disorganized and follows no logical order. Several introductory chapters include autobiographical material. These are followed by attacks on the Talmud, interrupted in mid-chapter by "ethnographic" material: "How Jews marry, their weddings, ring ceremony etc."³⁹ Chapter 16 of von Carben's book promises a discussion of how much the Jews hate the Christians and how they observe their Sabbath, a *non sequitur* that the text does not bridge; chapter 18 contains subjects unrelated

to one another: “The blessings of Jews before and after meals; how they divorce and take another wife.”

The concrete information provided by von Carben is so cursory and begins and ends so abruptly in mid-chapter that it is difficult to discern a coherent authorial hand behind it. The interweaving of genres and topics from one paragraph to the next can be attributed, at least to some extent, to the transitional nature of von Carben’s *oeuvre*. In some places the work broke the traditional anti-Jewish polemical mold with the innovations that came to characterize converts’ writing; in others, it remained within the boundaries of the older discourse. For example, in attempting to chart the rituals of the Jewish life cycle from birth to death, as well as the calendrical cycle from the New Year, subjects that never interested Christian polemicists in the past, von Carben’s book sketched the outline of an “ethnographic” map which was to become ever more detailed with the passing decades and ensuing centuries.

The “ethnographic” genre reached its mature form in the sixteenth century with the publication by Antonius Margaritha of *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* (The Entire Jewish Faith) in 1530, an encyclopedic presentation purporting to reveal everything about the Jewish people and their religion. While Margaritha’s book contains much derivative and inaccurate material,⁴⁰ it merits closer scrutiny for the way it exemplifies the historical and literary forces that shaped the new writing of convert-authors. The publication history of Margaritha’s book provides some clues. It must have struck a sensitive chord with readers, as it remained an enduring publishing success, a sixteenth-century bestseller. The first printing appeared on 16 March 1530; it was reprinted less than a month later, on 7 April of that year. Reprinted four times within the first year of its appearance, the book was reissued many more times over the next two centuries. Published at a turning point in Christian religious history, German history, and the history of European printing, Margaritha’s book became the model for the new genre. Margaritha’s position as “Reader of Hebrew” at Augsburg situated him in a city with one of the oldest and most aggressive publishing establishments of any German city in the sixteenth century. Margaritha’s own publisher, Heinrich Steyner, one of the most prolific of his age, published some eight hundred titles, including much Reformation-related material.⁴¹ Steyner published various gems of both Christian and convert anti-Judaica among his titles. In general, Augsburg publishers had a history of publishing anti-Jewish works.⁴² In fact, the first book of Hebraica issued by an Augsburg press was a 1509 work by Pfefferkorn; such books must have sold well, because Augsburg publishers continued to print related works thereafter. Some of the woodcuts that appeared in Pfefferkorn’s books found their way into Margaritha’s *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*, creating a sense

of continuity and kinship between the books of the converts.⁴³ The publication history of Margaritha's nicely printed, amply illustrated book implies a large and steady readership for *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*. It was not the author but the subject that accounted for the sales; Margaritha published other books which were never reprinted and remained obscure.⁴⁴

The timing of its publication offers a clue to Margaritha's intentions as well as to the spectacular notice his book received. Close to a decade had passed from the time of his conversion in Wasserburg in 1521 to the time he published *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* in 1530, so the impulse to produce this book could not have been the conversion itself. What prompted him to publish it at that particular moment? Margaritha published *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* at the height of Augsburg's preparation for the Reichstag (the Imperial Diet) scheduled to be convened there. While the Imperial itinerary shows that the emperor and his court did not usually stay longer than several days in any one location while on the road, in 1530, the emperor arrived in Augsburg on 15 June and remained through 23 November of that year.⁴⁵ The Reichstag meeting and Emperor Maximilian's heavy debts to the Fugger, the great commercial family of Augsburg, necessitated this extraordinarily long Imperial sojourn in their city.⁴⁶ The excitement surrounding the arrival of the Imperial Court proved to be a boon to the printing industry in Augsburg. It stimulated publishers to issue books of the "mirror for princes" genre, in which a wise man offered moral and political advice to eminent political leaders. Margaritha's publisher, Steyner, printed a single work addressed to princes at least three times in honor of the Imperial visit. Margaritha's book may be seen within this broader context.⁴⁷

Different from earlier polemics in that it was neither a direct polemic against the Jewish religion nor a manual for clerics to use in disputations, Margaritha's work was addressed to *Christliche Oberkeyt* (Christian political authorities), who, as Margaritha repeatedly emphasized, shaped Jewry policy. A comparison of editions of *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* shows that most substantive "improvements" in the later editions fall within the remarks addressed to the Christian authorities. In this respect, Margaritha's work marks one of the most significant transitions to occur in Jewish-Christian polemic, away from religion and theology, toward a more secular discourse centering on the political and economic place of Jews within the Christian polity.

Margaritha argued that Jewish customs and folkways, and particularly the prayer services, were animated by such deep hatred for Christians and Christianity that the presence of Jews constituted a real threat to Christian society. For Margaritha, Jewish messianism had contemporary political ramifications, inextricably woven into the fabric of the religion in such a profound way that, Marga-

ritha charged, all Jews had to be aware of them.⁴⁸ Jewish prayer books contained not only blasphemous passages, but condemnations of Christian political rulers as well. Margaritha's book translated large portions of the Jewish prayer book into German to prove his contention. The idea of translating the Jewish prayer book did not originate with Margaritha; Pfefferkorn had attempted to draw negative attention to the Jewish prayer book, and an incomplete translation had been issued in Augsburg within the previous decade.⁴⁹ But Margaritha's claim of comprehensiveness, coupled with the politically significant circumstances under which his book appeared, made it the first such text to influence public opinion at the same time as it attempted to sway the Imperial mind.

Margaritha's argument and subsequent influence went far beyond the prayer book text; in *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* he incorporated and advanced some of the tendencies already manifest in the works of von Carben and Pfefferkorn. He rendered the most mundane details of Jewish life as elements of a deliberately concealed anti-Christian complex. *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* promised to reveal the secrets of Judaism and, in doing so, redefined those secrets. He interwove biblical, rabbinic, and post-rabbinic law with local superstition and practice; he superimposed chronological and geographical planes upon one another to form a composite Judaism, presenting the whole combination as one venomous brew.⁵⁰ As son of a chief rabbi, Margaritha's claim that he was privy to the innermost secrets of Jews carried more weight and produced a more profound impact than any other work of its kind. His work contained detailed commentary on the history, meaning, and observances of every Jewish holiday, fast day, and Sabbath; on the life cycle from birth and the circumcision ceremony, to marriage and family life, to death and burial, all spiced with anecdotes from contemporary Jewish life to illustrate Margaritha's polemical point. He exposed every practice, ceremony, custom, ritual, law, and prayer, as well as the economic and social fabric of Jewish life, to the mocking scrutiny of Christians.

Margaritha's novel approach to Jewish ritual proved so successful that the attribution of hidden malevolent intent to Jewish ritual behavior became ubiquitous in books concerning Jews and Judaism throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The term *heimlich*, and its many variations used to denote secrecy, form a recurrent and striking motif in books about Jews and Judaism written by converts from Judaism, as well as by Christian Hebraists in the early modern period. The titles of innumerable works on the Jews proclaimed that each work would reveal, uncover, detect, or denude some aspect of Judaism or Jewishness that had hitherto remained veiled, covered, and arcane.⁵¹ Margaritha's attribution of secrecy to the quotidian details of Jewish life, designating the most trivial Jewish everyday behaviors as "secrets" to be probed for clandestine evil intent,

proved to be a powerful and influential new approach in the polemic of Western Christianity against Judaism and Jews.

It was because of its direct and powerful impact on Martin Luther that Margaritha's book came to play such an important role in the perception of Jews in early modern German lands.⁵² Luther repeatedly, almost obsessively, invoked the specter of Jewish perfidy concealed under a mantle of secrecy. In his later writing, he characterized Jews as the "embodiment of all that was uncanny and subversive of the social order."⁵³ He contrasted Jewish duplicity and cunning with the childlike, open, natural innocence of Christians. Like Margaritha, Luther addressed his charges not to theologians alone, but to the German princes, advancing the notion that Jewish deception constituted a political danger, not merely a theological one.

Domestication of a Polemic

Shifting its focus from the theological questions based on canonical texts to everyday ritual, the debate within Christian society over the role of Jews in the Christian world broadened considerably. Throughout the Middle Ages, the disputation between the two religions pitted scholars of one religion against scholars of the other; male elites matched wits and prooftexts with one another. The first early sixteenth-century works written in the "ethnographic" genre broke new polemical ground. Published both in Latin and in the German vernacular, such books exemplified a linguistic duality symbolic of the transition from the traditional clerical readership to a much broader one. Moving the anti-Jewish polemic out of the seminaries and into the local parishes, out of the inherent limitations of Latin and into the accessible vernacular, the combination of picture and text was calculated to convey information in a manner typical of the first decades of print, to reach new readers on the margins of literacy. Pictorial representation remained an enduring feature of the literature, as publishers continued to exploit popular interest in the secrets of Judaism.

By illuminating Jewish folk practices, rather than concentrating on legal texts, converts moved the polemic against Jews into the domestic and private sphere. For the first time, authors included women in their exposition of Jewish life.⁵⁴ In the early sixteenth century, women figured most prominently in the writings of Victor von Carben. Converted late in life, at age fifty, his wife and three children did not follow him into Christianity. In some places von Carben's remarks seem to be autobiographical. One chapter is entitled, "How many a Jew becomes a Christian when he is not hindered by his wife/in conjunction with this an explanation is offered why Jewish women are more steadfast in their faith than Jewish men."⁵⁵ Perhaps for deeply personal reasons, von Carben implicated Jewish

women in everything negative and hostile about Judaism. "How the Jews, woman and man, curse the Christians; . . . that Jewish women are much more hateful than Jewish men."⁵⁶ In the story von Carben marshaled to prove this point, a Jewish mother wanted to kill her own son when he showed signs of leaning toward Christianity.⁵⁷ In a similar vein, von Carben reported that when a Jew, deserving the death penalty because of his misdeeds, was taken to be burned, Christians sympathized and asked out of mercy, 'Do you want to be baptized and become Christian? If so, you can spare your life and stay with your wife and children.' The men look at their wives in misery, as though they might wish to do this. The women notice this and worry that out of mortal fear, the men will be swayed. They take their children under their arms and jump into the fire, like sheep who have no sense. Would you believe that the obstinacy of the women was greater than that of the men?"⁵⁸ Von Carben advanced a theory of compensatory piety to account for women's greater devotion to Judaism: "That is, women are more steadfast in their religion because they think that God scorns them. They want to make themselves appealing to God by demonstrating their steadfastness."⁵⁹

Even as his work emphasized the obduracy of Jewish women, von Carben reached out to them as having the most to gain from conversion. He appealed to Jewish women directly to convert to Christianity. The treatise that von Carben wrote on Mary reflected both the rise of Mariolatry in sixteenth-century Christian piety and von Carben's unique interest in Mary as a model for Jewish women.⁶⁰ While many other converts addressed questions that served as hallmarks of the traditional exchange between Christianity and Judaism, after the sixteenth century few devoted complete books to subjects like the virginity and sanctity of Mary. Von Carben's work on Mary is cast in the form of a classical polemic between a learned Jew and a learned Christian, but in his presentation of Mary as the ideal woman, von Carben offered her as an alternative to the role prescribed for women by Jewish society.⁶¹ He reiterated his point that Judaism held women spiritually inferior to men. In the disputation, he has the character of the learned Jew explain why Jews could never revere a woman: "We all know what troubles Eve brought into the world, how many men have been brought down by women." Victor, the learned Christian character, responds: "It is true that women are not as greatly esteemed among Jews as they are among Christians. The men have a daily prayer in which they thank God for not creating them women. Jews believe their sanctity derives from circumcision. But in baptism, all are equal. At least Jewish women should turn to Christ and his mother."⁶²

Wherever he could find a relevant place, von Carben noted the inferior standing of Jewish women in Jewish ritual. "Because women are greatly scorned, they are not worthy of pronouncing the blessing. Not only women, but unlearned

men as well must go to someone more learned to pronounce the blessing for them."⁶³ Three men eating together may say grace after meals aloud, whereas even the presence of one hundred pious women would not suffice to pronounce the benediction communally.

Von Carben's consideration of women as independent targets for conversion and his characterization of their role in Jewish life were utterly novel. Sebastian Münster had also praised the openness of Christianity to both sexes, noting that whereas Jews circumcised males only, Christians baptized both sexes.⁶⁴ Von Carben went further, urging women to take advantage of the gender difference and ease their way into Christianity; for, unlike Jewish men, they did not have a physical marker etched into their flesh that would forever remind them of their origin.

Was von Carben's approach successful? Did Jewish women convert in increasing numbers after the early sixteenth century? The few, scanty statistics on conversion, together with other sources that can shed light on this question, indicate that the frequency of female conversion did rise very slowly, until the late eighteenth century, when it escalated rapidly. Andreas Würfel, eighteenth-century chronicler of Jews in Nuremberg, cited numbers of Jewish baptisms that took place in Nuremberg. Würfel was one of the few chroniclers to provide a breakdown by gender. He recorded a total of one baptism in the entire fourteenth century, and one in the fifteenth. For the sixteenth he recorded a total of five. No women figured in his lists for these three centuries. For the seventeenth century, however, he recorded eight baptisms, including one female; and for the first half of the eighteenth century, to 1755, twenty baptisms, of which six were female. While the rise may be attributed partly to Würfel's access to records that were more contemporary with his own time, it seems clear that with an overall rise in the number of conversions, the figures for women would rise as well.⁶⁵ Deborah Hertz has shown that while the dominant pattern through the early eighteenth century was that of a male convert whose wife refused to follow suit, some women, even those married or betrothed to Jewish men, were making independent decisions to leave Judaism by the late eighteenth century.⁶⁶

The rise in the number of female converts is attributable to several factors. Despite the urging of converts like von Carben, neither the Catholic nor, subsequently, the Protestant churches made any serious efforts to reach out to Jews, not to mention Jewish women, in Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Clergymen discouraged lay people from engaging Jews in theological arguments, so any missionary efforts rested largely in the hands of individual clergymen, and therefore strictly within the male ambit. More often than not, women who converted came together with a male convert, as wives, daugh-

ters, sometimes mothers or sisters of converts. All this changed with the advent of the Pietist movement in the late seventeenth century. Pietists advanced the notion that the obligation to seek converts fell upon lay people as well as clergy. They advised Christian women to use the same strategies as their male counterparts to gradually win the trust of Jewish women and to encourage them on the path toward acceptance of Christianity.⁶⁷ The subsequent introduction of Yiddish into the Christian mission to the Jews meant that some conversion materials were now directly accessible to women. Solomon Aufhausen directed his *Jüdischer Theriak*, a defense of Judaism against the claims of the converts, to “common Jews and Jewesses,” a sign that women also needed to be fortified against Christian efforts.⁶⁸ Missionary outreach was only one factor, however. Increased contact between Jews and Christians, particularly at the extreme ends of the social scale, led to a natural increase in the number of women who left Judaism for Christianity, or for Christian men.

Von Carben pioneered not only the call to increase missionary outreach to Jewish women, but the insertion of themes about the role of Jewish women into the genre of Jewish ceremonial he helped create. The notion that Christianity held women in greater esteem became a topos in anti-Jewish conversionary writing by converts and Hebraists alike. For every Jewish custom which von Carben interpreted as hostile to Christianity, he made sure to devote a significant place to the role of women. In execrating Christians, Jews were all alike, “young and old, women and men.” In his description of the Kapparot atonement ritual, von Carben wrote of poor Jews who could not afford to buy the chickens and hens that were to serve as vehicles of vicarious atonement. Instead, they laid in wait for the first Christians to come their way, and secretly transferred their sins to them. “And Jewish women did the same with Christian women.”

The first works of Jewish ceremonial to include woodcuts and, later, copper engravings enabled readers to see the practices described. In the early sixteenth century, the works of both Pfefferkorn and Margaritha presented women in a small segmented frame, apart from the larger picture, a pictorial reflection of their segregation in public devotional services. Later illustrations kept the women in their restricted place in synagogue depictions but featured them prominently in activities that took place in other settings. The possible relationship between this fuller representation of women in Jewish life and the explosion of Yiddish minhag and devotional literature that addressed Jewish women has yet to be explored.⁶⁹ Sebastian Jugendres’s illustrated edition of convert Paul Kirchner’s book on Jewish ceremonial included many additions concerning the activities of women. Jugendres described the Torah scroll as having a parchment which could only be sewn by Jewish women and inscribed by men.⁷⁰ Scenes of matzah baking

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Fig. 12. Priestly blessings and penitential flagellation, early sixteenth-century depictions of Jewish ritual (after a similar woodcut in Pfefferkorn). Note the women and child, *lower right*. Antonius Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* (Augsburg, 1530). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

show women alongside men in active roles; holiday descriptions define women's roles clearly; some of the synagogue scenes depict figures visible in the women's balcony.⁷¹ Women were shown as full participants in depictions of business, especially moneylending, reflecting their active role in family enterprises. As converts and Hebraists drew a more complete, albeit negative, picture of Jewish life, they included Jewish women fully.

By the eighteenth century, the emphasis on women's place in the discourse of Jewish ceremonial had shifted somewhat. Many of the more comprehensive

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Fig. 13. Kapparot and other Jewish rituals. Note the prominent role of women and children. Antonius Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* (Leipzig, 1531). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

works routinely included mention of women's roles, although not always for polemical purposes. Carl Anton and Gottfried Selig placed Jewish women's status and obligations within the context of their discussion of Jewish religious practices as a matter of course.⁷² In this, they followed both their convert predecessors and their Jewish sources, rather than previous Christian readings, which tended to describe "Jewish customs" without such gendered differentiation.

The Jewish education of women provided another, related opportunity for converts and Hebraists to criticize Jews. Von Carben had been one of the first to point out the gender distinction in education, and other sixteenth-century

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Fig. 14. Matzah-baking scene. Jugendres edition of Paul Christian Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (Nuremberg, 1724). Note the prominence of Jewish women. Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

converts and missionaries castigated Jews for not providing their daughters with religious instruction equal to that of men.⁷³ Eighteenth-century convert Gütgen Steinhardin wrote an autobiographical account that provided considerably more nuance than most polemical pronouncements. She conceded that her parents did not neglect her intellectual development; they sent her to the house of a *Praeceptor* (teacher) of Hebrew. After her father's death in 1762, amidst the changes that overtook the household, she stopped attending school at age ten; her formal education ended there. After that, her mother taught her things women needed to know about running a household, including the scrupulous observance of religious precepts pertaining to women, "which included many ridiculous and stupid ceremonies." Eventually, she wrote, she came to detest the religion and, with God's grace, came to understand that he could never have given such abominable laws.

Gütgen's polemical criticism contrasts with the warm-hearted piety and manifest learning of the well-to-do seventeenth-century memoirist Glikl of Hameln

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Fig. 15. Sukkot [Tabernacles]. Johann Christoph Bodenschatz, *Aufrichtiger Teütsch Redender Hebräer* (Frankfurt, 1756). Note the inclusion of Jewish women. Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

and other seventeenth-century contemporaries, such as Bella Perlhefter of Prague. Prosperous Ashkenazic Jews in the seventeenth century educated their daughters considerably, although the curriculum for Jewish girls differed from that for boys. Gütgen complained that she learned how to read Hebrew without understanding it, and that her father taught her nothing of the religion, because it “was not the custom among Jews to teach their daughters about religion.” She recalled, “At those times I prayed, ‘Dear God, why didn’t you give the female sex precepts by which to honor you?’ Our entire practice is more like beasts than human.”⁷⁴

Convert Gottfried Selig recalled, “When I was a little boy, the entire household doted on me. Among the Jews, sons have a great advantage over daughters, as parents believe that only through the prayers of their sons can they be released from Hell. When we became ill [he and his sisters] I was treated more carefully, a special room was cleared for me and an elderly Christian woman hired to nurse me.” Selig described the great love and affection which Jewish parents showered on their children and received from them in turn, “greater than among any other people.” This is why he found it peculiar that, when it came to knowledge of God’s word, Jews kept their daughters virtually in the dark. “They rarely educate them beyond the ability to read their Judeo-German books filled with superstitious teachings. They learn to read Hebrew without comprehension. Just as male

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Fig. 16. Marriage procession. Jugendres edition of Paul Christian Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (Nuremberg, 1724). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

children were introduced to Hebrew language, Bible, and Talmud at an early age, so it is the reverse with them [females].”⁷⁵

Joseph Samuel Frey wrote of the sharp discrepancy between the education of Jewish boys and girls: “My sisters were taught to read the prayer book in the Hebrew language, i.e. to pronounce the words, but without understanding even the literal meaning of a single sentence. This alas is usually all the education which the females receive.” To supplement his argument for the mission to Jewish women, Frey contrasted this Jewish inconsistency with Christianity (which made no such discrimination between the sexes!) “Those who believe that females have souls as well as males, . . . will as much lament the neglect of their education as they will disapprove of the impious daily thanksgiving of every Jew: . . . ‘that thou hast not made me a woman.’ ”⁷⁶

Carl Anton categorized Jewish women with unschooled Jewish men and mocked their illiteracy. “The ignorant and the female sex know so little, that all they know about the ten commandments is that they are ten in number.”⁷⁷

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Fig. 17. Immersion after menstruation. Jugendres edition of Paul Christian Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (Nuremberg, 1724). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

“It is to be noted that among Jewesses there are very few who have the concept of an oath, because unfortunately, with malice aforethought and blind superstition, they are raised in ignorance.”⁷⁸ Anton provided detailed instructions for a Christian judge who needed to administer an oath to Jewish women, necessary because of their differentiated status in Jewish law. Some of his formulations are quite gender-specific. The woman should be told that the rabbis specifically warned women against swearing falsely, because a curse had been brought into the world on account of the first woman, who bound herself to Satan through a falsehood. A woman who swears falsely renews this bond with Satan. Anton enjoined that Jewish women be instructed gradually in small doses, “so that the temperament of the Jewish woman, raised in most cases in greatest ignorance, will not be overwhelmed by too many citations at one time.”⁷⁹

The full inclusion of Jewish women in the growing corpus of literature on Jewish ceremonial provides dramatic illustration of one of the paradoxes of the entire genre. On the one hand, it allowed Christians for the first time to see Jews

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Fig. 18. Divorce. Johann Christoph Bodenschatz, *Aufrichtiger teütsch redender Hebräer* (Frankfurt, 1756). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

as a living human society, rather than through the frozen veil imposed by medieval theology. On the other, it paved the way for a definition of Jewishness and its perils for Christendom that was not only theological and mutable, but intrinsic and profound, encompassing every Jew, even those engaged in the most quotidian activities.

The Structure of a New Polemic

While some convert authors wrote monographs on one or two particular laws, festivals, or rituals, most followed the structure set by the Jewish calendar year, or by life-cycle rituals. Another mode of organization involved listing the commandments, sometimes divided into positive and negative, based on the Jewish *sefer mitzvot* genre. Most of the works attempted an encyclopedic structure, with very few variations on the basic schemes of organization.⁸⁰ This loose framework could accommodate almost any material. Most authors did not limit their polemical editorializing to the introduction and conclusion but inserted their value judgments at every opportunity. These tended to fortify several basic arguments. The most pervasive involved the tendency to see anti-Christian intent or gesture in every Jewish act. Authors would also mock particular rites and rituals that appeared to have no biblical or rational basis, attempting to show that Jewish practice distorted or subverted biblical prescription.

By opening the substantive portion of the book with the solemnity of the Jewish New Year and its rituals, the penitential period that followed, and the culminating Day of Atonement, the reader was drawn into some of the richest material at the outset. Jewish penitential ritual exemplified one of the fundamental premises of the entire Christian critique: that mankind engaged in an everlasting search for expiation of sin; that Jewish ritual was a clumsy, patently foolish, and ultimately vain attempt to achieve a state of purity. Only Christ could provide true redemption from sin. Von Carben described the taking of white chickens or hens as vicarious representatives of the sinner. While his description did not overtly mock the custom, his report of how wealthier Jews could afford to give the sin-laden chickens to the poor, while the poor had no choice but to eat them, spoke for itself.⁸¹

Close to three centuries after von Carben's description, convert C. J. Friedenheim advanced the idea that Yom Kippur services, and particularly the Kapparot ritual, exemplified perfectly the futility and externality of Jewish "so-called worship" and atonement for sin. He combed Jewish sources from B. T. Yoma to the work of the fifteenth-century rabbi Jacob Moellin (1360–1427), as well as the more contemporary *Kizzur Shela"h*, to ridicule the preference for chickens with the whitest feathers as derived from pagan practices. While some details of Friedenheim's presentation are original, very little of the overall treatment of the subject changed over the course of three centuries.⁸²

In his accurate depiction of tefillin (phylacteries), which far surpassed that of the Kirchner original he edited, Sebastian Jugendres managed to inject a note of

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Fig. 20. Kapparot and penitential flagellation. Jugendres edition of Paul Christian Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (Nuremberg, 1724). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

derision on account of one detail he deemed superstitious. He noted that Jews don the tefillin first on their arm, because it carries the Hebrew letter *yod* in its corner. The head tefillin have the Hebrew letters *shin* and *daled* which spell the name of God, *Shaddai*, when combined with the *yod*. They do not don the head tefillin first, because those two letters alone spell the name of the devil, “and they don’t want to have the devil sitting on their head.”⁸³

The most common approach to Jewish ceremonial took Jewish customs or observances that were either neutral, anti-pagan in origin, or dating from the very early polemic with Christianity, and disingenuously ascribed to them a malevolent intent toward contemporary Christians. One favorite theme concerned aspects of the celebration of Purim. While Persian villain Haman clearly antedated Christianity, the holiday was long thought to be a vicarious celebration of Jewish victory over Christianity.⁸⁴ Von Carben, for example, cited Mordecai’s refusal to bow down to Haman as proof of his claim that Jews may not show any respect to men wearing the cross, including their local pastors.⁸⁵ Johann Jacob Schudt derided “the arrogance and insolence of Jews on this Purim holiday . . . Our Frankfurt Jews fast on the first day and eat little the next morning but then the

Fig. 19. Kapparot and penitential flagellation. A century after they first appeared, the exact same motifs continued to illustrate Jewish ceremonial life for Christians. Friedrich Albrecht Christiani, *Der Juden Glaube und Aberglaube* (Leipzig, 1705). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

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carousing and gluttony begin.” Schudt warned his readers that in the fifth century the Jews crucified a man in effigy, called him Haman, and then proceeded to burn the effigy. He intimated that the holiday was not as innocent as it seemed, that it held potential for Jewish anti-Christian vengeance.⁸⁶ Hosmann offered proof from fourth-century Imperial edicts that prohibited Jews from using Christian symbols in a derogatory way on Purim that Jews used Purim to vent their anger against Christians.⁸⁷ Convert Friedrich Christiani wrote a monograph devoted to Purim, in which he promised “A brief description of the Jewish ‘Shrovetide,’ how they conduct themselves in their so called fast and prayer, as well as in the gorging and drinking, for the information of all pious Christians.”⁸⁸ Passover too was always a dangerous time for Jews in medieval Christendom, as it generally coincided with Easter. Converts capitalized on the heightened interest in Jewish practices related to this holiday and put an anti-Christian face on many of its rituals.

The commemoration of Tish’a be-Av, on which Jews fasted and mourned the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Titus, provided another popular polemical subject, since the ancient Roman Empire could easily be transmuted symbolically into the Christian Holy Roman Empire. Von Carben described the day of mourning with all its observances and then assured his readers that the Jews directed their curses not merely against Titus but against the apostles and the entire Christian community. The prayers of consolation recited on that day and the expressions of hope for the rebuilding of the Temple led naturally to a discussion of the subversive messianic goals of Jews.⁸⁹ Converts interpreted any commemoration of deliverance from a former foe of the people of Israel as having the covert intent of liberating Jews from their current oppressors.

Converts eagerly seized upon laws that required social and religious separation of Jews from pagans and non-Jews, such as *yayn nesech* (the prohibition against consuming wine produced and handled by non-Jews), as examples of the xenophobic tendencies of Jewish law. Von Carben reported that when a Christian, even a child, touches wine with his little finger, the Jews say, “Moses forbade us to drink wine with Christians.” Von Carben accused the Jews of lying, because there were no Christians in Moses’ time. It was a rabbinic, not a biblical prohibition, von Carben affirmed. If a Jew admitted to having broken this Talmudic law, he would be excommunicated until he undertook a difficult penance, and even so, he would remain an outcast, along with his family, for the rest of his life.⁹⁰

Fig. 21. Jew wearing tefillin. Carl Anton, *Einleitung in die rabbinischen Rechte* (Brunschweig, 1756). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

The literature also attempted to demonstrate in overwhelming, graphic detail the assertion by generations of Christian theologians that Judaism was not a real religion but a *superstitio*, a mere superstition, a counterfeit religion.⁹¹ Convert Friedrich Albrecht Christiani divided his material into “Glaube,” biblically based beliefs and practices, and “Aberglaube,” folk beliefs and superstitions. Several early eighteenth-century authors did not even bother with such distinctions. Convert Johann Christoff Lewien, wrote a “Treatise concerning Jewish fables and superstitions.” Lewien’s treatise described only customs dealing with the time between birth and circumcision. Lewien promised to describe the ceremonies accurately, as Jews actually observed them, so that Christians could rejoice that the coming of Jesus had superseded these laws. At the same time, he refuted some of the baser Christian opinions concerning these ceremonies, including the mistaken belief that Jews needed Christian blood to perform their ceremonies.⁹² Convert Friedrich Wilhelm Reich published a work with an identical title, as did convert Magnus Christian, formerly David Meyer, who limited his “treatise on Jewish fables and superstitions” to Jewish practices concerning illness, death, burial, and mourning.⁹³ Christian Gottlieb Seeligman’s monograph on Jewish wedding and holiday festivities was similarly intended to provide examples of superstitious behavior, to serve as a warning to the readers, who were exhorted to beseech God to protect them from error and superstition.⁹⁴ The “superstitions” of the Jews extended into dozens of hostile anti-Christian gestures, both mundane and menacing, from the petty to the monstrous.

“Jews hate the cross so much they will avoid passing it in the field or on the street. They call the cross *zelem* [the form] in Hebrew, and when they pass it, they curse.”⁹⁵ Converts combined genuine, popular anti-Christian material, of the *Toledot Yeshu* type, with material that did not have genuine Christian animus, so that even mundane practices seemed more threatening.

Most of the converts stopped short of the worst of such false accusations: namely, that Jews murdered Christians for various ritual needs. In fact, the assumption that converts served as the agents of revelation of Jewish secrets was so deeply ingrained in the minds of the Christian audience, that some Christian scholars adduced the silence of the converts as proof that the suspected activity could not have occurred. Silence thus became a potent weapon in the writing of converts. If a convert did not reveal a secret, it did not exist. Margaritha’s *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* carefully denied the blood libel by giving detailed ingredients for baking matzah, which may contain “only flour and water, neither salt nor fat may be added.” Margaritha did not intend merely to share a recipe, but to confute the blood libel. He emphasized that he had personally participated in these preparations, deriving his information from firsthand ex-

perience. Similarly, when Selig gave the recipe for the powder used to stanch the bleeding after circumcision of a child, he intended to confirm his argument that Judaism may be superstitious, but it was not vicious. "It is manufactured several ways—of dragonblood, red roses, *Boles* and *Terra Sigillata*; some use wormwood and others ground burned eggshells."⁹⁶ Christians accepted the claims of converts more readily, because their work was otherwise full of hostility and bent upon the exposure of everyday secrets. Andreas Osiander's rejection of the myth that Jews needed Christian blood included, among his proofs, the statement that "Baptized Jews and Jews shunned by their brethren do not report ritual murders even though they have every reason to hate their fellow Jews. Pfefferkorn and the friars in Cologne would have raised this charge of ritual murder if it had any grounding in reality. Doctor Paul Riccius, who has converted from Judaism to evangelical Christianity, denies that Jews have ever practiced ritual murders."⁹⁷

A small number of converts did report practices in which Jews reportedly used Christian blood for ritual or magical purposes. These include Samuel Friedrich Brenz, Dietrich Schwab, Ernst Ferdinand Hess, and Paul Christian Kirchner.⁹⁸ Already in the early seventeenth century, convert Christian Gerson inveighed against them. "Many of these writers have not read the Jewish books themselves, as they could neither read nor understand them. They did not scruple to toss in some falsehoods, as though this or the other were written in Jewish books, while the truth is otherwise. This serves more to strengthen the Jewish faith than to weaken it, as the Jews only mock them."⁹⁹ Gerson singled out Luther's work, the "Wittenberg Schemhamphoras," as well as convert Hess' *Juden Geissel*, as examples of polemically counterproductive anti-Jewish books. Malicious falsehoods could never serve as the basis of religious dispute, he argued. Debate with Jews ought to center on true knowledge of their books. Only positive and truthful means of persuasion would result in sincere conversions.

In his *Jüdischer Theriak*, a refutation of convert Samuel Friedrich Brenz's *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlangen-Balg*, in which Brenz accused Jews of secretly using the most scurrilous terms to refer to Jesus, Solomon Zvi Aufhausen asked with affected naiveté, "We know that these days many Jews are converting to Christianity. Why would we, even amongst ourselves, curse the Christian messiah with impunity, when to do so would put us in grave danger?"¹⁰⁰ Although most converts did not indulge in the ultimate libel, their writings, combined with preexisting popular belief in Jewish magical powers, helped to sustain the aura of danger, fear, and loathing surrounding everything Jewish in the Christian imagination. The combination and range of negative insinuations in the works of Jewish ceremonial, ostensibly devoted to a neutral exposition, made the religion of the Jews appear terribly ominous.

REPRESENTATION AND RIVALRY

Jewish Converts and Christian Hebraists

No Christian can experience what the Jews do or do not believe.

Gerson, Juden Thalmud

I say this without flattery: one out of a hundred born Jews do not have the scholarly knowledge of these things [Jewish ceremonial] as you do.

They would do well to sit with me at the feet of Rabbi Mayer

[Johann Friedrich Mayer, a Christian] to study.

Christoph Wallich, Die Mayerische Synagoga

At the same time that converts from Judaism created a literature of Jewish ceremonial, Christian Hebraists in German lands, spurred on by the accomplishments of their Italian competitors, turned to the study of Hebrew and the Jewish religion.¹ German humanist Johannes Reuchlin's role in the disputation regarding convert Johannes Pfefferkorn's assessment of Jewish books and religious practices constituted, in retrospect, a first battle to demarcate the lines of hegemony over knowledge of Jews and Judaism between a converted Jew and a Christian Hebraist scholar. Converted Jews claimed knowledge of Judaism and its texts as a birthright. Compelled to traduce that very birthright in order to claim their place within the Christian world, they wrote books motivated by the need to expose, or invent, the dark side of Judaism. Christian Hebraists, by contrast, had been trained in the rigors of Greek and Latin grammar and Christian theology. By their painstaking but thorough acquisition of Hebrew, they intended not so much to discredit Judaism as to use its resources to enrich their study of Christian texts. While none acted out of a philo-Judaic motivation, the overt polemicism and sloppy methodology that characterized so many works of the converts contrasted with the scholarly accuracy and aura of professionalism in the works of the Hebraists.²

The early German Hebraists concentrated on producing rudimentary lexicographical tools for the study of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud. Johannes Reuchlin and Sebastian Münster, among the first serious Christian Hebraists in German lands, both published lexicons and grammars of Hebrew and Aramaic.³ At the same time, François Tissart's *De Judaeorum ritibus compendium* (1508), one of the earliest scholarly Christian works on Jewish rites and rituals, heralded an intense and active interest by German successors, such as Thomas Mürner.⁴

In the early seventeenth century, Christian authorship of Jewish "ethnography" took a quantum leap forward with the publication of Johannes Buxtorf's monumental and influential *Synagoga Judaica (Juden Schul)*. The first comprehensive effort by a truly competent Christian Hebraist, it provided the foundation for the works of Schudt, Ulrich, and Eisenmenger. Buxtorf himself told a scholarly correspondent that facilitating Christian access to the Hebrew Bible and its commentaries was the most important priority in his life's work; he would not abandon it to promote openly anti-Jewish agendas.⁵ Buxtorf left his most polemical anti-Jewish work unpublished.

Despite its high level of scholarship, Buxtorf's *Synagoga Judaica* could never quite achieve an objective stance toward its subject. Producers of Christian Hebraist literature did not relate to the material as academics might to any scholarly subject; they saw themselves engaged in "revealing, uncovering, unveiling" something which had been concealed, often with hints of sinister doings. Wilhelm Schickard of Tübingen wrote in his *Jus regium hebraeorum* that he had "plucked his information from rabbinic darkness and exposed it to light."⁶ Buxtorf advertised that *Synagoga Judaica* would expose customs, beliefs, and ceremonies practiced by Jews in secret, hidden from Christian eyes.

Secrecy and Curiosity

The hunger of the public for more material on the inner, or "secret," life of Jews seemed insatiable. What had begun as a theological polemic converged with what Hans Blumenberg called *curiositas*, European intellectual movements that reached out, beyond traditional boundaries. While in classical thought, *curiositas* denoted a sin against traditional modes of cognition, in modern thought, *curiositas* refers to the condition that drives people to re-examine accepted truths, to reach out to nature, to the world outside, to travel and see the unknown. Quests for knowledge, motivated by *curiositas*, formed one of the essential prerequisites for European modernity.⁷ Seeking to study more "exotic" societies, some Europeans of the early modern period found them in their nation's new colonies, Germans in their native Others. The literature of Jewish ceremonial, with its

ever more detailed descriptions of exotic Jewish practices, appealed to the curiosity of the reader. Kirchner presumed “*der Curisité*” on the part of the reader; Johann Jacob Schudt pointedly called his book *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, “Jewish Curiosities,” and Gottfried Selig wrote “only for readers who are interested in the most outstanding ‘*Merkwürdigkeiten*’ (curiosities) . . . lingering on matters my well-wishers have expressed the desire to know, superstitions and customs.”⁸

In the early eighteenth century, convert Christoph Wallich praised his patron for building a great university and including in its curriculum “pure theology, the Holy Tongue, and Jewish Antiquities.” Wallich, a most enterprising convert, persuaded his patron, the Count Palatin Johann Friedrich Mayer, that in order to really distinguish himself in the field of Jewish “curiosities,” he should spare no expense to build a full replica of a synagogue. It should be “stocked with a variety of Judaic rarities, everything that belongs in a synagogue, not only to please his own curiosity and for the entertainment of his friends, but primarily to demonstrate from all the accoutrements of Jewish worship, that a Jew today is left only with circumcision and dead letters.”⁹ The crowning glory of the synagogue would be an authentic Torah scroll, with all its appurtenances, apparently written by Wallich himself. Wallich boasted several times that this model synagogue was much cleaner and lighter than any actual synagogue that could be found among the Jews, affirming the long-standing Christian association of the synagogue with darkness and malevolence.¹⁰ Wallich set out to demonstrate to all what others kept hidden, the actual practice of Jewish “superstition.” Hired to teach university students the meaning of Scriptures, the cantillation of the Torah, the role of the cantor in the prayer service, along with a clarification of all Jewish *minhagim*, Wallich was inspired by the curriculum to produce his own volume on Jewish synagogue ceremonial and customs.

As the new genre of Jewish ceremonial matured and stabilized, the field became saturated. Each new author attempted to discover virgin scholarly territory, so that the range of subjects in the field grew in depth and breadth. As a result of the competition for more original material, most converts included apologies for the appearance of “yet another” book on this subject as a matter of course. They frankly stated that a great deal of similar material had already seen the light of day. In fact, their Jewish contemporaries felt inundated by the torrent of attacks in print. Solomon Zvi Aufhausen complained that Brenz’s book, “with [its] many pages,” appeared in thousands of copies. Even if Aufhausen exaggerated the numbers, his impression of being besieged reflects historical reality. The numerous and vigorous Jewish defenses against the charges leveled by converts in their books testifies to Jewish awareness and defensiveness in the face of this polemical onslaught. Even Christian readers grew weary in the face of

the sheer amount of very similar material being directed at them. Hebraists also competed among themselves. See, for example, the introduction of Bertling to Anton's *Kurzer Entwurf* (second edition). Although the introduction to Bodenschatz's *Kirchliche Verfassung* discussed the very question he wished to address in his introduction, Bertling noted, the subject had not been exhausted, and he would proceed with his plans. Few authors had any qualms about recycling the same material in slightly different packaging and publishing it anew.¹¹

Although converts claimed firsthand knowledge of the customs and laws they described, Christian Hebraists often disdained their vaunted expertise. They realized that many of the converts fell short of even minimal competence in theology and religious law. Errors and inaccuracies proliferated in books written by converts. These mistakes often offered an opportunity for Hebraists to elevate their scholarly preeminence at the expense of the converts' experience. Buxtorf's *Synagoga Judaica*, based primarily on Jewish sources, borrowed heavily from Margaritha and Hess, although he seldom acknowledged his debt to the latter.¹² Each of these converts provided opportunity for the Christian Hebraists who followed them to refine and correct their work. Margaritha's celebrated work was riddled with errors, as was that of Paul Kirchner.¹³ Wagenseil noted Margaritha's tendency to err in describing works he had apparently never seen.¹⁴ Wagenseil's fellow Hebraist, Christian Reineccius, went so far as to issue a newly edited version of Margaritha's *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*. Sebastian Jugendres used the weaknesses he found in Kirchner's original book to demonstrate the superiority of academically trained clergymen over untutored converts when it came to Jewish knowledge. For example, when Kirchner referred to the months of the Hebrew festivals with their Western approximate equivalents, using May instead of the Hebrew *Sivan*, August for *Av*, to suit the expectations of Christian readers, Jugendres corrected him sharply: "Ist falsch."¹⁵ Hebraists tidied up the converts' style, corrected errors of fact, and added new categories where omissions seemed blatant. They added footnotes, glosses, and indexes, academic apparatus that lent the works a patina of scholarly rigor. The Hebraists competed for a territory to which the converts had staked a claim based on natural advantage.¹⁶

Despite their competition for hegemony over Jewish material, practical considerations often forced Hebraists and converts to work together in an uneasy alliance. Hebraists were the prime consumers of the specialized knowledge that converts purveyed; they needed both converts and Jews to authenticate their book knowledge with experience from the field. Converts needed the Hebraists to polish their language, edit their unprofessional writing, and shape their material into a credible product. Many such collaborations flourished, some originating with a Jewish informant turned Christian, some casual, and some long

term.¹⁷ Letters from the Wagenseil collection in Leipzig illuminate the relationship between this scholar and his informants, and the competition between the Jews and converts among them. Wagenseil's correspondence with the Jew Ber (Dov) Perlhefter and members of his family dates from the second half of the seventeenth century.¹⁸ He paid his informants by providing comfortable room and board during their stay in Altdorf, as reported in a letter by one converted informant, Christian Zarfo of Jena, in 1675: "I remember well what I received in the home of my master, my teacher [Wagenseil] in food and drink and all good things; we lacked for nothing. . . . The studies I have been pursuing until now, the gospels which were written with the holy spirit, called *evangelium*, I have proven that they are Talmudic words spoken in parable as the ancients, the blind Hebrews (*ha-ivri'im ha-ivrim*) were wont to do. . . . I beseech you, master and teacher, write to me concerning the great work *Shiltei ha-gibborim*, and concerning Rabbi Dov [Ber Perlhefter], who has not attained the good (*Dov asher lo tov*), . . . would that his heart become like mine, at one with the trinitarian bond that will never be undone [that he convert to Christianity], and I pray that the triune God will illuminate his eyes."¹⁹

Zarfo's letter sheds light on another aspect of the relationship between Hebraists, converts, and professing Jews; both Hebraists and converted Jews exerted pressure on their Jewish colleagues to convert. When Ber Perlhefter proved resistant to their exhortations, Wagenseil apparently decided to try and entice his learned wife. Ber, who resided in Altdorf while his wife remained with her family, wrote her a letter, letting her know that his employer, Wagenseil, had requested that she join the household for a celebration on the forthcoming Tuesday (12 December 1674). Despite the fact that such a call from an employer must have been more a summons than an invitation, Bella Perlhefter refused Wagenseil directly. In literate Hebrew she protested, "For, as heaven is my witness, it is impossible to come to my husband in Altdorf now. I have a small child. With whom should I leave him, who will be responsible to watch him? And if I carry him with me, the cold is great, the snow is high and a tiny child cannot tolerate the cold, for he or she has not been out of the house from the day of his or her birth and is not accustomed to the cold. [Mrs Perlhefter changed genders in mid sentence.] And third, my child is small and cries often, in the manner of all little children, and I know that my lord [Wagenseil] is accustomed to peace and quiet, and how can I come before him with the cries of the little one?" She concluded with a vague promise that she would go one day when the time was ripe.²⁰ Since she wrote the letter a day before the party, her refusal would have arrived too late. Wagenseil was not deterred, and he later found another reason to invite the learned Mrs. Perlhefter to visit him. In another letter, this time addressed to her

husband in Altdorf, she again begged off. "And that you have further written to me about coming to your place, to teach dance to the only, wonderful, daughter of your master the great scholar, whose name escapes me, may God watch over her, it is puzzling to me that you add, 'and to teach her to play the zither,' for you know that from the day of my mother's death, I took an oath not to play any musical instrument, and now how can I violate my oath? But it is possible that sometime I will come to teach her dance."²¹

What conclusions can we draw from this correspondence? Mrs. Perlhefter (whose husband, Ber Eybeschuetz, adopted her family name after their marriage) managed numerous business affairs and communal matters notwithstanding her children, yet she refused to travel from the Jewish community of Schnaittach to Altdorf. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, Altdorf boasted a proud university and the presence of a great Hebraist, but it had no Jewish community of its own. The Jews employed by Wagenseil as tutors and informants faced both subtle and overt pressures to convert to Christianity. Had Bella arrived in time for the party of 12 December, Wagenseil might have pressured her to spend Christmas in his household. The warm festivities associated with this holiday would have been the best enticement for Wagenseil's purpose. While some of these assumptions remain on the level of conjecture, Christians showed a demonstrable interest in Jewish women as potential converts. Conversionary pressure informed the relationship between the "best" of the Christian Hebraists and their Jewish informants and introduced considerable tension into the relationship between those Jews who had converted and those who refused to join their ranks.

The Jugendres Edition of Kirchner

A close reading of two editions of an exemplary instance of the literature of Jewish ceremonial, Paul Kirchner's opus, provides a perfect demonstration of the contest between converts and Christian Hebraists. In 1717, Kirchner published *Jüdisches Ceremoniel*, a brief, insubstantial, inaccurate, and biased survey of Jewish practices, which added nothing new to the discourse. The reworking of the text by an amateur Hebraist, Sebastian Jugendres, resulted in a different book, over twice the length and very different in tone from the Erfurt original. A close comparison of the two texts reveals the fascinating interplay between the book of the convert and that of the Hebraist.²²

Kirchner's own brief introduction contained autobiographical facts concerning his early life, his other works, and his intention to write a book that would lead Jews to conversion. He explained that his inability to publish an earlier work led him to produce this one, for which it proved easier to find financial backing.²³ In all these elements, Kirchner's introduction conformed to the standard

for the genre. When Jugendres published his revised edition some years later, in 1724, he omitted Kirchner's introduction and substituted his own, signalling his intention to pursue a different agenda and remake the book to suit his own ends.

In his introduction Jugendres stressed the secret and impenetrable nature of Jewish observance. But he turned the tables on converts from Judaism, saying that while they claimed to provide the best information, they in fact participated in the deception, offering their readers only a "Fuchs Belz" (a phony substitute). Admirers of Kirchner's original book should be aware, warned Jugendres, that Kirchner himself passed over certain matters in silence, that new material remained to be revealed. Jugendres substantially revised or rewrote some chapters and annotated all of them, listing an impressive array of sources he consulted to ascertain the accuracy of Kirchner's original. He commissioned a set of elaborate copperplate illustrations for his edition, often set inside the synagogue of Fürth, the most important Jewish community near Nuremberg. In a battle for hegemony over Jewish secrets, Jugendres asserted the superiority of professional Christian scholars over the amateurs whose sole claim to authority was that they had once been Jews.

Jugendres's edition refined, corrected, and softened Kirchner's coarse language, orthography, and grammar, as well as his scornful tone toward all things Jewish. Where Kirchner opened his work by disdaining the daily morning prayer of the Jews: "Now they shake their heads; now they shut their eyes, now they move with their bodies to and fro; now they hop with their two feet, as they lift their bodies heavenward, like geese," Jugendres opened his work with an almost lyrical description of the rounds of the *shulkloppfer*, the synagogue knocker, who made his rounds with a wooden mallet in the early hours of winter days, as pious wives woke their sleeping husbands and parents roused their sons for morning services. Where Kirchner provided a tired litany of inaccuracies concerning tefillin, referring to them as the *zehn Geboth* (ten commands), together with a very cursory description of the wool spun by Jewish women for their husbands' tzizit, Jugendres offered a long and detailed disquisition complete with illustrated diagrams. Kirchner's presentation played to the usual clichés about Jewish life, eschewing depth, concern for accuracy, and sensitivity to telling detail; Jugendres attempted to create a real world. Neither succeeded fully. Kirchner's desire to fulfill negative expectations completely distorted his description, while Jugendres slanted his much richer picture of Judaism because of his need to reconcile images of contemporary Jews with those culled from biblical and other texts, and it remained incomplete on subjects for which he lacked firsthand information.

Jugendres omitted some of Kirchner's frequent insulting and hostile comments. For example, where Kirchner entitled a chapter "On Jewish Usury and

Deceit," Jugendres edited out the word "deceit."²⁴ He struck out entire sentences such as Kirchner's statement, "When Jews finish praying, they kiss the door and ask God to allow them to deceive Christians in business," and "What great foolishness the Jews practice on Easter, one could write entire comedies if one wanted to sacrifice much time to such a matter." Where Kirchner caricatured the customary "bidding war" for various synagogue honors as a raucous market unbecoming a house of worship, Jugendres characterized the same proceedings as good-natured fun intended to raise funds for the synagogue. Kirchner described a Talmudic tale as "a rabbinic fable or lie"; Jugendres included the story but characterized it as a parable intended to encourage moderation.²⁵ In places, he added material that seemed to testify to genuine piety among Jews. For example, he described meeting a Jew in Moravia so immersed in his prayers that he did not acknowledge Jugendres's presence. Jugendres recognized this concentration as a sign of devotion during prayer; it did not distress him. He reported with admiration that some pious Jews stood in place and prayed for twenty-seven hours without interruption on Yom Kippur, unlike the other literature of Jewish ceremonial, which tended to reserve the most derisive assessment for Jewish penitential rites.²⁶ In his discussion of Purim, Jugendres added that Jews distributed alms even to the Christian poor, reversing the conventional Christian depiction of the holiday.²⁷ Jugendres occasionally distinguished between the conduct of Jews from one locale to another, a rarity in literature which tended to view Jews and Judaism monolithically. He spoke of the respect accorded to their synagogue by the Jews of Fürth, who would not use a house of worship as shelter from heat or rain, or conduct their business there, in contrast to the Portuguese Jews of Hamburg and Amsterdam in their "*Christen-Tempel*."²⁸ Jugendres contrasted Kirchner's brief, faulty discussions with his own more scientific approach, enriched by his own observations of Jewish life in neighboring Fürth. "The Jewish synagogue must be the highest . . . as in Fürth, not far from Nuremberg, a high pole was raised over the synagogue to offset the fact that the Jew Joel's house surpassed it in height."²⁹

Yet, for all this, Jugendres's account of Jews and Judaism contained much negative material. He conveniently adduced other authorities for negative readings of Jewish lore. Margaritha served as his source for understanding the reasons why Jews have been so hated by Christians. It came about, he reiterated, due to the anti-Christian intent of prayers like *alenu*, originally composed with no such design but now abused by Jews who added words which lent the prayer an entirely new meaning. Jugendres took the entire section directly from Margaritha, boldly printing the offending words "that they worship vanity and nought" as they appeared in Margaritha's German translation, a sign that he was aware of the

inflammatory nature of the material.³⁰ Sometimes he excised Kirchner's disdainful remarks only to substitute his own. Remarking on how carefully Jews pronounced the blessing before partaking of food, he added, "Ach, if they would only see something besides the external work, and the power of such a prayer would reside in something other than mere words."³¹ In describing the *shofar*-blowing ritual, Jugendres invoked Numbers 10:9, a verse that described the blowing of the trumpets before going to war, and then commented: "If *shofar* blowing is put into its proper context, it is clear that the very essence of the blowing is open hostility to enemies."³² He cited R. Bahya on the meaning of circling the *bima* seven times on *Simhat Torah*: "It expresses the hope that the walls of Edom will tumble down."³³ Concerning Jewish card playing on Christmas Eve, he claimed that "Jews intend to insult our Redeemer with this playing" and advised the authorities to forbid it.³⁴

Although Jugendres exercised great editorial authority, inserting and excising material as he saw fit, he did not shrink from leaving the most damaging libelous charge of all those that Kirchner had included in the book: that Jews used the blood of innocent Christian children for their ritual needs. Jugendres cited Kirchner's entire section verbatim, before acknowledging its falsity in a footnote. The passage is significant both for its place in Kirchner's original text and for Jugendres's marginal refutation. The text of Kirchner's original:

When a Jewish woman has difficulty giving birth, she is given preserved blood, which comes from an innocent murdered Christian child, as it is their barbaric custom to massacre during their Easter days in inhuman fashion. . . . They take a drop and say, "It is oxblood," but I think that some Jews believe it must be Christian blood, referring to the time they called out concerning our messiah, "His blood be on us and on our children's children". . . . When they notice that a person seems willing to leave their superstition and convert from Judaism to Christianity, then they are collectively guilty and conspire to eliminate that person, saying: "his blood should be an atonement for all of us Jews."

It remains incontrovertibly true that it must be none other than Christian blood, one of the proofs being that they cannot obtain it except from the *Obersten Land-Rabbiner* (highest rabbi in the land) who distributes it with greatest caution. It is used only in cases of most exceptional need; moreover it is only given to someone with highest guarantees who is willing to put up all his possessions and goods as security; all this, so that if someone should inform them that he wishes to betray this matter to the

Christians, they can seize all this man's fortune. From this it is easily deduced that it is nothing but Christian blood.³⁵

In a lengthy footnote to this text, Jugendres mocked Kirchner's charge.

With this accusation the author "could have remained at home." First, he himself acknowledged that he didn't see it [this practice]. It is easy enough to conjecture from secrecy that they had such a thing. Brenz has already come forward with this accusation in his *Schlangen-Balg*, but it must be said that his allegation rests solely on conjecture, as Samuel Zevi [Aufhausen] has already refuted, and our holy Wagenseil never maintained anything other than that it was a false accusation. Whoever is interested in researching the accusation further would do well to recall the story that took place in Danzig, where a dead Christian child was thrown into a Jewish home. . . . Hundreds remained in mortal danger until God revealed the identity of the true criminals. So it appears that this new convert only wants to sell Christians "a foxes tail," and by uncovering such unfounded secrets, wants to gain their love. Had he only known that it would not go with them as he wished, and that he would still need his old co-religionists, he would have taken better care here.³⁶

By undermining the text with a footnote only, Jugendres achieved multiple goals.³⁷ He retained the sensationalist power of Kirchner's anti-Jewish "revelation" within the text of his authoritative work, while maintaining his own scholarly reputation by providing a "learned" corrective.³⁸ This variation on the medieval canard comes as a surprise in Kirchner's book, although it did not originate with Kirchner. Ernst Ferdinand Hess, Samuel Friedrich Brenz, and Dietrich Schwab, among other converts, preceded him. In Kirchner's narrative it does not appear where the reader might expect to find it—namely, in the section on Passover rituals—but in an otherwise innocuous chapter on Jewish birthing practices. The deceptively casual inclusion of this material in a discussion of childbirth accomplished several goals. It transformed a seemingly universal and elemental human experience into a sinister Jewish ritual, dehumanizing an aspect of Jewish life most likely to generate sympathy for the common bonds of all humanity. By relating ritual murder to childbirth, Kirchner placed this alleged "crime" against Christendom squarely within the ambit of Jewish women. For the Jewish child to be born, a Christian had to be murdered, implicating Jewish children from birth, indirectly but powerfully, in the crime of murder. Moreover, placing the libel in the "domestic" section of the narrative transformed a "crime" committed by a

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 22. Childbirth. Jugendres edition of Paul Christian Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (Nuremberg, 1724). Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

conspiracy of Jewish rabbis from remote locations around the world into a crime which occurred regularly in every Jewish home. The subtle shift of context from canonical prooftexts to Jewish private spaces in the literature of Jewish ceremonial moved Jewish women and children to the center of Christian anti-Jewish animus.

In the concluding portions of his life-cycle descriptions, Kirchner also invested Jewish illness, death, and funerary rites with anti-Christian meaning, so that the circle of Jewish life as “anti-Christian” would remain unbroken. Kirchner described a sickroom scene, as a visiting rabbi prayed for atonement with the patient: “Then he would designate a witness and tell the sick person to repeat the following words: ‘Be my witness that the evil spirit or Satan leave me no peace; they entice me to become a damned Christian so that I and my soul can be saved. Be my witness that I do not wish to do it, that he should not persuade or mislead me even if he appears to me ten or more times per hour.’” Describing the “hesitating will” of the Jew, always tempted by the prospect of conversion, a temptation which, Kirchner imagined, grew stronger in the final moments of

life, he concluded that Jews “believe the spirit of God to be the devil, although I prefer to believe that God is sending a message through the Holy Ghost.”³⁹

Convert Selig reported that a very sick Jew must *mosser moda’ah* (formally renounce) the Devil, before he lost consciousness, because Jews believed that the Devil sat by the sickbed and tried to persuade the sick to reject the God of Israel and deny Him.⁴⁰ He cited Pastor Lochner of Fürth, who observed that numerous times when Jews languished on their deathbeds, rabbis or other Jews in attendance would whisper something into the ear of the dying. Whether it was about Jesus or not, he could not confirm.⁴¹ Selig editorialized, “We cannot refrain from divulging our thoughts regarding this prayer: that the rabbis instituted it against our Savior, so that should any Jew have a thought about Christ in his last moments, they have this method of releasing themselves from that thought. For them, Christ is associated with the Devil.” Selig recorded a tradition he heard from a Moravian Jew who had converted to Christianity. The informant claimed to have seen with his own eyes that when a Jewish child died, a wooden knife and fork were placed in the coffin; he did not know the reason for this. Bodenschatz in a similar report explained that Jews placed a wooden fork in the hand of the dead “as a weapon of anger against those who had wronged him, along with a lock, to symbolize that the dead were utterly closed off from the living.”

Converts portrayed Jews as being locked in constant struggle between the deepest instinct to convert and the influence of demonic Jewish forces which pulled them back, so that even customs utterly innocent of polemical intent could be depicted as anti-Christian. In his autobiography, Selig recalled an incident that showed his awareness of the deeply rooted notion among Christians that Jews promoted anti-Christian thoughts even in the moments when death was imminent:

When we [my sisters and I] became ill . . . an elderly Christian woman was hired to nurse me. Suddenly, my father was arrested. We later found out that . . . this terrible woman claimed to the authorities that when I lay close to death, my father put a stone and a knife on the bed near me, saying if I should happen upon the crucified Christ on my way to eternity, I should use these tools to wound him. . . . One would think such an absurd charge would automatically be dismissed, but it cost my father dearly to defend himself. He had to send to the university for their experts to pronounce an opinion whether the accusation was false or not. The woman died before the proceedings were finished.

But the question remains. Could the woman have invented such a charge purely out of her own imagination, or must there be some truth to it? It

could not have been completely invented. . . . It cannot be denied that Jews have all manner of superstitions and awful customs when it comes to burial of their dead.⁴²

Selig objected precisely to this distortion of “foolish customs” so that they looked like murderous crimes. This episode, and many others like it, heightened the awareness of this son of an eighteenth-century Jewish court family of the way in which prejudiced minds turned innocent gestures into horrible misdeeds; he was determined to draw the line between foolish customs and their sinister “implications.” He ended his discussion of Jewish funerary practices by referring to a seemingly unrelated topic: “We consider this a suitable place to complete our rebuttal of the groundless accusation that Jews in certain cases needed Christian blood.”⁴³ After this rebuttal, Selig searched for an explanation of the true origin of this accusation and found it precisely in the trivialities of Jewish ritual life. “In our consideration, it is related to the secrecy and the secretive conduct of the Jews during their strange rituals, for example the care they take with the preparation of their Passover cakes . . . the red wine they drink at night by the meal, which they also sprinkle on the ground, their hanging amulets around the neck of brand new mothers which they guard carefully and never open. . . . We declare this accusation, together with sainted Luther, to be false and the work of fools.”⁴⁴

Closing the Circle: Converts versus Hebraists in the Age of Enlightenment

By the mid-eighteenth century, a new generation of more sophisticated converts began to challenge the hegemony of the Christian Hebraists. The publication of several new works in the first half of the eighteenth century by Christian Hebraists provoked innovative responses by former Jews. Johann Andreas Eisenmenger’s notorious *Entdecktes Judenthum* (Judaism Revealed), released for publication in 1711, and Georg Bodenschatz’s *Kirchliche Verfassung der heutigen Juden* (*The Religious Condition of Contemporary Jews*) came in for sharp criticism from some prominent and articulate converts from Judaism.

A consummate Hebraist, Eisenmenger applied the most malevolent and sinister readings to Jewish texts; he produced an enduring monument to anti-Jewish distortion. As historian Jacob Katz has noted, Eisenmenger did not fabricate his sources; he quoted accurately and translated literally. Nevertheless, his tendentious method of extracting damaging excerpts did not result in an accurate portrayal of the world of Jews who lived by these sources, either in terms of their beliefs or their actions. Eisenmenger read the sources through the prism of as-

sumptions which formed the bedrock of medieval Christian anti-Judaism; Jews read and interpreted their sources very differently.⁴⁵

While the very title of the work purporting to tell the secrets of Judaism situated it within the tradition inaugurated by converts from von Carben to Christians, Eisenmenger did not base *Entdecktes Judenthum* on the rituals and customs of Jews. Instead, he went back to the classical prooftexts, placing the Talmud at the center, along with myriad other Jewish texts, popular and obscure, revered and neglected, legal and narrative, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Aramaic, completing the work of his medieval predecessors with far greater Hebraic competence than they ever mustered. He read every fable and commentary literally and asserted that Jews esteemed all these texts as much as the Bible itself. Like the medieval disputants, Eisenmenger never claimed impartiality. He announced on the title page that Jews remained blind to the truth of Christian doctrines, and that they regularly blasphemed and insulted all the *sancta* of Christianity in the most horrible ways. Eisenmenger's Judaism inculcated deceit and hatred for all human beings, Christians in particular. His chapter headings on the questions of whether Jews were permitted to kill Christians, whether Christians should trust Jewish doctors, on Jewish attitudes toward Christian authorities, and on Jewish deceitfulness rehearsed standard themes in anti-Jewish literature with new vehemence and thoroughness. Eisenmenger argued that the only reason why Jews did not carry out their malevolent plots against Christians more frequently was for want of opportunity rather than lack of desire.

Eisenmenger reserved a special role in his work for converts from Judaism. He regarded them as a separate category of informants, neither Christians nor Jews. In his bibliography, placed at the beginning of *Endecktes Judenthum*, Eisenmenger provided comprehensive lists of the Hebrew and Yiddish books he had consulted, followed by a separate bibliography of books written by converts from Judaism.⁴⁶ In spite of his disdain for unlearned converts, Eisenmenger opportunistically relied on this "despised" source when it suited his purpose. Advancing accusations for which he could provide no prooftexts in support of his claims, he turned to converts for evidence. In so doing, Eisenmenger entered a debate that had been in existence for several literary generations. Converts Ernst Ferdinand Hess, Dietrich Schwab, and Samuel Friedrich Brenz, among others, had established a new standard in anti-Jewish literature within the rubric of revelation of Jewish "secrets." They not only repeated and fortified accusations such as those of Margaritha about anti-Christian themes in Jewish prayer, but pioneered in gathering popular Jewish sayings which expressed scorn for Christians. Their compilations of Jewish anti-Christian folkloric material formed a unique repository and novel "text" in the ongoing polemic to prove Jews more threatening to

Christians than they seemed. Based on oral traditions, this material could not be verified or discredited on the basis of texts. These authors affirmed that Jews used Christian blood for magical or ritual purposes. They depicted Judaism as a dangerous threat to Christendom, a vision to which Eisenmenger enthusiastically subscribed.⁴⁷

Brenz's *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlanger-Balg* had provoked a vigorous refutation in Yiddish by Solomon Zvi Aufhausen; that book had, in turn, been refuted by the Hebraist Wülfer.⁴⁸ Thus, Eisenmenger's return to convert sources represented a regression to material whose reliability had already been publicly questioned for a century. Eisenmenger cited converts whenever he needed prooftexts for negative Jewish attitudes toward Christian sancta that no Jewish source could provide.⁴⁹ He explained the lack of Jewish sources on the Jewish will to deceive Christians regarding their true intent: "Do not allow any Jew to convince you that this has any other purpose than insulting Christ. For you [the Christian], will be deceived. I heard it myself from a convert."⁵⁰

When it came to the ritual murder libel, Eisenmenger, the conscientious Hebraist scholar, faced a dilemma. He had committed himself to exposing Judaism from its own sources, but to "prove" this canard, there were, of course, no usable Jewish texts. Eisenmenger could cite only Christian accusers. He traced a rumor that Jewish women needed Christian blood as a childbirth aid to Christian sources.⁵¹ To support this charge, he cited an unsubstantiated report from the convert Brenz: "If however the Jewish woman is having difficulty with her womanly burden and is in great need, then the rabbi or the next highest Jew after him, called the Parnas, will take a clean deer parchment and write three amulets. As to the type of ink they must write with, they keep it completely concealed. I believe through true and reliable stories, that when the Jews buy or steal, and then murder, Christian children, that *perhaps* such amulets are written with this blood."⁵² Brenz's tentative statement did not live up to Eisenmenger's standard for hard textual evidence. But he did not hesitate to use it anyway; to protect his scholarly integrity from charges that he relied on such shoddy sources, he assumed a posture of skepticism: "That they use it for this purpose and that it is effective and helps with childbirth, I cannot believe." As for Jews' purported use of Christian blood in their Passover matzah and wine, the only Jewish sources Eisenmenger could cite (the "converted Jew" Thomas, a literary figure in Solomon ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah*, and Abravanel), denied it. Eisenmenger abandoned all scholarly pretense at this point, with an argument that so many [presumably non-Jewish] sources discussed the accusation that it could not be untrue. He concluded with an affirmative pronouncement, "that these Jewish murders of Christian children

happen around Easter time undoubtedly because our Savior Christ was crucified on Easter.”⁵³

Thus, Eisenmenger’s opus did not constitute a new stage in the ongoing polemic between Jews and Christians. Rather, it extended the methods of medieval anti-Jewish polemic into the domain of scholarship in the service of implacable hate. However, his use of dubious sources by converted Jews undermined Eisenmenger’s ambitious attempt to portray Jews in the most noxious light based on their own sources, a weakness that his critics would exploit to the fullest.

Despite his profound aversion to Jews and his ambivalent attitude toward converts, Eisenmenger asserted that the ultimate goal of his book was not the expulsion or annihilation of the Jews, but their conversion to Christianity. Eisenmenger wondered why there were so few Jewish converts through all the many periods that Jews lived among Christians.⁵⁴ He divided his answer into two parts. On the Jewish side, the factors that discouraged conversion included the great hatred toward Christianity instilled in Jews from childhood, their blindness and obstinacy in spiritual matters, the threats and curses with which they execrated converts, and the danger that converts would be murdered by Jews. Even as he castigated converts from Judaism for their suspicious character, he relied on converts to prove that Jews too held them in contempt.⁵⁵ On the Christian side, Eisenmenger pointed to the disunity among Christians, the dissolute life led by many Christians, the economic advantages Jews enjoyed in certain lands, and the Christian neglect of new converts. When prospective converts beheld the penury and humiliation that awaited them, they preferred to remain among the Jews, where the rich cared for the poor.⁵⁶

Entdecktes Judenthum provoked a more innovative response among converts than the work deserved as a polemic. It stimulated a reconceptualization of the relationship between converts and Christian Hebraists. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Carl Anton and, later, Gottfried Selig published refutations of Eisenmenger, stimulated apparently by the renewed controversy over the release of its original printing. Coming in the latter half of the eighteenth century, when the circumstances of most Jews in German lands had begun to improve, when the Jewish population was increasing and their intellectual life was beginning to flourish, Eisenmenger’s work encountered a world that no longer accepted the medieval premises of anti-Jewish scholarship with passive resignation.

Converts who set out to refute Eisenmenger’s charges undertook a more vigorous defense of their own former Jewish lives than had any of their predecessors. Carl Anton, formerly Moses Gerson Cohen, claimed to have studied in Prague, where he came into contact with Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschuetz, world-renowned

Talmudist, preacher, and Kabbalist. Anton's sojourn in Prague coincided with its flowering as a center of Jewish intellectual life.⁵⁷ Anton converted to Christianity at the age of twenty-three in Wolfenbüttel, on 30 June 1748. He became a teacher of rabbinic languages in Helmstadt and shortly thereafter published a steady stream of books, including one on Jewish ceremonial and custom.⁵⁸ He is most noted for his comprehensive collections of news reports concerning the feud that erupted between rabbis Eybeschuetz and Jacob Emden when Emden accused Eybeschuetz of being a secret adherent of the false messiah Sabbatai Zevi.⁵⁹

Carl Anton introduced his refutation of Eisenmenger with a declaration of love for the Jewish people: "I confess that I love the Jews because I was born and raised among them, more because my beloved Savior sprang from them. I love them with Paul and wish daily that they would find the right path."⁶⁰ This announcement, devoid of the usual characterizations of Jews as blind, stubborn, etc., departed from the assertions of almost all his convert predecessors. On several occasions he announced his intention to refute certain accusations against the Jews; his work contains an impassioned defense against the stock of medieval anti-Jewish libels, along with a repudiation of the methods of torture used to uphold them in Christian judicial and popular opinion.

"I can barely write this without feeling pain, that Jews have been accused of . . . using the blood of Christian children, which they bled from them in gruesome ways, that they poisoned the wells, and that their doctors kill Christian patients who come to them with trust."⁶¹ Anton presented lengthy excerpts from Eisenmenger, who held all these libels to be true. "As easy as it is to spread these inhuman lies throughout the world, it is difficult to refute them . . . who can refute the statements of converted Jews or the evidence presented by Jesuits?"⁶² Nevertheless, Anton pledged to try. He compared the confessions extracted from people accused as witches with those of Jews accused of ritual anti-Christian crimes: "Can one use such painful proof for such terrible deeds? Just as one cannot affirm the truth of a witchcraft accusation by torture, similarly, we cannot firmly conclude that Jews killed Christian children and drank their blood based on testimony obtained by torture. And what of the many Catholics who have testified to it? We must take into consideration that these testimonies were partly induced by the need to flatter and ingratiate; the rest, by religious zeal and the insatiable hunger for the goods of others." The former consideration was made by "those who went over from the Jewish to the Christian religion and used such false reports and evil accusations to distance themselves from their former brothers."⁶³

Like so many of his predecessors, Anton addressed more than one commu-

nity of readers. He published two works devoted to refuting Eisenmenger; each contained messages for both Jews and Christians. The first, *Kurzer Entwurf der Erklärung jüdischer Gebräuche . . .* (A Brief Outline Clarifying Jewish Customs . . .) (1752–54), treated the customs of the Jews in a comprehensive manner; the second, *Einleitung in die rabbinischen Rechte* (An Introduction to Rabbinic Law) (1756), paid particular attention to the laws about administering judicial oaths to Jews. While Anton conceived even the work on Jewish customs more as a polemical response to Eisenmenger than an independent project, remarking, “If the reader will please see my *Customs of the Jews*, he will see the entire matter in a different light than Eisenmenger has shown,” the *Einleitung* became the primary vehicle for his scathing refutation of Eisenmenger.⁶⁴

Anton responded to Eisenmenger’s encyclopedic method with a rebuttal of equivalent scope and diligence. He took one chapter of *Entdecktes Judenthum* and copied its nearly ninety pages verbatim: “I would have preferred to abbreviate it, but Eisenmenger cited so many sources.”⁶⁵ He followed it with a chapter of his own, in which he refuted Eisenmenger’s material, paragraph by numbered paragraph. Anton’s unassuming title, *Kurzer Entwurf* (A Brief Outline), for his massive undertaking did not imply that he considered his material to be of little weight. The title carried a calculated polemical message: “I have established my *Kurzer Entwurf* so that no Jew should have the slightest pretext to mock it. I know how delighted they are to mock those who reduce their astounding number of customs to a small number. . . . For example, Antonius Margaritha entitled his book *The Entire Jewish Faith*, yet it does not even enumerate half their customs. Christian Gerson’s *The Jewish Talmud: Primary Contents* only cites several examples from the historical portions, although by his own count, the Jewish Talmud contains 63 books and 524 chapters. The Jews themselves know that each chapter can fill a volume with its possible interpretations. Like Eisenmenger, Gerson understood the Talmud only in its narrowest literal sense.”⁶⁶ Anton employed a similar strategy when he chose a modest title for his treatise on Jewish law, *Einleitung* (An Introduction).

Anton was not the only convert in the latter half of the eighteenth century to mount serious attacks on Eisenmenger while simultaneously addressing other audiences. Gottfried Selig, born in the mid-eighteenth century to a wealthy Jewish family, converted to Christianity along with several of his sisters. A prolific writer, Selig’s literary legacy included a voluminous and extensively detailed autobiography, as well as his monumental *Der Jude*.⁶⁷ *Der Jude* differs in several ways from the corpus of other works devoted to Jewish ceremonial. Published as a weekly periodical to be bound every quarter into a single volume, Selig hit upon a novel means of earning a steady income by purveying his convert’s

knowledge in a new Enlightenment format. Selig enlisted subscribers, primarily scholars, learned societies, and libraries, and inundated them with his weekly installments of Jewish law, lore, gossip, and criticism. *Der Jude's* periodical format kept Selig more dependent on the pleasure of his readers than the authors of most monographs, and his work was filled with notes of gratitude, defense, and explanation.⁶⁸ As years went by and his productivity showed no signs of flagging, anxious subscribers requested, and later demanded, that he conclude his project. They complained in jest that his project, *Der Jude*, was becoming a second "ewige Jude" (eternal Jew). But Selig kept insisting that some fascinating aspects of Jewish life remained to be uncovered; he managed to draw out the project for nine years. In the ninth year he finally brought the project to a close, although, he complained, "our goal has not been reached and we still have many unpublished pieces that could be very useful."⁶⁹ Among such unrealized projects, Selig mentioned a "History of the Jews which would chronicle this unfortunate and obstinate people from the times of Christ until today. It will remain unpublished because the public would prefer to read improbable and noxious novels." Selig later went on to publish a three-volume autobiography.

In *Der Jude*, Selig emerged as an outspoken critic of Christian Hebraists who had erred, in large ways and small, in their depictions of Jews. Like so many converts before him, Selig announced at the beginning that he could be trusted on these matters, "on account of his birth within this people [the Jews], and his many years of instruction in their teachings and customs."⁷⁰ He claimed, like Eisenmenger, that he would rely exclusively on Jewish sources. He acknowledged the large number of works like his own that had been written by the most honorable men (Hebraists) but averred that some of these works were marred by misinformation, and he pledged to correct their errors wherever necessary, without favoritism, regardless of their reputations. All the Hebraists came in for criticism, but Eisenmenger and Bodenschatz were Selig's particular targets.

A small sample will suffice to convey the type of mistake that Selig corrected and the tenor of his chastising voice. "Bodenschatz errs" when he claims that the child born after miscarriage of a fetus of several months would still be considered a *Bechor* (an eldest-born).⁷¹ Schudt described the *bechor shor* (eldest-born calf), which Jews kept in their synagogue yard at great expense to themselves. Christians believed that Jews venerated the calf and called it *Kalb Mosis* (Moses' Calf). Both Lund and Bodenschatz repeated this error, Selig reprimanded, but Jews would only laugh if they heard such a thing.⁷² Selig praised the derisive comment of "saintly" Schudt concerning the efficacy of Jewish prayers for atonement on the deathbed. "Jewish atonement must be one great fable, for the entire people have repented according to their fashion, for so many centuries, yet their

request has not been granted. Thus, the consolation for the dying Jew cannot be as consoling as he thinks.” But Selig could not agree with Schudt’s ensuing offensive remarks: “However, that the Jews mark their dying with Christian blood, and say ‘Were Christ the true messiah, then this blood would save you,’ as a converted Jew of Regensburg once claimed, is a preposterous and absurd error. Not only has Wagenseil already discredited it, but even Eisenmenger, who endeavored to bring every provable accusation against Jews, declared this one to be false and invented.”⁷³

Selig admired Eisenmenger’s scholarly thoroughness but deplored his distortion of sources. “Eisenmenger overemphasized some things. He often tracked down everything that appears bad or shameful with great zeal and care, but the good in some of their chief books, e.g. Maimonides or R. Joseph Alsheikh, he completely silenced before the Christian reader. . . . If everything that appeared in our [Christian] writings against other religious sects, without all the proper limitations and interpretations [would be gathered in one work] there would be many things which would appear paradoxical, and completely against the intentions of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”⁷⁴

Selig leveled comprehensive criticism against the Hebraists’ enterprise. His strictures against the misrepresentation of Judaism and Jewish life by Hebraists encompassed Buxtorf, Schudt, and other Hebraists, in addition to Eisenmenger.⁷⁵ Unlike the objects of his critique, he did not hesitate to praise Jews when he found commendable traits: “In the Jewish Nation there is greater love by parents for children and by children for parents than among any other people. Even the poorest among them take care of their children. One often sees among them that a father or mother will go begging so that a son can go to study or that a daughter should be able to marry.”⁷⁶

Anton and Selig privileged their own experience as former Jews over the academic knowledge of Christian Hebraists and of other Christians who might make similar claims. Anton cautioned, “Christian authorities often call upon Christian clerics to administer oaths, believing that they are more knowledgeable of Jewish customs. This is true only in rare cases; most only succeed in making fools of themselves.” Anton explained that the presence of Christian clergymen, even if they were knowledgeable, immediately put Jews on guard; Jews would worry that the Christian cleric would try to convert them, or at least make them say things they held to be theologically objectionable. Anton warned Christian magistrates and judiciary figures who did not understand the Jewish law concerning oaths that they might inadvertently cause a “coerced oath” which would be legally meaningless.⁷⁷

Anton and Selig imbued their writings with a sense of indignation at the hor-

rendous injustice that had been perpetrated against the Jews throughout their history as a result of the false and malicious accusations that they now sought to refute. Anton declared: "I have devoted an entire section to the refutation of Eisenmenger's charges because in times to come, if accepted as true, they will be so dangerous for the Jews that they will be in exceptional danger for their lives."⁷⁸ Selig too noted that "This false rumor [that Jews used Christian blood] has brought the Jews into physical and mortal danger, and often great persecutions."⁷⁹

Anton went on to argue that the hatred of Jews which motivated and pervaded Eisenmenger's work opposed the Christian teaching that one must love even one's enemies, including the Jews. More seriously, Anton charged, this hatred distorted his scholarship. "Just as Eisenmenger condemned all Jews on the basis of a few bad ones, I could vindicate them all on the basis of a few good ones."⁸⁰ Selig likewise cautioned that while some of the stories about Jews cited by Eisenmenger might be true, "the evil deeds of individual persons should not be laid upon the conscience of an entire nation."⁸¹ Anton warned that the danger of erroneous judgment was more acute when the sources were written by converts, "who tried to ingratiate themselves with Christians by levelling every sort of shameful accusation against the Jews, some because they were so ignorant they didn't know better, thereby rendering Christianity even more hateful to the Jews." These converts underwent their "veränderung" (change of religion) in ignorance, and some for ulterior motives. They did not adopt the true religion of Christ, which requires "Herzensänderung" (an inner change of heart), as well as the zeal of Paul to draw the Jews closer. He cited Buxtorf, a Christian, to defend Jews against the interpretations of Brenz, a convert, and Eisenmenger concerning the intentions of the Kol Nidre prayer.⁸²

Where Eisenmenger cited convert Dietrich Schwab's description of being "abused" by his fellow Jewish students for drinking with a Christian, Anton chastised Eisenmenger for this egregious distortion: "First of all, as a Jew, he had no business drinking wine with a Christian." The incident was simply a student prank, yet Schwab decried it as though a murder had been committed. "Whoever heard of blaming an entire people for such a thing!" Selig similarly castigated Eisenmenger for relying on converts like Brenz regarding the integrity of Jewish doctors: "Eisenmenger's account, based on Brenz, contains outright lies. For Brenz disclosed in his *Schlangen-Balg* absolutely nothing but lies, ignorance, calumnies and a blind zeal strengthened by his ulterior motives. . . . This had become the custom among converted Jews who came to us and who sought only to nourish themselves on alms. They believed that they would enter the good graces of Christians through these lies and libels."⁸³

In another case, Eisenmenger reported that he had heard of corrupt Jewish judges and concluded from anecdotal evidence that the entire Jewish legal system was riddled with deceit. Anton replied indignantly to this charge. True, there may be such individuals, one would find them in any nation. But Jews, as well as their laws, condemned such behavior. "Many that I know make their wives, children, and relations swear that they would not accept anything at all from anyone. If a gift is found in their house of unknown provenance, they send it immediately to the poor. If Eisenmenger does not know such Jews, perhaps it is because he does not wish to know them."⁸⁴

Anton accused Eisenmenger of deliberately citing sources out of context and applying them to issues that had no relevance to their original meaning.⁸⁵ Polemical names which Jews of old had used to repudiate pagans and paganism, Eisenmenger uniformly interpreted as used against Christians, "although it never occurred to any Jew that this meant Christians or Christianity." Based on this error, Eisenmenger argued that Jews cursed "Christian authorities," so did not deserve to be tolerated by them. For example, Anton remonstrated, Eisenmenger cited a phrase directed against the Roman emperor Nero as a Jewish, anti-Christian insult. How could this be directed against Christians? While Jews might harbor thoughts against those who treat them poorly, argued Anton, Jews knew perfectly well how to praise and thank those who allowed them to practice their religion unhindered.

With the works of Anton and Selig, the relationship between converts and Christian Hebraists came full circle. Converts had become comfortable enough with their Jewish pasts to demand that it be represented accurately. They reviewed the monumental literature of Jewish ceremonial that had been created in the previous two centuries and attempted to correct the errors and distortions that earlier converts and Hebraists had incorporated in their work.

CONCLUSION

Converts in the Age of Enlightenment

It appears in our times that they are becoming more cultivated, particularly in Berlin and in some other parts of Germany. May God's grace improve them all.

Selig, Der Jude

Now came the day of my baptism. . . . My mother was very happy that she had saved one more of her children from Judaism, and my father said, "I hope this will be good for you."

Fanny Lewald: An Autobiography

Those who wish to be certified as rabbis should be tested first to see if they understand the true Christianity, so that they will not introduce so much blasphemy into the curriculum.

Callenberg, Neue summariche Nachricht

The sense that they were living on the threshold of a new age in which the relationship between Jews, Christians, and converts was undergoing profound change pervaded the writings of converts in the later eighteenth century. Both Carl Anton and Gottfried Selig attempted to lay to rest the false charges and hateful myths that had haunted Jews in Christian lands for centuries. Anton, for example, became embroiled in an intramural faculty dispute at Helmstedt University over the existence of the legendary Wandering Jew. In 1755, he published a treatise in which he vigorously disputed the entire idea as contrary to reason.¹ Anton's grounds for rejecting the mythical figure provide an instructive contrast to seventeenth-century convert Friedrich Albrecht Christiani's earlier rejection of the legend in his *Der Juden Glaube*. Christiani considered the Wandering Jew too similar to foolish Jewish legends which he had already rejected.

Anton's treatise itself would remain largely unremarkable, except for the notorious response it provoked. The wife of one colleague published a mocking

rebuttal, in which she claimed to have seen the Jew with her own eyes, now somewhat shorter in stature than in his description several centuries earlier: he had suffered from osteoporosis of the vertebrae in the interim. She followed this eyewitness report with an appendix in which she claimed to have seen not only the Jew, but his wife, the Wandering Jewess. Although many scholars prior to Anton rejected the existence of the Wandering Jew, Anton's highly visible campaign and his argumentation based on reason constituted a departure for converts.

Judaism in the Light of Reason and Science

While the books of a later generation of converts certainly contained the occasional barb against a particular Jewish teaching or practice,² their tone overall signaled a new posture of aggressive affirmation of their Jewish selves on the part of converts. Converts now marshaled for their definition of Judaism concepts such as *Wissenschaft* (science) and reason, new terms of the Age of Enlightenment, as well as the positive contributions of the Jewish people to world civilization. Selig characterized his times as “our tolerant age,” in which Jews established themselves and their businesses throughout Europe.³ He justified his massive project of documenting the customs of the Jews with a positive evaluation of Jewish contributions to civilization. The title page of the first volume of *Der Jude* depicts a Jew offering bounty to a Christian (see fig. 23), an image consistent with the agenda of Selig's project, to show Christians positive aspects of Judaism. The image provides a startling contrast to the stock images of Jews conveyed in the works of earlier converts. Ernst Bertling addressed his introduction to Carl Anton's book on Jewish customs to a hypothetical freethinker, a person of reason, who denied the validity of any textual proof to confirm the Christian religion. While Bertling's arguments were derivative (for example, the continued existence of Jews testified to the truth of Christianity), the hypothetical figure to whom he directed the argument was a creature of the Enlightenment.⁴ Johann Caspar Ulrich opened his opus on Jewish life with an engraving that depicted Jews laying down their Torah scroll not before a symbol of Christianity, but at the feet of the personification of reason, before whom all religious traditions were now expected to prostrate themselves (see fig. 24).

Anton presented Jews from a comparative cultural perspective, likening the accusations and trials of Jews to those of witches, the persecutions of Jews by Christians to those of Christians at the hands of Japanese, and Protestants at the hands of Catholics. Selig compared Christian accusations against Jews to the charges made by pagans against early Christians.⁵ Such cross-cultural comparisons characterized the Age of Reason. By applying them to Jewish-Christian relations, Anton and Selig transformed the despised position of Jews within

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 23. Selig, *Der Jude*, vol. 1, title page (Leipzig, 1768). The Jew proffers his bounty to Christians. Reproduced courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 24. The Torah in the Age of Enlightenment. Johann Caspar Ulrich,
Sammlung Jüdischer Geschichten. (Basel, 1768), frontispiece. Reproduced courtesy of the
Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

Christendom from a unique, theological necessity to a common sociological phenomenon. Gauging the conduct of Jewish policy by the Enlightened ideal of “love of humanity,” Anton found many states in the “bosom of Christendom,” such as Spain, Portugal, and France, deficient in that they did not extend this love to Jews.⁶ Selig referred to Jewish “Sitten und Gewohnheiten,” customs and practices, less theologically charged terms than “ceremonial” and “ritual,” used by his predecessors (as well as by himself on occasion). He refuted absurd polemical arguments by claiming they went “against all reason,” the universal standard of the Age of Enlightenment.⁷ Not only the content but the forms of the converts’ works manifest the influence of Enlightenment usages. Anton’s *Tabulae antiquitatum*, an encyclopedic work of useful tables and lists for Hebraists, conformed to the encyclopedic trend of Enlightenment scholars. In fact, Selig characterized his encyclopedic journal of Jewish life as “eine Wissenschaft,” a scientific endeavor.

Selig took pains to distinguish between practices that had a textual basis, which he deemed reasonable for Jews to observe, and the many which he claimed were obtained “not by divine revelation but by the remarkable inclination of Jews to keep instituting additional, unreasonable observances.” His criticism of Purim observance presents a marked contrast to that of his predecessors. The observances of Purim had long been identified by Christians and converts as anti-Christian in nature. As late as 1790, an anonymous critique suggested that the Jews ought to abolish this anti-Christian holiday, since all mentions of Persians were really veiled allusions to Christians.⁸ Where others saw anti-Christian undertones, Selig objected that the popular Yiddish translations of the story diverged from the biblical tale and that the festivities themselves led to coarse and crude behaviour.⁹ Selig’s thinking anticipated that of enlightened Jewish lay leader David Friedländer, who argued that the giving of charity justified the retention of the holiday, but that the raucous behavior that it inspired ought to be eliminated.¹⁰ Selig objected to a Passover song from the Haggadah “because it goes against the judgment of every reasonable person.”¹¹ Anton distinguished his work from that of other converts and Hebraists by claiming that professing Jews could serve as witnesses to the truth of his descriptions of Jewish ceremonial. It defied logic, he argued, that books (like those of some converts) which contained material denied by all Jews could claim to be telling the truth about them.¹²

By separating what they considered baseless superstitions from historically grounded and valid customs, Anton and Selig responded to the Age of Reason in another respect. While earlier writers had regarded all Jewish ceremonial as a vast and confusing testament to Jewish theological bondage, the later eighteenth-century writers wanted to educate Jews themselves to abandon what

they considered to be unenlightened customs. Not every call for reform of Judaism stemmed from altruistic motives, however. The Christian mission in Halle proposed a doctrinal reorganization and internal educational reform of Judaism in order to facilitate subsequent rational polemical dialogue in the service of the Christian mission:

We Christians in our denominations have education in our schools and churches, examination in the catechism and sermons. This is how the populace overcomes ignorance and learns the fear of God. None of these are to be found among the Jews. Their schools teach only reading and writing. In the synagogues on Sabbath and holidays, they read only Biblical texts and babble (*herplaudern*) prayers out of the *Tefilla* and *Sidderle* [prayer book] without comprehension. It is a great rarity for them to have a sermon. . . . This is why it is difficult to convert the Jews—they have no grounding in religion, even in their own. If they would, it would lead to more reflection on religious matters in general. There is no point in making Jews listen to Christian sermons. I propose instead that we teach them Jewish matters alone, and find a more neutral space.

The model of what I believe would be the most effective type of opening sermon . . . to the Jews . . . shows how closely Jews and Christians are related; that the patriarchs, apostles, even the messiah descended from them. Their ancestors should be praised for upholding the Law. This type of praise would suit them very well. This will be just hors d'oeuvre to whet their appetites to return . . . [We will] modify their own religion for them, piece by piece. Then they will begin to regard the Christian religion differently. If the teacher is capable, . . . he will make it easier for them to doubt their own religion.¹³

This is not to say that converts and missionaries in the latter half of the eighteenth century suddenly ceased to condemn Jewish ceremonial; far from it. Rather, the standard which they used to evaluate it changed from a theological to a rational one.

Christian readers who felt that Selig made Jews appear too enlightened, and Jewish readers who felt he cast too much of their heritage as baseless superstition, objected to Selig's work.¹⁴ By the late eighteenth century, converts could not have been oblivious to the existence of Jews who had themselves become "enlightened," sloughing off some of the observances or adopting a more critical stance toward their own tradition.¹⁵ Selig grew cautious in response to Jewish readers who took umbrage at being cast in the same mold as the superstitious rabble. When his *Der Jude* appeared in the 1770s, these Jews complained to his

publishers that “he did not distinguish sufficiently between various customs and opinions considered vital only by the Jewish masses, which the educated people find contemptible, and those which are approved by the learned as well.”¹⁶ Selig responded, in an ironic tone, aimed at his “enlightened” former coreligionists:

But haven't we derived these customs from books whose standing is not in doubt by any orthodox Jews? Haven't we taken many irrational, superstitious and foolish ideas from their own prayerbooks? Indeed, it is not unknown to us [to Selig] that there are a large number of Jews today who no longer wish to be bound by the teachings of their forebears, who ridicule them in their hearts, and not only among the educated, but also among the unlearned, who, thinking themselves wise, because of their longstanding contact with other nations, have become completely distanced from the religion of their fathers and have become filled with apathy and contempt against it. But this type is regarded by their pious coreligionists, learned and unlearned, as *Schkotzim*, *Poschim*, and *Kallim*, as unworthy sinners and scum. In our periodical we have described only the beliefs and customs of truly orthodox Jews, although it seems that the critics understand these to be the masses.

When he mocked that “these tales are accepted by Jews as fully factual,” he had to qualify his statement with the parenthetical “we mean those [Jews] who accept the tradition and teachings of their rabbis as divine.”¹⁷

Selig acknowledged in his introduction that “the diversity of customs depends upon human caprice; it is infinite and follows no hard rules.” Every little variation did not deserve exacting scrutiny, so his work would offer only the basic outlines, the daily usages observed by “rabbanite Jews of our times in their abodes.”¹⁸ After an entire volume of scurrilous phrases and sentiments he attributed to Jews, Selig concluded: “It may please our readers that we add to this, that in our days, the manners and customs of the Jews, particularly those who live in Berlin and other German cities, have greatly improved, and such expressions are virtually no longer heard.”¹⁹ After affirming that converts from Judaism were the only Christians whom Jews seek to murder, he tempered his statement: “It appears in our times that they are becoming more cultivated, particularly in Berlin and in some other parts of Germany. May God's grace improve them all.”²⁰

By the late eighteenth century, converts began to lose their function as innovators of the Christian critique of Judaism. Those Jews who acceded to the notion that to be fully German (or European) meant to be Christian continued to convert, but the intense hostility to their former religion and community that characterized most earlier converts was lacking. Throughout the early nineteenth

century, conversion remained a choice for Jews who desired radical assimilation into German society. But by then, some German Jews were beginning to search for ways to accomplish their cultural assimilation by modifying their Judaism without having to convert.²¹ Many converts from acculturated backgrounds did not have the intense exposure to Jewish sources and traditions that their predecessors had. Conversion in the nineteenth century could more often be characterized as a part of the process of “drift and defection,” in the apt locution of Todd Endelman, rather than the more abrupt change of identity that was so frequently the case among early modern converts.

It would be naive to conclude that just because conversion ceased to be the only way out of traditional Judaism, the historical experience of the early modern converts had no further effect within the Jewish world. The demands of liberal German politicians like Karl Streckfuss, that Jews not only productivize their occupations but loosen their adherence to the ritual law, universalize the messianic idea, and send their children to Christian schools for religious instruction, did not just happen to largely coincide with the centuries-long critique of Judaism. Originally articulated by converts and Hebraists, and now reiterated by German politicians, these became the internalized ideal of German Jews themselves.²²

This does not mean that no converts saw themselves in the traditional role of transgressive agents against their former Jewish community. It was a convert, the former *shochet* Elias Magnus—Carl Ludwig Frederici after his baptism—who first opened the door to subjecting Jewish burial practices to a Christian/Enlightenment critique. The Jewish custom of burying the dead as soon as possible was now coming under frequent attack as a barbaric custom, since it did not allow sufficient time to determine that death, rather than a near-death coma, had occurred. This critique came in the context of a Europe-wide debate over determining definitive occurrence and scientific definition of death. Hebraist Schudt specifically cited the Jewish practice of early burial, accompanied by the possibility of live burial, as an example of Jewish depravity inherent in rabbinic law.²³ Selig lavished much space in *Der Jude* to a comprehensive discussion, in the end agreeing with Schudt’s critique.²⁴

For a long time, Jewish communities insisted that Jewish law on this matter was based on a biblical injunction against allowing the dead to remain unburied overnight. It seemed as though this one issue, so fraught with emotion, would remain an internal Jewish matter into which Christian authorities had no right to intervene. It was convert Frederici who claimed that the rabbis had distorted the original meaning of the biblical text, in line with centuries of Christian critique of rabbinic exegesis. Frederici pointed out to the duke of Mecklenburg-

Schwerin, through an intermediary, that the verse in Deuteronomy cited by Jews did not apply to all cases of death equally. The verse specifically referred to someone put to death by violent means. Frederici claimed that rabbis had over-generalized from the source to include cases of natural death.²⁵ Frederici's arguments opened a decades-long battle in which the government and the medical establishment, as well as local and more distant Jewish communities, became involved. Both Rabbi Jacob Emden and Moses Mendelssohn played distinguished roles. Each tried to balance the needs of the Jewish community against the demands of the times.

Mendelssohn played a key role in attempting to reverse another long-standing intervention by converts. In the late eighteenth century, the synagogue in Königsberg still retained an inspector to ensure that Jews did not recite passages deemed offensive to Christians, particularly an offending phrase within the *alenu* prayer. The attempt to have this inspector removed touched off a public debate in which Mendelssohn defended the Jewish prayers against an accumulation of converts' accusations.²⁶

Some of the most ardent advocates of the notion of the German state as Christian, such as Friedrich Julius Stahl, were converts from Judaism.²⁷ For converts like Stahl, the ability of Judaism to change and reform itself posed a severe challenge to the old theological view of the fossilized, law-bound Mosaism against which Christianity had polemicized for centuries. Great Viennese jurist Joseph von Sonnenfels, converted to Catholicism as a child, who helped lay the principles for the Edict of Toleration of Joseph II in 1782, believed that conversion of the Jews should be required for full emancipation.²⁸ As historian Michael Meyer put it, "Any signs of religious vitality in the Jewish community would represent a threat to the very principle of Jewish moribundity on which they had made their own major life's decision. The doctrine of historical development within a religious spirit that retained its unique identity could be applied properly only to Christianity, not to Judaism."²⁹ Converted Jews often became the most conservative Christians. They liked their Jews authentic and identifiable, the better to stigmatize and oppose them as an alien and unassimilable body.³⁰ Still, although converts like Frederici and Stahl played vocal and influential roles, they remained exceptions, rather than rules. Converts ceased to have the same role in mediating between Jewish and Christian society as they had in the early modern period.

Anti-Judaism as Anti-Rabbinism

Converts who defended Jews often cast the rabbis as the villains who upheld the most unreasonable and superstitious practices among the common people.³¹

Other anti-Jewish works of the late eighteenth century also singled out rabbinic influence as the primary impediment to Jews joining the family of humankind.³² Two traditions converged in the eighteenth-century anti-rabbinic Christian critique of Judaism. The first was the age-old Christian polemic from which such terms as “Pharisaism,” “prayer of the lips only,” “Werkheiligkeit” (salvation by works), “mechanical observance,” “self-righteousness,” and “hypocrisy” were derived.³³ The second was the anticlericalism of the Enlightenment, more muted in German lands than elsewhere, but a potent force nonetheless. Nourished by an anticlerical Enlightenment posture whereby the people must first be liberated from clerical oppression before reason could prevail, anti-rabbinism flourished in the Age of Enlightenment. Selig wrote, “In order for the reader not to arrive at a premature anger and hatred against this blinded nation, we will show the sources from which this hatred derives. It comes from the love of self and arrogance which their rabbis implant into them from youth.”³⁴

Both these strands are apparent in an anonymous work published in the late eighteenth century, *Rabinismus*.³⁵ This book held nothing but scorn for the “old Jewry” personified by the rabbis. Rabbis led their people astray by hiding the true nature of their own teachings, primarily the Talmud, from most Jews. The book presented Talmudic/rabbinic Judaism as the polar opposite of Enlightenment/reason. The “black rules, the foolish deceitful strokes by which Jews have been separated from the world of civil humanity must be publicized. . . . No conception is more in need of improvement than Judaism. Who can believe that rational creatures can be proud of circumcision on the eighth day? That a people demands superiority over the nations because they eat kosher food and avoid food which was deemed unclean in Egypt or Palestine? . . . Because they resist doing essential tasks on the sabbath, and engage in ridiculous buffoonery during prayers?”³⁶

The author of this seemingly classical anti-Jewish polemic presented it as the anti-rabbinic argument for the new age. It differed from its predecessors in that it was addressed to an audience of “the rational classes, people of good taste.” Unlike previous attempts to show the dark side of Judaism, this one was written in epistolary form and graceful style. Spurred on by the reforms initiated by Joseph II’s Edict of Tolerance (1782), the book betrayed all the ambivalence of enlightened German-Christian society toward the notion of a modernized Jewry. It contained many adjurations to Jews to “reform” and speculated on the wonderful possibility of ridding the world of Jewish Jews. Yet it also contained a preponderance of material sufficient to scare any Christian reader who might think that a reformed Jew was different from the hideous creature of rabbinism. After portraying Jews through the ages as the most depraved and deceitful

people, after hundreds of pages in which every medieval canard was presented as historical fact, from the charges of ritual murder, the magical use of “remnants of human limbs,” to the assurance that Jews routinely tried to cheat Christians and cursed them in secret at every opportunity, the final concession to the enlightened age which concluded the main portion of the book, was a grudging, “Perhaps today the Jews have changed their custom and the lust for Christian blood was exchanged for Christian money.”³⁷

The final section of *Rabinismus* contains a fictitious “confession,” similarly designed to subvert “rabbinitism.” An ingenious tale of intrigue and deceit that allowed the author to accomplish his goal on many levels, “The Confession of the Disguised Rabbi, Count of Vaxeras,” ultimately found its way into modern German literary history. In it, a Christian count down on his luck ingratiated himself to a Jewish businessman and, in the process, fell in love with his daughter. Knowing that he would never get the father’s money if the daughter converted to Christianity, the count decided to undergo a superficial conversion to Judaism in order to attain his objectives. The author has the prospective father-in-law coach the count in the “secrets of Judaism,” allowing the author to repeat and confirm the many anti-Jewish accusations he had made in the book. The count underwent a simulated circumcision ceremony, “since the Jews do not hold of this ceremony as strongly as they used to.” After the marriage, the couple moved to another locale, where the counterfeit Jew was deemed so skilled in interpretation of Jewish laws that the community offered him the first rabbinical vacancy. He served in that position until the end of his life. His attempts to subtly insinuate the reasonable teachings of Jesus in place of the Jewish superstitions met with failure, due to the stubborn clinging of the Jews to their traditions.

The tale ended with the count revealing his entire story in his last will, so as to uncover the evil secrets of the Jews for the world to know. Only a small “counter-party” among the Jews was delighted to have the count’s revelations to provide them with further ammunition against their benighted brothers. After his death, the count’s wife converted to Christianity, and a large ferment arose within the Jewish community.

The “Confession of the Counterfeit Rabbi” is a rich work. It subverted “rabbinitism” the way Christians imagined that Jewish converts subvert Christianity, by being insincere in their conversion. The purported mastery of the new religion was meaningless, since the conversion was undertaken for the basest of motives. The author managed to reveal the shameful and barbaric secret nature of Jews twice, once when the count was being instructed and again when his will was read. It is a tale of Christian triumphalism, since the count was never truly convinced by Judaism, and his wife converted to Christianity in the end. The count

[To view this image, refer to
the print version of this title.]

Fig. 25. Anonymous, *Rabinismus* (Amsterdam, 1789). Title page with signature
“Van Geldern,” Heinrich Heine’s maternal family name. Reproduced courtesy of the
Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

nevertheless offered the hope that some secret “counter-party” within the Jewish world would prevail over the obscurantism of most Jews.

It took Heinrich Heine to transform the tale of the converted rabbi of Vaxeras, with its multiple strands of conversion, dissimulation, and deceit, its loathing and longing for the Jewish past, into “The Rabbi of Bacherach,” a haunting meditation on Jews, Christians, and the divided souls that emerged between them.³⁸

APPENDIX
THE CONVERSION AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
FRIEDRICH ALBRECHT CHRISTIANI
(LEBENS=LAUFF)

[p. 65] Ich Fridrich Albrecht Christiani/ bin sonsten meiner Ankunfft beydes von Vater und Mutter ein gebohrner Jude/ bürtig von Prostitz aus Mähren/ mein Vater ist ein *rabbi*, Nahmens *Moses*/ meine Mutter aber heist *Sara*/ welche ich in gutem Zustande verlassen / und noch bey dem Leben zu seyn verhoffe. Diese meine Eltern haben mich nach Jüdischer Gewohnheit beschneiden und *Baruch* nennen lassen/ haben mich auch von Jugend auff in dem Jüdenthum erzogen/ in den Jüdischen Gesetzen und Gebräuchen unterrichtet/ und zu dem *Studio Rabbिनico* dergestalt angehalten/ dass/ nachdem ich allbereit zu Hause ziemliche *Fundamenta* in demselbigen geleet / sie mich in die Synagoge nach Posen verschicket/ da ich endlich so weit kommen/ dass ich nicht allein die Schrift Altes Testamentes in Hebräischer Sprache verstehen/ sondern auch die Rabbinischen *Commentatores* fertig lesen können/ und in den Talmudischen Büchern wohl bekandt worden. In dem sechzehenden Jahre meines Alters kam ich wieder zu meinen Eltern/ und als ich mich nun bey denenselben ohngefähr 2. Jahr lang wiederum auffhielte/ wurde ich von dannen nacher Bruchsal am Rhein gefodert/ und zu einem *Chasan* oder Vorsinger [p. 66] in der Synagoge daselbsten auffgenommen. Als ich nun daselbst in meinem Amte begriffen war/ war ich so eiffrig in meinem Jüdenthum/ dass/ wenn mir dazumahl iemand von meiner nunmehr geschehenen Bekehrung gesaget hätte/ solches mir eben so wunderlich vorkommen/ als itzt manchem dieses ungläublich und wunderlich scheineth/ nemlich dass in denen letzten Tagen eine ziemliche Anzahl derer Jüden durch Gottes Gnade bekehret werden sollen. Wie ich aber an diesem nicht zweiffele/ also hat auch Gott jenes an mir erwiesen/ sintemahl Anno 1666. als ich nur eine wenige Zeit zu Bruchsal zubracht/ ein allgemeines Geschrey unter den Jüden

von einem neu entstandenen Messia erschollen/ welcher dazumahl die Jüden weit und breit erregt/ dass sie auf diesen Wahn gerathen/ es wäre nun ihr verheissener und erwarteter Messias angekommen/ welche sie aus ihrem elenden Stande in das Gelobte Land bringen werde/ darzu sie sich schon an unterschiedlichen Orten bereitet/ und Anstalt gemacht/ wie sie allen Hausrath verkauffen/ und die Schulden gegen halbe Bezahlung erlassen wolten/ damit sie einen guten Zehrfennig auff die Reise haben möchten. Als dieser falsche Wahn die Jüden [p. 67] bethörete/ bekam ich hierdurch Gelegenheit/ der Sache an ihr selbst/ und der Lehre von dem Messia desto fleissiger nachzuforschen/ nahm die Heilige Schrifft Altes Testaments vor mich/ betete zu Gott/ dass er mir das Verständniss eröffnen/ und worauff er mit seinen Weissagungen von dem Messia gezielet/ zeigen möchte. Als ich nun vor mich/ nechst Beystand Gottes des Allerhöchsten/ eine Zeitlang darmit umgienge/ begunten mir die Augen aufzugehen/ dass ich sahe wie ich und meines gleichen bisshero irre gingen/ und also auff bessere Gedancken veranleitet wurde. Denn als ich eine Weissagung nach der andern *examiniere*/ befand ich/(1) dass der Messias/ welcher in denselben verheissen/ Gott und der wahre Sohn Gottes wäre/ indem derselbe Malach. III, 1. מלאך הבריה *der Engel des Bundes* genennet/ und bey Einsetzung des Bundes Gen. XVII. XVIII. und XXII. als ein unerschaffener Engel/ und Gott selbst/ beschrieben wird; Und dann auch/ weil er ausdrücklich genennet wird/ so wohl mit Gottes eigenthümlichen Nahmen *Jehovah*, wie *Jerem.* am XXIII, 6 stehet. ידוּר צדקוּנּוּ i.e. der HERR/ der unsere Gerechtigkeit ist/ als auch der Herr des Tempels/ Malach. III. פתאום יבא אל היכלו i.e. [p. 68] bald wird kommen zu seinem Tempel der Herr/ den ihr suchet. (2) Erkennete ich/ dass er zugleich Gott und Mensch seyn solte/ 2 Sam. VII, 19. da Gott der dem König David den Messiam aus seinem Saamen zu erwecken/ verheissen/ denselben also beschrieben/ dass ihn David für Gott und Mensch erkennen müssen/ wenn er daselbst saget: Herr/Herr/ du hast von fernen Zukünftigen geredet/ das ist eine Weise eines Menschen/ der Gott der Herr ist. (3) Zeigete mir eben diese itzt erwehnte Weissagung/ dass der Messias nicht würde ein weltlich und zeitlich Reich anfangen/ sondern solte ein geistlich Reich haben/ das ewig währet. Eben darauff wies mich auch ferner der Prophet Daniel/ welcher den Messiam in einem Gesichte in folgender Gestalt sahe. Es kam einer in des Himmels Wolcken/ wie eines Menschen Sohn/ biss zu dem alten/ und ward für demselbigen gebracht/ der gab ihm Gewalt/ Ehre und Reich/ dass ihm alle Völcker/ Leute und Zungen dienen solten; seine Gewalt sey ewig/ die nicht vergehet/ und sein Königreich hat kein Ende/ Dan. VII, 13.14. (4) Sahe ich/ dass das Amst des verheissenen Messia nicht solte seyn eine leibliche Erlösung/ [p. 69] aus der Welt Drangsal/ sondern eine geistliche Erlösung von Sünde/ Tod/ Teuffel und Hölle/ durch seine selbst Auff-

opfferung; massen er Psalm CX. ausdrücklich genennet wird ein Priester ewiglich/ nach der Weise Melchisedech/ und Esaias prophezeyet cap. LIII, II. dass er sein Leben zum Schuld=Opffer geben werde/ und durch seine Erkänntniss viel gerecht machen/ denn er wird ihre Sünde tragen. u.u. Darzu befand ich den verheissenen Messiam durch den Mund des Propheten Hos. cap. XIII, v. 14, also redend: Ich will sie erlösen aus der Hölle/und vom Tode erretten/ Tod/ ich will dir ein Gifft seyn/ Hölle/ ich will dir ein Pestilentz seyn. Dieses alles aber/ welches ich durch fleissiges Nachforschen in der Heiligen Schrift fande/ war der Lehre von dem Messia/ die ich in dem Jüdenthum gelernet/ schnur stracks zuwider. Überdass und (5) befand ich auch noch/ dass der Messias zu Bethlehem im Jüdischen Lande solte gebohren werden/ wie geschrieben stehet bey dem Propheten Micha. V,2. Und du Bethlehem Ephrata/ die du klieen bist unter den Tausenden in Juda/ aus dir soll mir der kommen/ der in Israel ein Herr sey/ welches Ausgang vom Anfang und von [p. 70] Ewigkeit her gewest ist. (6) Merckte ich/ dass der Messias solte in den andern Tempel kommen/ und durch seine Gegenwart denselben herzlich machen/ wie der Prophet Haggai II weissaget: So spricht der *Herr Zebaoth*/ es ist noch eine kleines dahin/ dass ich Himmel und Erden/ das Meer und Trocken bewegen werde/ ja alle heyden will ich bewegen/ da soll dann kommen aller Heyden Trost. Und ich will das Haus voll Herrlichkeit machen/spricht der Herr Zebaoth/es soll die Herrlichkeit dieses letzten Hauses grösser werden/ denn des ersten gewesen ist/ spricht der Herr Zebaoth. Diese beyde itzt angedeutete Oerter (Bethlehem und Jerusalem) aber seynd schon längst zerstöhret worden/ drum gedachte ich/ sollen gleichwohl diese Weissagung wahr seyn/ so muss der Messias dazumahl/ da solche Oerter noch gestanden/ allbereit kommen seyn. (7) Erfuhr ich auch endlichen/ dass dem verheissenen Messia eine bestimmte und gewisse Zeit seiner Zukunfft bestimmt Gen. c. XLIX, 10. da Jacob auff seinem Tod=Bette bey Einsegnung seiner Söhne/ und insonderheit seines Sohnes Juda/ als aus welchem der Messias kommen solte/ also redet: Es Wird das Zepter von Juda [p. 71] nicht entwendet werden/ noch ein Meister von seinen Füßen/ biss dass der Held komme/ und demselben werden die Völcker anhangen. Dergleichen Weissagung auch bey dem Propheten Daniel/ Cap. IX, 24. zu befinden: Siebenzig Wochen sind bestimmt über dein Volck/ und über deine heilige Stadt/ so wird dem Ubertreten gewehret/ und die Sünde zugesiegelt/ und die Missethat versöhnet/ und die ewige Gerechtigkeit gebracht/ und die Gesicht und Weissagung zugesiegelt/ und der Allerhelligste gesalbet werden. Darauff erwogte ich/ wie beydes das Zepter von Juda entwendet/ und die siebentzig Jahr=wochen auch allbereit vollendet/ darum schloss ich daraus/ dass nothwendiger Weise der Messias bey nunmehr geschehener Erfüllung der bestimmten Zeit seiner Zukunfft/ kommen seyn müsste. Als ich nun

meinen Irrthum recht erkannt/ und diese angezogene Sprüche wohl erwogen/ gab Gott seinem Worte Krafft/ und brachte mich ferner auff die Gedancken/ wie ich von dem Irrwege auff rechten Weg möchte gebracht werden/ sahe mich also wie ein Blinder nach Hand=Leiter um/ die mir den rechten Weg zeigen möchten. In Bruchsal/ da ich unter den Jüden lebete/ und in ihren Diensten [p. 72] war/ durffte ich mein Vorhaben nicht wohl mercken/ lassen/ gieng also ein gantzes Jahr mit solchen Gedancken schwanger/ besonne mich hin und her/ wie ich selbe möchte ins Werck richten. Ich hatte allbereit vorgenommen/ ein Christe zu werden. Aber wie der Tueffel sonsten ein Zerstörer und Verhinderer alles guten Vorhabens ist/ also hat er auch seine Lust an mir auszuüben nicht ermangeln lassen; bald hielt er mir vor/ wie ich hier in gutem Zustand lebete/ und mein gutes Auskommen hätte/ dahingegen/ wo ich davon würde abstehen/ ich mich gar leicht in äuserste Noth und Gefahr bringen könnte; bald stellte er mir den Zwiespalt und uneinigkeit unter den Christen vor/ denn ich vernahm/ dass die Christen in unterschiedene Hauffen abgetheilet/ u. unter sich selbst nicht einig wären/ welches mir fast den grösssten *Scrupel* machte; bald warff er mir vor/ dass bey den Christen solche Greuel getrieben würden/ dafür sich die Jüden selbst entsetzen/ wenn sie solche Greuel/ welche dem Worte Gottes zuwider sind/ ansehen. Und wie ich die Sache recht nachforschete/ befand ich/ dass es freylich dem also war; Denn zu Bruchsal/ wo ich mich auffhielt/ war es Ertz=Papistisch. Ich hörte zwar viel von ihrem Gottes=Dienst/ durffte aber/ weil ich ein Jude [p. 73] war/ demselben nicht beywohnen; doch geschahe es zuweilen/ dass sie öffentliche Umgänge auff den Strassen hielten/ da sahe ich scheinbarlich/ dass sie solche Greuel verübeten/ die uns Gott ausdrücklich in seinem wort verboten. Nur ein einiges Exempel anzuführen kan ich nicht unterlassen/ dieweil es wohl zu mercken ist: An einem Char=Freitage sahe ich mit grossem Verdruss/ dass das Volck nicht allein vor denen getragenen Bildern und Creutzen niederfiel/ und dieselben anbetete/ sondern mit dem Herrn Christo fast ärger/ als die Jüden selbst gethan/ spielte. Da gedachte ich bey mir: So arg machen es gleichwohl die Jüden nicht: Gehen die Christen also mit ihrem Gott um/ so will ich lieber bleiben/ wer ich bin/ und dem Gott Abraham/ Isaac und Jacob einfältig dienen. Aber Siehe! als wir nun fast alle Lust zu dem Christenthum durch ietzerwehnter Leute Gottes=Lästerung verschwunden/ traff ich zu meinem Glück daselbsten einen Barbiers=Gesellen an/ der zwar Papistisch/ aber nicht (wie er sich gegen mir verlauten liess) so sehr abergläubisch war/ wie andere/ derselbe sagte mir/ dass ich mich daran nicht kehren solte. Er hielt auch nicht viel von diesem Pfaffen=Spiel/ wäre desswegen doch ein guter Christ/ welchem sein Christenthum [p. 74] ein Ernst wäre. Zeigte mir auch unterschiedliche Christliche Bücher/ und unter andern auch die Teutsche Bibel Altes

und Neues Testamentes/ welches sonst wie ich mir anietzo berichten lassen/
ein ungewöhnlich Ding bey den Papisten ist. Weil ich nun die Teutsche Sprache
lesen und verstehen konte/ machte ich mich zuweilen über die Teutsche Biebel/
und aus Curiositaet geriethe ich über das Neue Testament/ fieng dasselbe an zu
lesen/ und gieng also fast den gantzen Evangelisten Matthæum durch. Woraus
ich denn wohl sehen konte/ worauff sich die Christliche Lehre gründete; Weil
aber in demselbigen von solchem ärgerlichen Gepränge und *processionibus*, so ich
unter den Papisten sahe/ gar nichts erwehnet wurde/ fragte ich obgemeldeten
Barbiers=Gesellen/ wo sie denn dergleichen Sachen hätten/ indem ich in diesem
Buche/ welches die Christen vor Gottes Wort halten/ gar nichts gefunden? Gab
er mir zur Antwort: Freylich ist in diesem Buche gar nichts darvon gemeldet/
es ist nur unter denen Pfaffen eine alte Gewohnheit/ welche sie nicht gerne ab-
kommen lassen/ damit sie das gemeine Volck in der Andacht behalten. Hierauff
fragte ich weiter/ wenn solches in diesen geringen Orten so prächtig zugehe/
[p. 75] so müsse ja in den grossen berühmten Städten ein weit grösser Gepränge
mit dergleichen Ceremonien seyn/ als zum Exempel zu Strassburg/ und der-
gleichen Orten mehr/ u. Darauff gab er mir zur Antwort: Dass in der Stadt Strass-
burg solches gar nicht gebräuchlich wäre/ dieweilen die Lutheraner auff solche
Gepränge und Ceremonien gar nichts hielten/ sondern verichteten in stiller ein-
falt ihren Gottesdienst. Darauff sanne ich auff Gelegenheit/ nach Strassburg zu
kommen/ gab meinen Dienst auff/ und nahm von der Jüdischen Gemeine da-
selbsten Abschied/ ohn ermeldet meines Vorhabens. Ich gieng in Gottes Nahmen
aus Bruchsal nach Strassburg/ kam auch glücklich bis zu der Rhein=Brücken.
Da fiel mir ein/ wie es nun weiter anzufahren? massen mir nicht unbekandt war/
wie die Jüden in Strassburg ohne grossen Zoll nicht eingelassen würden/ und
darinnen alle Stunden wohl bezahlen müssten. War derowegen entschlossen/
mich nicht vor einen Jüden/ sondern vor einen Studenten auszugeben/ gieng
darauff nach oberwehnter Stadt zu/ und kam also mit dem Nahmen des Stu-
denten durch/ und kehrte in dem nächsten Wirths=Hause/ zum schwarzen
Bären genant/ ein. Des andern [p. 76] Tages war gleich ein grosser monatlicher
Buss=Fast=und Bet=Tag/ da fassete ich ein Hertz/ zum erstenmahl den Christ-
lichen Gottesdienst zu besuchen. Gieng derowegen frühe Morgens in die grosse
Münster=Kirchen daselbsten/ und hörte den Hoch Ehrw. und Hochgelahrten
Hrn. Friedrich Saltzman/ SS. Theol. *Licent.* den hundertten Psalm erklären. Diese
Predigt gieng mir dergestalt zu Herten/ dass ich vor Freuden nicht wuste/ wie
ich dran war. So bald nun die Predigt geendiget/ erkundigte ich mich bey dem
Wirth des gemeldeten Wirths=Hauses/ welches der fürnehmste Pfarrer in
gemeldeter Stadt wäre? darauff bekam ich Bericht/ dass Tit. Herr Sebastian
Schmid/ SS. Th. D. Kirchen=Präsident wäre/ welcher alle Sachen/ was die Kir-

chen anbetrifft/anzuordnen und zu bestellen hätte. Nachdem ich nun solchen Berath erhalten/ kehrete ich nach des hochgedachten Theologi Hause zu/ meldete mich bey ihm an/und gab ihm mein Vorhaben zu verstehen. Dieser hochberühmte Mann liess ihm zwar mein Anbringen wohlgefallen/ doch stellte er mich deswegen zur Rede/ fieng etwas hart an mit mir zu reden/ und fragte mich alles so genau aus/ dass auch das geringste nicht vergessen ward/ hielt mir auch die [p. 77] Wichtigkeit meines Vorhabens dergestalt für/ dass ich Gott und seine Kirche zu *ludiren* und zu äffen (wie etwan andere Gottesvergessene hievor gethan) mich ja nicht unterstehen solte/ dass mir die Haare/ wie man zu reden pflaget/ zu Berge stunden. Weilten aber ich ein gut Gewissen hatte/ und keines bösen Vorsatzes bewusst war/ fassete ich ein gut Hertz/ verantwortete mich so viel als mir immer möglich war. Als nun nach vielen Fragen und examiniren er nicht nur von mir selbst/ sondern auch von mein schon bereits abgesagten Feinden/ den Jüden (so wohl von denen/ welche ihrer Handelschafft halber in die Stadt kommen/ als auch von denen andern/ so im Lande umher wohneten) sattsamen Bericht wegen meiner Person bekommen/ und in meinen vorgegebenen Worten vergnügliche Warheit befunden/ ward ich erst recht auff=und angenommen/ und von einem löbl. Kirchen=*Convent* daselbsten an den Hochlöblichen Magistrat bester massen recommendiret/ welche mich alle gnädig auffnahmen. Von der löblichen Obrigkeit wurde mir alsobald Unterhalt des Leibes verschaffet; von einem löblichen Kirchen=*Convent* aber wurde die Vorsorge der Seelen betrachtet. Und damit ich in der Christlichen Lehre fleissig [p. 78] unterrichtet werden möchte/ wurde ich denen Wohl=Ehrwürdigen Herren Predigern zum Jungen St. Peter in die *Information* übergeben/ welche denn an mir in dem Herrn treulich und fleissig arbeiteten; insonderheit aber der Wohl=Ehrwürdige und Hochgelahrte Herr Daniel Rauch/ damahls gewesener Diaconus an obermeldter Kirchen/ mein Hochgeehrter Herr Præceptor, welcher es sehr treulich mit mir gemeynet/ und mich höchst=fleissig/ und fast Tag und Nacht informiret/ welche treue Arbeit der getreue Gott ihm und den lieben Seinigen reichlich vergelten wolle.

Als ich nun eine Zeitlang in den *Fundamentis* Christlicher Lehre und des heiligen *Catechismi* unterrichtet/ auch dieselben durch die Gnade Gottes ziemlich gefasset/ wurde ich zu unterschiedlichen mahlen/ bey angestellten Zusammenkünfften/ in des Hoch=Ehrwürdigen Herrn Praesidenten, wie auch anderer Prediger Gegenwart examiniret/ und mir unterschiedliche Glaubens=Fragen vorgelegt/ welche ich auch nach meinem wenigen Vermögen/ nechst Beystand Gottes/ so gut als ich konte/ beantwortete.

Als nun von dem obgemeldten Herrn Praesidenten, und andern Herrn Predigern befunden [p. 79] worden/ dass mir an der heiligen Tauffe nichts mehr hin-

derlich seyn könte/ und nunmehr Zeit wäre/ mich dem Herrn Christo und seiner Kirchen/ als einen natürlichen Oelzweig/ einzuverleiben/ wurde die Sache einem Löblichen Magistrat nochmahl vorgetragen/ um eine gewisse Zeit zu diesem hochheiligen Werck zu bestimmen/ welcher sich denn das Christliche Vorhaben gefallen liesse/ desswegen auch einen gewissen Tag nemlich den Dienstag/ war der 18. November des M. DC. LXXIVsten [1674] Jahres (auff welchem ohne diss ein grosser Monatlicher Bet-Tag einfiele) zum Tauff=*actu* ernannte und bestimete. === Nach empfangener Heiligen Tauffe am obgemeldeten Tage, habe ich in obermeldter löblichen Stadt/ so wohl von der löblichen Obrigkeit/ wie auch vom löblichen Ministerio daselbsten viel Wohlthaten reichlich genossen/ hätte auch hertzlich wünschen mögen/ dass ich die Gelegenheit gehabt hätte/ daselbst die Tage meines Lebens zu verbleiben. Weiln aber dazumahl/ wegen eingefallenen schweren Kriegs=Zeiten/ offterwehnte gutthätige Leute gleichsam mit sich selbst zu thun hatten/ die *Universitaet* auch dem Ansehen nach von Tag zu Tag in Abnehmen gerathen wolte/ habe ich/ nach reiffer Erwegung/ nicht finden können/ wie/ sonder [p. 80] grossen Beschwerden meiner höchstgedachter Gutthäter/ ich ferner daselbst mein Auffenthalt haben möchte. Habe demnach auff treuhertziges Einrathen meiner jederzeit hochgeerten Patronen daselbsten/ meine Fortun anderswo nothwendiger Weise/ der vormahls vielfältig mir erwiesenen Gutthaten eingedenck/ suchen wollen. Nachdem ich von dar verreiset/ mich an unterschiedlichen Orten umgesehen/ wo ich dasjenige *Talent*, so mir *Gott* anvertrauet/ am besten anlegen möchte: wurde mir abermahls von treuhertzigen Freunden/ so ich auff der Reise besprochen/ gerathen/ dass ich mich auff die Welt=berühmte Universität Leipzig begeben solte/ auf welcher nicht allein viel gutthätige und Christlichgesiñete Hertzen/ sondern auch/ welches zu meinem Vorhaben dienen möchte/ viel Liebhaber der Hebraischen Sprachen anzutreffen wären. Diesem treuen Einrathen zu folgen/ habe ich mich auch anhero verfügen/ und mit meiner wenigen Wissenschaft/ *Gott* und meinem Nechsten zu dienen/ hiermit schuldig anbietien wollen/ damit ich mit *Gott* und Ehren mein Hausswesen Christlich führen und mein täglich Stücklein Brodtes und Aufenthalt haben könte.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, 70, 120.
2. Ibid., 70. See also the remarks in Morrison, *Understanding Conversion*, 5: “Although Islam and Christianity were both religions of conversion, conversion was not institutionalized in Islam, which lacked both priesthood and hierarchy.”
3. This is true for the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 2:299; for a similar assessment of a sixteenth-century Jewish community in the Islamic world, see Amnon Cohen, *Jewish Life under Islam*, 74.
4. Romanelli, *Travail in an Arab Land*, 42–43.
5. A. Cohen, *Jewish Life*, 74.
6. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, 212. Exceptions to the general picture drawn here occurred during critical periods in the rise and expansion of Islam when greater importance was attached to converts from Judaism. See Perlmann, “A Legendary Story,” esp. 86, n. 3, on the notion in early Islam that converts from Judaism were insincere, hoping only to subvert Islam from within.
7. N. Roth, *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims*, 199–202.
8. On the consolatory tradition see Halkin, “Le-toledot ha-shemad,” 101–10; Soloveitchik, “Bein hevel arav”; Menachem Ben-Sasson, “Tefillatam shel anusim.” From the famous responsum of Rashi, it is clear that already in the eleventh century there was strenuous criticism of the forced converts. By contrast, the only “letter of consolation” for Ashkenazi Jewry, Josel of Rosheim’s “Trostschrift,” is highly polemical, and his other work is suffused with deepest enmity for converts. See Rosheim, *Joseph me-Rosheim*, ed. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, 313–49.
9. English trans. (with some modifications) in Halkin, *Crisis and Leadership*, 33–34; Hebrew text in Maimonides, *Iggerot ha-Rambam*, 1:58–59.
10. Stow, *Catholic Thought*, 19.
11. Gervers and Bikhazi, eds., *Conversion and Continuity*, 4.
12. *ASRHJ* 10:220–95.
13. Stow, *Catholic Thought*, 5–17.
14. Kalkar, *Israel und die Kirche*, 67–83; on the conversionary efforts of Christian Kabbalists, see Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew*, 43–56.
15. On conversion rates in sixteenth-century Italy, see Toaff, *Il vino*, 181–208: “convertiti, neofiti e apostati”; Milano, “Battesimi di Ebrei,” 133–67; Bachi and DellaPergola, “Did Characteristics of Pre-Emancipation Italian Jewry . . .”; Segre, “Il mondo ebraico”; Simonsohn, “Some Well-Known Jewish Converts.”
16. Bornstein-Makovetsky, “Conversion to Islam,” 37. With some notable exceptions,

most Italian-Jewish converts, from the lowest socioeconomic spectrum, hoped to benefit from the arrangements available for converts. Most did not improve their status and remained impoverished alms collectors.

17. Segre, “Neophytes,” 131.
18. C. Roth, “Forced Baptisms.”
19. Segre, “Neophytes,” 134–35.
20. In the role of censors, neophytes were sometimes able to jeopardize or shut down entire yeshivot, when they ordered the confiscation of all their manuscripts and books. Buxenboim, *Iggerot*, 9–10; Segre, “Neophytes,” 140–41.
21. See also Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, 90–122; for converts from Judaism in medieval English history, see Stacey, “The Conversion of the Jews.”
22. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 43.

Chapter 1. The Medieval Legacy

1. Goitein, *Letters*, 212.
2. Halkin, *Crisis and Leadership*, 33.
3. I thank Professor Mark R. Cohen for his illuminating comments on the lexically passive form *meshummad*, implying that no Jew in Ashkenaz would convert out of conviction, compared to the active step implied in the Sephardic designation, *poshe’a*, a tacit acknowledgment that external coercion was rarely applied. Despite this, the attitude toward converts was harsher in Ashkenaz.
4. Elijah Levita, *Opusculum . . . Tishbi* (Isny, 1541), 251.
5. Judeo-Arabic *afsha* from the Hebrew *pasha’*, used throughout genizah literature. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 2:300.
6. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, provides an excellent account of factors leading toward conversion; however, he omits the historical dimension. Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium*, 91–128, analyzes conversion from a historical and sociological perspective; see the insightful analysis of Morrison, *Understanding Conversion*.
7. Anon., “Ma’aseh nora”; Habermann, *Sefer gezerot*, 11–15. Chazan, “The Persecution of 992”; *idem*, *European Jewry*, 32, analyzed the text as reflecting reality of late tenth-century France. The final episode, in which the accusation of the apostate served as the catalyst for the temporary confiscation of books from Jewish homes on the Sabbath while the owners were at prayer services, seems more reflective of later events.
8. Stow, “A Tale of Uncertainties,” used this example to introduce his study of the sixteenth-century Roman *neofiti*.
9. “He did not abandon his evil ways to return the Torah of God to his heart.” According to the chronicle, Sehok traveled widely after his conversion and preyed upon the kindness of the Jewish communities by identifying himself as a Jew, saying “I am a Hebrew,” until the word got around that he was a fraud. He then reverted to Judaism for a time.
10. Chazan, “The Persecution,” 217, n. 3.
11. For an analogous role played by an apostate, see the medieval *megillah* [scroll] of Saragossa/Syracusa: “In those days, a wicked and quarrelsome man named Hayim

- Shami apostatized . . . and the king Saragossanos elevated Hayim Shami whose name was changed to Marcus.” In this text, the apostate revealed to the king that the Jews were planning to appear before him with empty Torah-scroll cases, a mockery rather than an honor. The community was saved by divine intervention. Danon, “Quelques Pourim,” 135.
12. Habermann, *Sefer gezerot*, 13. On apostates as revealers of secrets, see Carlebach, “Attribution of Secrecy.”
 13. Grossman, *Hakhmei Tzarefat*, 151.
 14. On conversion to Christianity in tenth- and eleventh-century Europe, see the remarks of Chazan, *European Jewry*, 30; Agus, R. Meir, 45–46, no. 3; Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 12.
 15. On the son of R. Gershom, see Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 112; on Elhanan, son of R. Shimon, *ibid.*, 89–90. The story of Elhanan was elaborated through the centuries. In the eighteenth century, Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 1:535, cited an elaborate version from *Maiseh bukh*, (Amsterdam, 1701) 76–77.
 16. See sources cited by Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 112, n. 21, cited from *Or zaru’a*, *Hilkhot aveilut*, 2:176, no. 428. *Mordechai*, Mo’ed Katan: רבי גרשום נתאבל על בנו כשנשחמד ארבעה עשר יום, ק”ו לשכינה י”ד יום.
 17. Cited in Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 112, from *Responsa R. Meir Rothenburg* (Prague), no. 544, and similarly in *Mordechai*, Mo’ed Katan, remez 886.
 18. Grossman, *Hakhmei Tzarefat*, 152.
 19. Eidelberg, “An Unknown Responsum”; Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 122–27 and n. 70, for a thorough discussion of the available sources. Cf. *Mahzor Vitri*, no. 125.
 20. On the oft-told legend see the sources cited by Avraham David, “Tales,” 71, n. 14; Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 90, n. 49. Prinz, *Popes from the Ghetto*.
 21. Lutheran leader Pomeranus Bugenhagen claimed that he was taken from his Jewish parents by the local mayor, Henning Bugenhagen, who adopted and baptized him after the Jews of Spandau had been martyred in 1510. While this particular story proved untrue, it reflected common Jewish fears and Reformation polemical tactics. *ASRHJ* 13:440, n. 48.
 22. On the question of whether 1096 was a “watershed,” see *ASRHJ* 4:89–91; Chazan, *European Jewry*, 197–222; Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 436–40.
 23. See the texts of the memorial prayers cited in Bernfeld, *Sefer ha-dema’ot*, 3:294, 298–9. On the vessels of memory created by medieval Jews, see Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 31–52.
 24. Habermann, *Sefer gezerot*, 25.
 25. *Ibid.*, 51.
 26. Chazan, *European Jewry*, 293.
 27. Habermann, *Sefer gezerot*, 47. The designation in this passage, *ha-ivrim ha-ne’enasim* (the coerced Hebrews), appears to be a rather disingenuous way to call them Jews without actually doing so. The martyrs were referred to as *hasidim*, *zadikim*, or simply *yehudim*.
 28. *Ibid.*, 57; Chazan, *European Jewry*, 294.
 29. Sonne, “Nouvel examen,” 126–27, claims that one of the chronicles was written by a forced convert, apparently a native of Mainz who fled to Speyer, where he reverted.

30. For examples, see the translation of a responsum by Rashi, in J. R. Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World*, 301–02, and the discussion in Katz, “Although he has Sinned”; Fram, “Perception and Reception.”
31. *Sefer Hasidim*, 428, no. 1798, trans. in Chazan, *European Jewry*, 147.
32. *Ibid.*, 465, no. 1922, trans. in Chazan, *European Jewry*, 147.
33. In Habermann, *Sefer gezerot*, 37, a parent justified his conversion so that his children would not be removed from him and raised in the Christian faith. The father later killed himself along with them.
34. Soloveitchik, “Religious Law,” 208–10.
35. Habermann, *Sefer gezerot*, 24.
36. For examples, see *ibid.*, 11, 12, 25, 27, 31, 32, 35, 36.
37. Abulafia, “Invectives against Christianity,” 66.
38. Habermann, *Sefer gezerot*, 109.
39. On the roots of this metaphor, see Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 9–36.
40. I. G. Marcus, “A Pious Community and Doubt,” 106. The account was preserved in Isaac ben Moses of Vienna, *Or zaru’a*, who attributed it to mid-twelfth century R. Ephraim of Bonn. On the identity of R. Amnon in twelfth-century Mainz, see Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 35, n. 35.
41. I. G. Marcus, “A Pious Community,” 111–13.
42. Kupfer, “Le-toledot mishpahat R. Moshe bar Yom Tov.”
43. Alexander-Ihme, “A Yid,” identified the rescue by one Jew of another from apostasy as a popular literary motif. In the stories, a relative, a rabbi, or God, intervene to prevent a young person from converting. The potential convert then joyously reunites with family and community. In a similar narrative motif, a Jewish convert to Christianity abandons his new faith after a miraculous sign shows him that his first religion was the true one after all. Bursch, *Judentaufe*, 39.
44. On R. Meir, see Agus, *Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg*. Carmoly, “Gefangenschaft des R. Meir von Rothenburg,” 348; cf. David Gans’s *Sefer zemah David*, ed. M. Breuer, 128.
45. “*Rex Rudolphus cepit de Rotwilre Judeum qui a Judeis magnus in multis scientiis dicebatur et apud eos magnus habebatur in scientia et honore*”: *Annales Colmarienses*, s.v. 1287, in *Fontes rerum Germanicarum*.
46. Agus, *Rabbi Meir*, 1:126. Cf. Praver, *History of the Jews*, 152–53.
47. Shammash, *Minhagim*, Hebrew section, 78–79; cf. trans., English section, 80–81.
48. Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 69.
49. Carlebach, “Between History and Myth.”
50. Rosheim, *Sefer ha-miknah*, 24; from an older text of a ban against *mosrim*. See introduction by Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, xvii.
51. Rosheim, *Sefer ha-miknah*, 7.
52. In Solomon ibn Verga’s chronicle *Shevet Yehudah* the hated tax collector Mascarenhas played a parallel role in the massacre of New Christians in Lisbon. Yerushalmi, *Lisbon Massacre*, 60–61. “The Jews were themselves partly to blame . . . some said that all the Christian hatred was due to their hatred of a Jewish tax-collector named Mascarenhas.” Whereas the “bad Jew” appeared in one incident in ibn Verga, it formed the central thesis of *Sefer ha-miknah*.

53. For examples see David, “Tales,” 82; *idem*, “Le-me’ora’ot”; and Bernfeld, *Sefer ha-dema’ot*, throughout.
54. Stanislawski, “The Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah*,” 144–46.
55. Amelander, *Sefer she’erit Yisra’el*, 173.
56. *Ibid.*, 177.
57. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, 67–76, 148–50; *idem*, “Although he has Sinned”; Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain*, 8–20.
58. Fram, “Perception and Reception,” 300, n. 5. On the dual status of the apostate as non-Jew when it came to inheritance, but a Jew in personal status issues, such as marital law, see Blidstein, “Who is not a Jew?”
59. Netanyahu, *Marranos of Spain*; Assaf, *Be-oholei Ya’akov*, 145–80; Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court*, 22–31.
60. Grossman, *Hakhmei Tzorefat*, 503. Katz, *Exclusiveness*, 67–68. Katz assumed that this number referred to an aggregate over several years rather than a single incident.
61. The gender imbalance may indicate lower frequency of female apostasy, or simply lower incidence of such cases in the literature.
62. See e.g., Margolis, *Seder ha-get*, nos. 57, 85, 100, 102; no. 101 recorded the custom in Austria for a man to issue and deliver a Jewish divorce to his wife who had converted, upon finding another wife. If the first wife returned to Judaism, the divorce remained valid. See Isserlein, *Terumat ha-deshen*, nos. 42–43, regarding an apostate who appointed a Jewish agent to deliver the writ of divorce to his wife. Shohat, *Im hilufei*, 190–91, notes numerous cases involving apostates, mostly from *Shevut Jacob* of Jacob Reiszow.
63. For later patterns, see Hertz, “Women at the Edge.” On the status of apostate women in Jewish law, see Blidstein, “The Personal Status.” For some medieval examples, see, Agus, *Rabbi Meir*, 1:241, no. 171; 1:378, no. 363; 1:392, no. 387.
64. On levirate marriage involving an apostate, see Bruna, *Responsa*, no. 184. Bruna recorded the case of a marriage in Regensburg in which the brother of the groom was an apostate. The bride’s father hesitated to allow the marriage to proceed, lest she some day fall into the control of the apostate levir. R. Y. Neustadt permitted several women to make prenuptial conditions to prevent them from falling into the hands of apostate levirs; Bruna permitted the women to remarry even without the prenuptial condition. Cf. Isserlein, *Terumat ha-deshen*, responsa no. 223.
65. On Jewish inheritance laws concerning apostates in the Geonic period, see Ir-Shai, “Mumar ke-yoresh.” For a medieval example, Agus, *Rabbi Meir*, 2:616, no. 686: “Q: During a riot and massacre, A and his wife L were killed and their daughter apostatized. A’s brother and L’s brother have survived them. Who is the rightful heir to A’s property? A: An apostate forfeits his rights as an heir, although he has the power to transmit his property to his Jewish heirs. . . . If A’s daughter is still a minor, the estate should not be divided until she reaches majority. Then if she still persists in her apostasy for one hour . . . for a minor does not forfeit her rights as an heir upon apostatizing, since the persuasion of a minor is tantamount to inexorable compulsion.”
66. Isserlein permitted it. Cited in Bruna, *Responsa*, no. 135. On the responsa of Isserlein and Bruna, see Zimmer, *Harmony and Discord*, 163–66; Eidelberg, *Jewish Life*.

67. For rulings that the apostate was not considered “a brother” when it came to taking interest, see Isserlein, *Terumat ha-deshen*, no. 241; Bruna, *Responsa*, no. 242.
68. On this question see, Agus, *Rabbi Meir*, 1:217, no. 129: “The wine of a Jewish infidel or of a Karaite who does not trust the teachings of the rabbis, is *yayn nesekeh*, for, although not idolaters themselves, they do not guard their wine from being handled by Gentiles.”
69. See the question concerning a convert playing the lute for Jews on the Sabbath in Joseph ben Moses, *Leket yosher*, 1:65.
70. See the fascinating parallels to some of these questions and a discussion of the power of conversion to affect the religious, ritual, and legal status of converts in conversions from Hinduism and Islam to Christianity in India under British colonial rule, in Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 75–117.
71. Horbury, “The Benediction.” For some recensions of the benediction see Solomon Schechter, “Genizah Specimens,” *JQR* 10 (1898): 657: מהרה ותקוה ומלכות זרין ממהרה למשומדים אל תהי תקוה ומלכות זרין ממהרה. Another fragment reads: Another תעקר בימינו והנצרים והמינים כרגע יאבדו יתרו מספר החיים ועם צדיקים אל יכתבו. בא”י מכניע זרים. Cf. Elazar of Worms, *Perush siddur ha-tefillah*, 342–43; Solomon bar Samson, *Siddur Rabbenu Shlomo*; Berliner, *Randbemerkungen*, 52–54; Ashkenazi, *Sefer . . . Hakham Zevi*, no. 112; Lieberman, “Some Aspects,” in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume*, 2:531. On the convert behind the Prussian royal edict: Assaf, “Mi-seder ha-tefillah,” 118.
72. Von Carben, *Ich bin ein büchlein*, ch. 17. Cf. Teter, “Jews in the Legislation,” ch. 3.
73. Kirn, *Das Bild*, 114–15.
74. Reuchlin, *Gutachten*.
75. *Ibid.*, 43–45. Reuchlin may have adopted this defense strategy from Mülhausen’s anti-Christian polemic, *Sefer ha-nizzahon*, 193; Horbury, “Benediction,” 31.
76. Margaritha translated, “un alle die ein anderen glauben für sich selbs haben/sollen alls in aynem augenblick vergon.” Cited in Mieses, *Die älteste*, 37. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724): 34. He translated “Die Abgetilgten” as “die getauften Juden.”
77. An early discussion of penitent apostates, Abrahams, *Jewish Life*, 25–26, emphasized the shift between the great resentment toward them in early medieval Jewish sources and the softening of this stance in the early modern period. For a recent illuminating study, see Fram, “Perception and Reception.”
78. Agus, *Rabbi Meir*, 1:279–80, no. 241. In this case R. Meir had an important motive for accepting the testimony of forced converts. Only they could provide information concerning the status of the forcibly baptized Jewish women of Rockenhausen who escaped from their captors, and would not otherwise have been permitted to their husbands.
79. See the thirteenth-century Jewish sources cited in Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, 73, n. 3.
80. Yerushalmi, “The Inquisition,” 363–64.
81. Isserlein, *Terumat ha-deshen*, no. 86. Although, technically, there was no law mandating this ceremony, Isserlein concluded that “the custom of our forefathers is our Law.”
82. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:65.
83. On rites of reversion to Judaism after baptism, see Yerushalmi, “The Inquisition”;

- Shatzmiller, “Converts and Judaizers.” Gerson, *Der Jüden Thalmud*, 241 ff. described a similar ritual. On the magical powers attributed to baptismal waters in the early Christian centuries, see Bursch, *Judentaufe*, 45, and sources cited there.
84. H. Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History*, 3, n. 2: “Later, excommunication drove apostates into the camp of the Christians and they became accusers of Jews and Judaism.”
85. Kaufmann, “Rabbi Zevi Ashkenazi,” 112 ff.; M. Marcus, *The Principal motives*.
86. Agus, *Rabbi Meir*, 1:340–41, no. 317.
87. Agus, *Rabbi Meir*, 1:284, no. 246. Aronius, *Regesten*, 316, brings a somewhat similar case, only here the reason for the father seeking the death penalty for his daughter was her desire to convert: “Zu erwenen ist noch dass der Vater der Frau sie töten will, weil sie droht Christin zu werden, die Rabbiner von Erfurt verweigern ihm jedoch die Erlaubnis dazu.” Cf. *Teshuvot Maimoniyot*, Nashim, no. 25. I thank Professor Fram for alerting me to the latter source.
88. Yuval, *Hakhamim be-doram*, 185, n. 55, and literature cited there. See Jacob Margolis, *Seder ha-get*, no. 34b, concerning a woman who had converted, reverted to Judaism, and then sought a divorce. This responsum does not indicate whether the divorce was related to the apostasy.
89. Isserlein, *Terumat ha-deshen*, pesakim, no. 138.
90. Bacharach, *Havot Yair*, 1: no. 141. Katz, *Halakhah ve-kabbalah*, 369, cites a responsum of Moses Sofer concerning bans against followers of Sabbatai Zevi and the fear that a ban could lead to conversion. The responsum of Moses Isserles that served as a precedent considered whether the potential convert had children who might also be lost to Judaism.
91. Bacharach, *Havot Yair*, 1: no. 141. See additional sources in Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, 150, n. 2; Isserlein, *Terumat ha-deshen*, pesakim, no. 138.

Chapter 2. The Lost Crown of Synagogue

1. Concerning its dubious historicity see *ASRHJ* 9:77 and 9:276, n. 26.
2. Foster, *The Life of Saint Thomas*, 36.
3. *ASRHJ* 9:65.
4. Frankl, *Der Jude*, 9.
5. For this locution, see Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast*, 112.
6. Yerushalmi, “Assimilation,” 11–16. The belief in the ineradicability of human characteristics informed medieval literature. “One of the features of medieval characterology . . . [is] the basic stability . . . of the elements which constitute a given protagonist’s character and situation.” Vitz, *Medieval Narrative*, 17.
7. Frankl, *Der Jude*, 56–57.
8. *Ibid.*, 55.
9. *Ibid.*, 55. On the significance of this particular repast, see Fabre-Vassas, *Singular Beast*, ch. 8.
10. “Er will die juden ee besseren dan geistlichen und schriftlichen.” Wunderli, *Peasant Fires*, 106.
11. Frankl, *Der Jude*, 57.

12. One example is the ditty cited in Kirn, *Das Bild*, 62, n. 17:

*Ob sich eyn Jud schon täuffen lat,
So ist es doch nit fisch on grat.
Und hätt darzu zwölf eyd geschworen,
Ist krisam und tauff daran verloren.*

On the bath in Hell, see Fuchs, *Die Juden in der Karikatur*, 6, no. 12:

*Ein andr Badstub euch ist bereit
Zu schwitzen da in Ewigkeit.*

13. Besser, *Die Mittel*, 13.
 14. Hosmann, *Das Schwer zu bekehrende Juden Hertz*.
 15. Cited in Israel, *European Jewry*, 55.
 16. Kirn, *Das Bild*, 62, n. 17; 63, n. 23; and appendix, 209, line 19: “Eyn alder ast ist boess tzo beugen.”
 17. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, “On the Periphery,” 633.
 18. Rotscheidt, *Stephan Isaak*, 114.
 19. *Ibid.*, 155–56.
 20. Bursch, *Judentaufe*, 25; Fram, “Perception,” 302, n. 11; 304–05.
 21. Cited in Poliakov, *History of Anti-Semitism*, 1:47, n. 6.
 22. Elukin, “From Jew to Christian?” I thank Jonathan Elukin for allowing me to read this article before publication.
 23. Morrison, *Understanding Conversion*.
 24. As Bursch, *Judentaufe*, 43, notes, of the “hundreds” of baptisms of Jews for which Hosmann, *Das Schwer*, 156, could find scarcely one sincere convert, most were forced baptisms. Yet Hosmann did not hesitate to use these examples of forced converts as proof of the difficulty of obtaining sincere conversions from Judaism. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 2:1016, whose deep antipathy to Jews coexisted with a typical desire to obtain their conversion, nevertheless deplored the use of force to produce conversions.
 25. Adrian, *Send und Warnungsbrieff*, 29.
 26. See the imaginary conversation between a Jewish criminal and a Christian murderer who were executed at the same time in Hamburg. Since the Jew did not convert, and the accused murderer did not confess, the conversation between the two “unrepentant unbelievers” took place in hell. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution*, 89.
 27. For a Jewish criticism of this practice, Mülhausen, *Sefer ha-nizzahon*, 19, par. 21: “I re-proved them for doing injustice by releasing some Jews from the sentence of death in order that they might be baptized. For faith is not dependent upon water but upon the heart. If that Jew had believed their pseudo-religion in his heart, he would have converted before he was coerced.”
 28. Zeitmann, *Das grosse*. He baptized the Jew Levi Moses, convicted murderer of a Christian, who took the name Johann Matthäus Treu. On Zeitmann see Slouschz, “G. Th. Zeitmann.” See, similarly, the works by Martin Difenbach, Lutheran preacher in late seventeenth-century Frankfurt, who recorded the religious discussions he held with a Jew prior to his execution. *Judaeus Convertendus*, 129–30.

29. Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 29, 157.
30. Glanz, *Geschichte*, 53.
31. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 1:93. Eisenmenger inferred that this Jew said openly what most keep secretly to themselves, “heimlich unter ihnen,” because he knew he was about to die. He neglected to mention that the Jew had undoubtedly been solicited for baptism repeatedly; his dying remark came in response to that unwanted solicitation. See similarly his remarks at 2:516.
32. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution*, 29. According to *ibid.*, 63, the catching and killing of stray dogs was another of the executioner’s routine duties—to handle all sources of pollution in society. Evans does not speculate whether this was the link between Jews and dogs on the gallows.
33. Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 29, 138.
34. Andree, *Warhafftige*, 1–23.
35. For another description, see Glanz, *Geschichte*, 54. Schreiner, “Der Fall,” reprinted the proceedings of Anstedt as an “example of a Protestant Inquisition.” See the critical comments of Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 174–75, particularly for his reminder that Anstedt’s initial crime was not theological; the additional degradation as a Jew came only after he was convicted for a different crime.
36. Overdick, *Die rechtliche und wirtschaftliche Stellung*, 160, n. 7.
37. Glanz, *Geschichte*, 55.
38. Bursch, *Judentaufe*, 14. Renata Segre, “Neophytes,” 136, cites the case of an Italian Jew condemned to death for coin clipping; he converted to obtain amelioration of his punishment as he ascended to the stake.
39. Bursch, 42 and sources cited in n. 199.
40. *Ibid.*, 41.
41. Zeitmann, *Das Grosse*.
42. “Rariores sunt ac mala citréa in Moscovia”: Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 29, 84.
43. I have found numerous instances of such reversion in the city of Amsterdam alone. See my forthcoming article, “‘Ich will dich nach Holland schicken . . .’”
44. Among the more celebrated converts reputed to have reverted to Judaism: Julius Conrad Otto, author of *Gali Razia*, see Schudt, *Jüdischer Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 29, bk. 6, p. 88; Joachim Engelberger, converted to become Ferdinand Frantz, author of *Catholische Wegweiser*, punished by gruesome execution for his reversion. See Bursch, *Judentaufe*, 47. I thank Professor Yisrael Yuval for bringing this case to my attention. Friedrich Albrecht Christiani reverted in 1695 with his daughter: Carlebach, “Converts,” 78.
45. Bursch, *Judentaufe*, 44.
46. In early modern German drama, Jews were assigned the most objectionable roles; they could only escape their fate through conversion. Even then, their intractable natures usually outlived their conversions. “Ein jud ward christen, verdarb, und ward wieder reich”: the Jew returns to his original avaricious nature. See Frankl, *Der Jude*, 56, n.2.
47. Hirsch, *Sefer megalleh tekuphot*, introduction, on the difficulty of converting Jews and on converted Jews who had reverted to Judaism; Zengraf, *Disputatio Theologica*.

48. *Catalogum getauffter Juden nach alle seculis aufgesetzt*: “Der bestandigen and der wieder abgefallenen bekehrten Juden.”
49. Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 29, “Von Bekherung einiger Franckfurter und anderer Juden,” 83–163. Riederer introduced vol. 4 of Schudt with the anomalous case of two Jewish brothers converted in Frankfurt, 1681, who were, true to their adoptive name Bleibtreu, loyal Christians to the end.
50. Calmann, *Carrière of Carpentras*, 186, on fraudulent convert Isaac de Cavillon, who peddled his story from Carpentras to Nice.
51. Hirsch, *Sefer Megalleh Tekuphot*, introduction, n.p.: “das einige von denen bekehrten Juden wieder abfallen.”
52. Fehren, *Versuch einer Abhandlung*, n.p.
53. Glanz, *Geschichte*, 13. Glanz’s contention concerning the non-Jewish origins of this deception is based on philological analysis of *Gaunersprach*, the thieves’ cant, which did not use the Hebrew-derived word *schmatten* until Jewish criminals began to practice the scam in significant numbers.
54. Of the five baptisms recorded by Würfel in Nuremberg in the sixteenth century, one ended with the convert reverting, another with the convert judged to be a thief. In the seventeenth century, four out of eight ended “badly”; by the eighteenth century, there was a dramatic rise in the overall number of converts, twenty baptisms until 1755, with a dramatic drop in the proportion of “bad” ends for converts—only two. Unlike Würfel, I do not count conversion from one Christian denomination to another a “bad” outcome for a baptism.
55. Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 105.
56. Koch, *Sieg der Wahrheit*, 6.
57. Engerer, “Die verlohrenen Kinder,” 22. The sermon was preached at the “reconciliation” of Isaac Joseph of Paderborn. He converted to Christianity in Wittenberg, taking the name Christian Leib; he later reverted to Judaism in Amsterdam. He then returned to German lands as a Jew seeking conversion to Christianity. When his history was uncovered, he was imprisoned. He confessed his deviations from the church and was reconciled with it in a penitential ceremony.
58. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, 194.
59. Langmuir, “Thomas of Monmouth,” 835; emphasis added.
60. On Pablo Christiani, see Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 25–26; on Donin, see MacCoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 20–21.
61. Blumenkranz, “Jüdische und Christliche Konvertiten,” argued that in early medieval conversion autobiographies, converts from Christianity to Judaism converted out of attraction for their new faith, whereas converts from Judaism appear to have been previously alienated from Jewish life or thought. Their lifelong combative stances against Judaism may be explained as the continuation of existing critiques.
62. During the onslaught against the Talmud in the disputation of Paris, followed by the burning of the Talmud in 1242, the “confessions” of two Jewish rabbinic disputants were compiled by convert from Judaism Thibaut de Sezanne along with two other converts. The appendix *Extractiones de Talmud*, by convert Nicholas Donin, was written to justify the burnings of the Talmud. *ASRHJ* 9:69. The papal letter condemning the Talmud was based on Donin’s reports: “So we have heard [concerning the anti-

biblical force of the Talmud], since this is said to be the most important reason why Jews remain obstinate in their perfidy. . . . Books should be seized on the first Lent Saturday, in the morning, while the Jews are gathered in their synagogues”: Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 22. The church’s antagonism to the Talmud was strengthened by repeated attacks of Jewish converts. Joshua Lorki, later Heironimo de Santa Fe, who led Christians in the disputation of Tortosa, 1413–14, repudiated the Talmud as “Lying, foul, foolish, and abominable quibbles, contrary to the Law of God, to the Law of Nature and to the Law as written.”

Chapter 3. The Turning Point

1. See the numbers compiled by Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 150–63. In the half-century from 1600 to 1650, Friedrich found a total of eighty-five conversions mentioned in printed sources. This amounts to one or two each year in all German lands and includes cases in which entire families with young children converted. Even if the number is approximate, taking into account that the numbers grew progressively, a parallel period in the sixteenth century would scarcely have yielded higher numbers.
2. H. H. Ben-Sasson, “Jewish-Christian Disputation,” 372–85.
3. Hughes, *Early Modern Germany*, 24.
4. For Cologne, see Brisch, *Geschichte*, 2:59. Cologne’s tradition of converted Jews dated back at least to the early fourteenth century when the Allerheiligen Hospital was founded in 1311 to sustain recent or potential converts from Judaism. For Basel, see Gilly, *Spanien*.
5. This is the central argument of Kieckhefer, *Repression of Heresy*.
6. Cited from Johannes Eck’s *Ains Judenbuechlin*, in Nestle, *Nigri, Böhm, und Pellican*, 5: “Münch und Pfaffen oft aufgestanden seind wider die Juden zu disputieren, wie oft in Castilia und Navarra geschähen: Ich will nur ain teutschen nennen. Petrus Schwartz prediger ordens, wie er von Salamin kam, hebraisch und Arabisch gelernt . . . Erlangt bey dem Kaiser, das die Juden zu Regensburg mussten an sein predigt gan: In denen er allweg wider die Juden predigt.”
7. For descriptions of Schwarz/Nigri’s preaching in Nuremberg, see Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 96, entry for 1478; a more detailed description in Browe, *Judenmission*, 69–70.
8. Cited in Browe, *Die Judenmission*, 69–70.
9. Schwarz/Nigri’s *Stella Meschia* is identical to his *Tractatus ad perfid. Judaeorum* (Treatise against the Perfidious Jews) published in Latin (Esslingen, 1475) and in German, in a greatly expanded version by the same printer, in 1477. According to Nestle, *Nigri, Böhm, und Pellican*, 5, the text is a transcript of the “disputation” Schwarz held with the Jews of Regensburg in 1474. Only Johannes Capistrano, sent as papal legate and Inquisitor against the Hussites in 1451, made a similar attempt to persuade Jews in German lands to convert.
10. “yren geistlichen hunger czu püsen hab ich diss büchlein gemacht vnd nicht sie czu vervolgen wann ich hab yer person lieb”: Schwarz/Nigri, *Stella Meschia*, 5b, cited in Walde, *Christliche Hebraisten Deutschland*, 87, n. 3. Schwarz/Nigri’s unpublished work

of 1475, which circulated anonymously, *Tractatus de Judeorum et Christianorum*, concerned forced baptism, Jews and Saracens who had been baptized, and child baptism. Minty, “Kiddush Hashem,” 228.

11. Gilly, *Spanien, passim*.
12. J. Fürst, *Bibliotheca Judaica*, 2:152–53.
13. On Espina and the *Fortalitium* , see Netanyahu, *Origins of the Inquisition*, 814–24; McMichael, *Was Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah?*
14. Netanyahu, *Inquisition*, 823.
15. *Ibid.*, 1290, n. 24, suggests direct lines from the work of Espina to that of Eisenmenger and other German Judeophobes. Given the many German editions of Espina, this is not implausible.
16. Simon Dubnow, *Divrei yemei olam*, 6:91–93, argued for the influence of the Spanish example as a spur to German expulsions. The expulsions themselves, however, provide his only concrete evidence of “the Spanish disease” in German lands.
17. Rowan, “Ulrich Zasius,” 14.
18. Browe, *Die Judenmission*, 276–77.
19. Kinder, “Spain,” 230–37.
20. Yerushalmi, *Lisbon Massacre*, 69–80. The report, “Von dem christenlichen Streyt,” was published in at least three German-language editions within a very short time.
21. Chazan, “The New Christian Missionizing.”
22. Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 173–74; Selma Stern, *Josel*, 100.
23. Stern’s assessment, *Josel*, 102, was based on the account of Josel, as well as on the fact that Margaritha moved north, to Meissen and then to Leipzig, after this time. For Josel’s account, see Rosheim, *Sefer ha-miknah*, 15; *idem*, *Joseph me-Rosheim*, 345, from the “Trostschrift”: “darumben er [Margaritha] die Stadt Augspurg verschweren muest.” Similarly in his letter to the Strasburg city council of 1543, cited *ibid.*, 380: “gmelter gedaufter Jud [Margaritha] gifangen worden die stadt hot mussen verschweren.”
24. Berliner, ed., “Religionsgespräch”; Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 173–74.
25. Müller, *Judaismus*, introduction, n.p. Hamburg was home to a sizable Sephardic Jewish community, which constituted the target, along with German Jews, of Müller’s proselytizing activities.
26. See Rowland, “Revenge,” on Conrad Celtis’s pronouncements concerning the formation of a proud and distinct German humanist tradition.
27. On this subject see Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony*.
28. The literature on the Reuchlin–Pfefferkorn controversy is voluminous. See Kirn, *Das Bild*, for material pertaining to Pfefferkorn; and the collected studies in the recent volume *Reuchlin und die Juden*, eds. Herzig and Schoeps.
29. The project directed by Dr. Ittai Tamari, University of Applied Sciences, Cologne, “Hebräische Typographie im deutschsprachigen Raum,” to collect information on all Hebrew typefaces in German lands will shed new light on the incorporation of Hebrew in Christian presses.
30. Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 16.
31. François Tissard, cited in *ASRHJ* 13:181.
32. Skrabal, *Geschichte*, 8–16.

33. After the expulsion, Samuel traveled to Posen; he was later appointed chief rabbi of Greater Poland. Further on Margaritha see Diemling, “Christliche Ethnographien,” 17–27.
34. Similar, unconfirmed reports that he had subsequently turned Protestant circulated concerning the convert Matthew Adrian, baptized a Catholic. Le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 1:58.
35. Hsia, *Social Discipline*, introduction.
36. Cited from Bellarminus, *Controversiae*, bk. 4, in Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, 188–89.
37. Shalome ben Shalomoh, *A true narrative*, 2.
38. Fried, *Neupolierter*, n.p. [c.p. 30].
39. Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 159, n. 240. The conversions took place in 1700.
40. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 2:991.
41. *Ibid.*, 1:499; “emunah tefelah” and “emunah hadashah.”
42. Hartmann, *Oeconomia Conversionis*, 26.
43. Callenberg, *Neue summarische Nachricht* (1732), cited in Guggenheim–Grünberg, “Pfarrer Ulrich,” 15.
44. Martin Luther, “That Jesus Christ was born a Jew” (1523), cited in J. R. Marcus, *Jew in the Medieval World*, 166.
45. Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 167.
46. Anonymous, *Allerunterthänigste Adresse* (1720), 7, 11.
47. Misson, *Reise nach Italien*, 902–03.
48. Wagenseil, introduction to *Tela Ignea Satanae*.
49. Rotscheid, *Stephan Isaak*. I have based my account of the Isaac family on this book.
50. *Ibid.*, 99.
51. Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 112.
52. On the literature of Christian Hebraism and its interest in Jewish sectarianism in this period see Astren, “History.” Buxtorf argued that Jewish sectarianism was a result of the corruption of doctrine among them: Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism*, 94. For examples, see Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 4, bk. 6, ch. 27, 232: “Von den heutigen Secten der Juden.” Schudt begins with the Samaritans and advances through the Karaites. Lent, *De Moderna Theologia*, 399.
53. On rabbinic discussion over the status of Karaism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Assaf, *Be-oholei Ya’akov*, 185–89; Modena, *She’elot u-teshuvot ziknei Yehudah*, no. 77, dated 1615.
54. Quoted in Pullan, “The Conversion,” 55.
55. M. Marcus, *The Ceremonies*, iv.
56. Pfefferkorn, *Juden Spiegel*, fols. a^v–a2^r, repr. in Kirn, *Das Bild*, 205–06; similarly fol. c2^v, Kirn, *Das Bild*, 220: “Haben also durch yren vnuerstandt yren glawben vnd gesetz in zehen teyl gheteylt, der eyn helt ynd gelawbt das, der ander eyn anders, der drit sust, der vierd so, vnd wissen yn yrer schriffit niet hinder noch herre.”
57. “Even today,” Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*, 40a–b, 41b. “כנופיות-קשרים-כרות” *ibid.*, 43a.
58. *Ibid.*, 79a–80a.
59. *Ibid.*, 43b–44a.

60. Margaritha, *Wie aus dem heyligen 53. Capittel*, ii–iv.
61. Josel of Rosheim, *Sefer ha-miknah*, 10–11.
62. Gerson, *Jüden Thalmud*, 1:42.
63. Similarly, Augusti, *Merckwürdige Lebens = Geschichte*, 64, on the tyranny of rabbis who gain compliance through “Machtspruche and Bannstrahlen,” decrees and bans.
64. Frey, *The Converted Jew*, 21.
65. The impression that this was a Karaite is strengthened by the fact that Augusti and his companion traveled through Russia, where they met a merchant from Kaffa, home of a Karaite community. The companion had connections in the Crimea, largest area of Karaite settlement at the time, which helped them obtain passports and other necessary travel documents. Augusti, *Merckwürdige Lebens = Geschichte*, 26.
66. *Ibid.*, 28–32.
67. *Ibid.*, 35.
68. Callenberg, *Bericht an einige christliche Freunde*, Fortsetzung, 9:342. Shohat, *Im hilufe*, 8.

Chapter 4. The Last Deception

1. Romans 11:24–27.
2. Gow, *Red Jews*, 97.
3. For late North European apocalypses, see Klein, “The Apocalypse”; E. Cohen, “Jheronimus Bosch.”
4. Gow, *Red Jews*, 3, 92.
5. *LW* 54:436–37, winter 1542/3, Table Talk no. 5504.
6. For R. Joseph of Arles, see Aescoly, *Ha-tenu’ot*, 433; H. H. Ben-Sasson, “The Reformation.” Even before Luther, Sephardic courtier and scholar Abravanel recorded: “There is a tradition among the Jews of Ashkenaz, that because the seat of the Emperor is there, the messiah will come there [first].” Abravanel, *Perush*, Zechariah 1:16, p. 281, col. 4.
7. Gerson, *Jüden Thalmud*, introduction, n.p.: “kurtz vor dem Ende der Welt”; similarly, Terrel, *Juden Tauff*, 609, at the baptism of Gerson’s son, “in diesen letzten Zeiten.”
8. Christiani, *Juden Glaube*, 66; Gottfried, *Yeshua mashiach . . . Jesus der wahre Messias*, introduction.
9. Extensive discussion of the primary sources, in Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 19–29, 55–62; C. M. Clark, *The Politics of Conversion*, 9–32.
10. Cited in Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 32; 224, n. 2. Spanish theologian Alonso d’Espina’s vision of the endtime served as a transition between medieval Antichrist traditions and later, more sharply anti-Jewish, vernacular versions. Gow, *Red Jews*, 123–24.
11. Cited in Gow, *Red Jews*, 362–63, from a Middle High German *Historienbibel* of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. The Antichrist biography contained many inverted parallels to the medieval *Toledot Yeshu*, a Jewish polemical counter-history. Abulafia, “Invectives.”
12. McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 49–50.
13. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, bk. 2.

14. On conversion as the almost universal ending of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *Fastnachtspiele*, see Frankl, *Der Jude*, 8, 16, 24, 28.
15. *Ibid.*, 58–59.
16. *Ibid.*, 66.
17. Folz, “Ein Spil.” This translation is from Gow, *Red Jews*, 375.
18. Gow, *Red Jews*, 374.
19. The theory that Jews intended to use their wives to undermine all of Christendom was first translated into a specific German sphere by Eisenmenger. “If Jews were only commanded to murder the seven Canaanite nations, why do they hope to kill all Christians in the time of the messiah? The fact that they do harbor such hopes, is proof enough that it is permitted to them.” Eisenmenger cited the commentary of David Kimchi on Obadiah 1:20, to the effect that the Canaanites of the Bible had fled to Germany; thus the German people were identical to the biblical Canaanites whom the Israelites were commanded to destroy. *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 2:202.
20. Grimmelshausen, *Der abentheuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch*, 1669; Eng. trans. *Simplicius Simplicissimus*.
21. Grimmelshausen, “The False Messiah,” 279. For another version emphasizing the girl’s virginity, see Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 2:665–66. Eisenmenger attributed the story to a source dated 1222.
22. Grimmelshausen, “False Messiah,” 286.
23. Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 102.
24. Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*, 13a: “Beten sy auff dn Moschiach und wenn sy dis glaubeten/ weren sie mit uns schon eins”; *ibid.*, 98a. The deathbed scene, *ibid.*, 34b.
25. A list of converts from this period who stressed the centrality of the messiah for their conversion would far exceed the space and scope of this note. See, e.g., John, *An Account*, 2–42; Steinhardin, *Lebens=Geschichte*, 5–6: “dass wir Juden schon über 1700 Jahre vergeblich auf den Messias warteten, da Er doch wirklich gekommen seye”; note also her prayers as a Christian to “Herrn Messias” (Lord Messiah), 8.
26. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, 3.
27. Gerson, *Jüden Thalmud*, 1:351. Gerson, converted in 1600, wrote this book in 1607. “Die Jüden haben etliche falsche Messias angenommen und sind dadurch betrogen worden,” 1:350.
28. Carlebach, “Between History and Hope,” 5–7, 22–23.
29. Cited in Silver, *History of Messianic Speculation*, 145, n. 142.
30. Pfefferkorn, *Speculum adhortationis iudaice ad Christum*: “Och wie iemerliche wir bedrogen synd,” cited in Kirn, *Das Bild*, 30, n. 68.
31. Kirn, *Das Bild*, 30, n. 68; 30–37.
32. Cited in Silver, *History*, 145, n. 141. Münster published two editions of his work whose central message was the Jewish error concerning the messiah: *Vikkuah, Christiani Hominis cum Iudaeo, pertinaciter prodigiosis suis opinionibus & scripturae violentis interpretationibus addicto, colloquium* (Dialogue of a Christian and a Jew Stubbornly Addicted to his own strange Opinions about the Messiah) (Basel, 1529) and *Messias Christianorum et Iudaeorum* (Messiah of the Christians and Jews) (Basel, 1539). I thank Prof. Stephen Burnett for allowing me to read his illuminating study, “A Dialogue of the Deaf,” prior to its publication. Cf. Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, 48–49.

33. Lent, *Schediasma*.
34. Full text of Isaac's comments and further discussion in Carlebach, "Between History and Hope," 8 and n. 40.
35. Gerson, *Jüden Thalmud*, 2:400–07.
36. Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*, 105a.
37. Berger, ed. and trans., *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, no. 242.
38. Bächtold-Staubli, *Handwörterbuch*, 1:206–07.
39. For other examples see Felss, *Weg=Weiser der Jüden*, 83, who cited this passage as the greatest cause of Jewish stubbornness; Friedenheim, *Yehudi me-ba-hutz*, 108, gloated that R. Jacob Möllin (Mahari"l) had offered this solace 357 years earlier, "and still your messiah has not come." Selig, *Der Jude*, 9:29, cited the passage as being "of such worth that they call it the 'Golden Af,' referring to the time when the pious King Friedrich told them: The Jews have an 'Afen' in their holy Scriptures which they should inscribe in gold letters."
40. Glückel, *The Memoirs*, 197.
41. Basnage, *Histoire des juifs*, introduction to vol. 9.
42. Kidder, *A Demonstration*, 3:391. Section on Sabbatai, 3:408–21.
43. Méchoulan, "Au dossier," 194: ". . . che Giusù Christo, nato di Maria Vergine, è il vero Messia promesso alli ebrei, et ch'essi sono ignoranti, perfidi, et ostinati nel errore et malitia luoro se sperano che n'habbia a venir un altro."
44. Eidelberg, "Gilgulav shel ha-ra'ayon"; Buchenroeder, *Eilende Messias*, n.p.
45. Buchenroeder, *Eilende Messias*, n.p.
46. Hirsch, *Sefer megalleh tekuphot*, introduction; "false and deceitful": Buchenroeder, *Eilende Messias*, n.p.
47. Although Gerson's list served as the basis for others, including the *Schediasma* of Lent, it was not updated in later editions to include Sabbatai. (The latest edition I examined was published in 1685.)
48. Hosmann, *Das Schwer zu bekehrende*, 74–104.
49. On the list as a literary category, see Smith, *Imagining Religion*, 36–53; on "listen-wissenschaft" as a polemical tool, see Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, 98–100. Among the many who relied on Lent were Kidder, *A Demonstration* 3:389–421; Imbonati, *Magen/Bibliotheca*; Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 2:647–66; Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 27, 43; Anonymous, *Dissertation* 28–30; Friedrich Jacob Fürst, *Kräftiger Beweiss*, 28–31.
50. Lent, *Schediasma*, section on Sabbatai Zevi, 76–102.
51. Fürst, *Kräftiger Beweiss*, 26.
52. Johann Freiderich Riederer, introduction to Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, 4:

Du blinder Hauffe du! Ihr armen Kinder Levi!
greiffi mit den Händen doch dass schon Maschiach kam
Das euer falscher Christ/der Sabbatai Sevi
Wie Andre hiebevor/ ein garstig Ende nahm
dencket dass man eure List/und heilloss Wesen kennet
ob ihr uns hundertmahl gleich Edomiter nennet.

See the similar sentiments on a broadsheet on which Sabbatai is depicted, along with another figure, underneath a typical *Judensau* motif. The figures are identified in caption as “Sabathai Sevi ein falcher Mesias/ Jacobus Melstinius ein falscher Mesias.” The text underneath the illustration reads:

*Zwey erzBetrüger sieht man hier beysammen stehen
Die blinde Juden Schaar die hat sie angesehen
Vor dem der wahrer Gott, und aller Heyland ist
Mein Christ! bejammre doch des Teuffels Trug und list
Der wahre Mesias der soll bey sie noch kommen
So sehr hate Aberwitz die Juden eingenomen.*
Shachar, *The Judensau*, plate 40.

53. Weinryb, “Historisches und Kulturhistorisches,” 331.
54. Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 27, 47.
55. For the account of Edzard, I have relied primarily on Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 110–18.
56. Edzard received news of the movement as it reached the Jews of Hamburg. According to Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 27, 47, Edzard told him in 1685 that the wealthy Portuguese Jew Manuel Texera, Resident in Hamburg of Swedish Queen Christina, had shown him letters and news reports from the Orient concerning the latest wonders of Sabbatai on numerous occasions. The collapse of the movement caused Texera great embarrassment.
57. Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr*, 110.
58. For examples of possible reversion, see the cases of Aron Margalita (b. 1663, Zolkiew), who converted to the Reformed Church in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and then to Lutheranism in Hamburg in 1712, probably under the influence of Edzard. He reportedly died in a penitentiary because he expressed a desire to revert to Judaism (A. Fürst, *Christen und Juden*, 192); and of Friedrich Albrecht Christiani, another convert influenced by Edzard (b. Prossnitz, 1647, converted Strassburg 1673), who reportedly reverted to Judaism together with his daughter (Reineccius, foreword to Christiani, *Juden Glaube* (1713), 86).
59. Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 112b. (Pages 111–12 are erroneously paginated twice; this is the second set.)
60. Kidder, *A Demonstration*, 3:473, 484.
61. Christiani, “Lebens=Lauff,” in his *Juden Glaube*, 66–67; original text in Appendix 235–36.
62. Maier, *Danck und Lob*, introduction, n.p. See the discussion in Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 758, concerning the rumor that Sabbatai was burned. Scholem devoted the briefest notice to the devastating effect of the movement on individuals who converted, preferring to concentrate on collective Sabbatian conversions: Carlebach, “Sabbatianism.”
63. John, *An Account*, 2–3.
64. Matthew 24:5.
65. Da Costa, *Israel and the Gentiles*, 475.

66. Fried, *Neupolierter*, 17 ff., listed nine false Jewish messiahs; he lavished the most space on Sabbatai, 31–38, and concluded his section with the Antichrist, 56 ff.
67. Weille, *Die Herrlichkeit*, 27, 11.
68. Cited in Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 758.
69. On this convert see Hertz, “Women at the Edge,” 87.
70. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, 20–34.
71. Scholem, “Ha-tenu’a ha-shabta’it be-Folin,” 94–95. Scholem’s sources can now be augmented by a recent illuminating study of Kemper’s theology by Eliot Wolfson, “Messianism in the Christian Kabbalah.”
72. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 2:666–68. Eisenmenger’s account, which appeared very shortly after the event, may have been based on a report in the local press, cited by Scholem, “Ha-tenu’a ha-shabta’it be-Folin,” 100, because the number of Polish Jews, 120 individuals/31 families, is exactly the same.
73. Phillipus’s account, “Weg nach Jerusalem,” appended to his published sermon of 1715, is cited verbatim in A. Fürst, *Christen und Juden*, 259–60. The denominational scattering of the group may indicate that its members were alienated from their communities before they joined Hasid’s group. I thank Jonathan Elukin for this insight.
74. Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 27, p. 62. Schudt’s description of the spiritual devastation among the followers of R. Judah Hasid—“viele wieder zurück in Europam gekehret deren ein gut Theil den christliche glauben angenom-men”—accords well with that of Phillipus, but his numbers are so inflated (1300 adherents, of whom 500 died) as to be puzzling, as he claims to have checked the news reports with the converts himself.
75. C. M. Clark, *Politics of Conversion*, 49.
76. According to F. J. Fürst, *Kräftiger Beweiss*, 28, “es seye ein solcher Anhänger des Schabbasi ohnlängst zu Hall in Sachsen gewesen, welcher . . . ein magisches Buch gemacht habe (wovon Callenberg eine Abschrift besitze).”
77. See, e.g., Schultz, *Fernere Nachricht*, 3:66: “Vor Tische kam ein Jude in das haus, mit welchem der Herr Woltersdorff von dem Sabbita Sevi redete”; 132: “dass weil die Juden, den nach dem Worte Gottes gekommenen Messiam nicht haben wollen annehmen, so seyen sie hernach durch falsche Messias zur Strafe betrogen worden als hier in Smirna durch den Sabitha Sevi.”
78. Anonymous, *Der Erzbetrüger Sabbatai Sevi*. On Callenberg’s insitute and the Sabbatian connection, see Shohat, *Im hilufei*, 175–82.
79. Anton, *Kurze Nachricht*; *idem*, *Nachlese zu seiner letztern Nachricht*; Liebes, *Sod ha-emunah*, 228.
80. Megerlin, *Geheime Zeugnisse*, 59.
81. The fictional account, S. Brett, “A True Relation of the Proceedings of the Great Council of the Jews Assembled . . . in Hungary . . . to examine Scriptures concerning Christ—October 12 1650,” in Crouch, ed., *Memorable Remarks*, 108–18, also cited by Megerlin in *Geheime Zeugnisse*, 64. His term for false messiahs: “göbern schein-Messiassen.”
82. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 196–221; segment on Sabbatai, 208–21.

83. *Ibid.*, 209–10. Frey’s English-language book was republished more than a dozen times in the early nineteenth century, propelling this discourse before a new audience in a later generation.

Chapter 5. Writing the Divided Self

1. Cf. early American Puritan narratives: Caldwell, *Puritan Conversion Narrative*; Gilpin, *Millenarian Piety*, 6–8.
2. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, 137–38, 158–59.
3. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 43.
4. On the role of the Reformation in reviving the tendency to autobiography, see A. M. Clark, *Autobiography*, 31; Muschg, introduction to Thomas Platter, *Lebensbeschreibung. On Luther’s Turmerlebnis*, see Harran, *Luther on Conversion*, 174–93.
5. Friedrich Albrecht Augusti baptized a Jew who did not leave a written account of his life, yet his son assured Christian readers, the convert had “told his *Bekehrungsgeschichte* (conversion account) to my father”: Ernst Friedrich Anton Augusti, *Nachrichten*, 115.
6. Bok, *Secrets*, 73–80.
7. On Paul’s conversion, see Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 285–300; *idem*, “Conversion and Messianism,” 296–339.
8. On Hermannus’s autobiography, see Misch, *Geschichte der Autobiographie*, 3.2:505–22; Blumenkranz, “Jüdische und Christliche Konvertiten,” 275–79; Saltman, “Hermann’s *Opusculum de Conversione Sua*”; Abulafia, “The Ideology of Reform,” 50–58; Morrison, *Conversion and Text*, 113; Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews and Christians*, 222–30. Its publication in the seventeenth century renders Hermann’s autobiography relevant as a literary model in the early modern period, regardless of its historicity.
9. Pfefferkorn, cited in Kirn, *Das Bild*, 9, n. 2; Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*, final page; Gerson, *Chelec*, dedication page; Brenz, *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlangen-Balg* (1681), introduction. Puritan preachers routinely used similar expressions, but, as Patricia Caldwell has observed, their female parishioners rarely employed the metaphor of childbirth for conversion: *Puritan Conversion Narrative*, 26, n. 46.
10. Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogus Petri et Moysi Judaei*, in Migne, *Patrologiae . . . Latina*, 157:535–672; Jeremy Cohen, “The Mentality.”
11. On the significance of dreams in English (but not American) Puritan conversion narratives, see Caldwell, *Puritan Conversion Narrative*, 13–26.
12. Christiani, *Lebens=Lauff* (1713), 66.
13. Cited and trans. in A. Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*, 247.
14. Hirsch, *Sefer megalleh tekuphot*, “heraus gerissen.”
15. E. F. Augusti, *Nachrichten*, 61–62. The manual to which he referred, “Buche der Verzeichnisse” was published anonymously in Amsterdam. Augusti described its contents as “refutations and mockeries against the New Testament.”
16. Koch, *Sieg der Wahrheit*, 7; Franck, *Das von dem Stamm Juda*, 5. Franck converted to the Lutheran Evangelical church in Lübeck in 1696.
17. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 8.

18. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community*, 152–53, noted that for the early nineteenth century, one conversion within a family tended to influence others, precipitating a chain of conversions.
19. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 9.
20. Selig, in Graf, ed., *Judaicus Conversus*, 376.
21. Cf. Shohat, *Im hilufei*, 316, n. 10, where family members contemplate conversion with apparent openness. Frey, *Converted Jew*, related a chance meeting with a Scripture-quoting fellow passenger as having opened his eyes (11), although he had earlier stated that his uncle had converted to Christianity (3). The description of William James, in his classic study *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 184, provides an interesting example, somewhat beyond our chronological scope, of the underemphasis on family members as an influence on conversion. “The most curious case of sudden conversion with which I am acquainted is that of M. Alphonse Ratisbonne, a free thinking French Jew, to Catholicism, at Rome in 1842 . . . the predisposing conditions appear to have been slight. He had an elder brother who had been converted and was a Catholic priest.” James’s discounting of a sibling conversion parallels the pattern of our converts.
22. Carlebach, “Converts and their Narratives,” 69, n. 19.
23. See the remarks of Yuval, “An Ashkenazic Autobiography,” 543.
24. Margaritha, *Der gantze Jüdische glaube* (1705), t.p.; Felix, *Sendschreiben*, 5.
25. Saltman, “Hermann’s *Opusculum de Conversione Sua*.” A similar argument serves as the basis for Netanyahu’s assertion that Alonso de Espina could not have been of converso origin: “Alonso de Espina.”
26. See, e.g., the sermons of Theodore John, *An Account*; Petrus Rehbinder, *Judaicus Baptizatus*; Spoerls, *Kurze Betrachtung*.
27. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 3.
28. For other examples, see Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, “On the Periphery,” 625, n. 11, particularly on the translation of von Carben’s *Juden Büchlein* from German into Latin (*Opus Aureum*) by Ortwin Gratius, *ibid.* 626. See Margaritha’s *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* (Leipzig, 1531), title page. On the degree to which Johannes Pfefferkorn wrote his own work, see Kirn, *Das Bild*, 4–5; see Goldberg, *Ha-mumarim*, 14, n. 4, on a purportedly autobiographical letter of the convert Michael, dated 1584. Goldberg cast doubt on its authenticity because Michael wrote the letter in fluent Polish only a year after his conversion.
29. Paul of Prague, *Grundliche und klare Beweisung*; Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 110. Koch, *Sieg der Wahrheit*, 13–23.
30. Ben Shalomoh, *A true narrative*, introduction, v. The author twice reassured readers that the printed version constituted an accurate transcription and that all discrepancies between editions “were taken from his own mouth.”
31. Lebrecht, *Authentic Narrative*, probably printed in England shortly after the death of the subject.
32. Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, and Harpham, “Conversion and the Language of Autobiography.”
33. The sixteenth and seventeenth century witnessed a flowering of Jewish autobiographical writing. While Renaissance Italian-Jewish autobiographies, such as those of

Isaac min Halevi'im, Abraham Yagel, and Leone Modena might seem the least relevant to the works under consideration here, their influence cannot be discounted. Christiani published a translation of Modena's *Sur me-ra'* as *Der gelehrte und bekehrte Spieler*, a treatise on gambling; he may well have taken an interest in other aspects of Modena's career. On Modena's autobiography see Davis, "Fame and Secrecy"; for Yagel, see Ruderman, *A Valley of Vision*, 23–27.

An independent legacy of German-Jewish autobiography existed in the early modern period. It includes the journals of Josel of Rosheim, *Joseph me-Rosheim: Ketavim histori'im*, 277–310, ed. H. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt; Yom Tov Lipmann Heller's *Megillat Eiva*; Asher b. Eliezer ha-Levi, *Die Memoiren*; P. Bloch, *Ein vielbegehrter Rabbiner*, containing Juda Mehler Reutlingen's *Shebut Yehudah*, which begins "The day I have become a person, the day I married;" the *Memoirs* of Glückel of Hameln; the anonymous Bohemian Jew in Alexander Marx, "A Seventeenth Century Autobiography"; Pinhas Katzenellenbogen's *Sefer yesh manhilin*, and Jacob Emden's *Megillat sefer*.

34. Cited in Boyarin, *Storm from Paradise*, 66.
35. Christian, *Jüdischer Hertzklöpffer*, n.p.; Koch, *Sieg der Wahrheit*, 13.
36. Christiani, *Lebens = Lauf* (1713), 65.
37. Cited de Weille and de Weille, *Het Geslacht de Weille*, 58, from the foreword to de Veil's translation of Maimonides' *Yad ha-hazaka*. On de Veil's works, see Dienstag, "Christian Translators," 302–04, and bibliography cited there.
38. Xeres, *An Address to the Jews*, 2–3. Xeres, from Saphia in North Africa, may have been of Sephardic descent. See the testimony about him appended to his *Address* by Peter Fleuriot.
39. Koch, *Sieg der Wahrheit*, 13–16.
40. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 10, 15.
41. E. F. Augusti, *Nachrichten*, 14–16.
42. *Ibid.*, 43.
43. See numerous additional examples in Shohat, *Im hilufei*, 182–85 and in the bibliography to this book.
44. E.g. the nearly contemporary, full-length autobiography of Asher b. Eliezer ha-Levi, *Die Memoiren*.
45. Mintz, *Banished from their Father's Table*, 4.
46. See, e.g., Victor von Carben, cited in Kirn, *Das Bild*, 36, n. 90.
47. Friedrich Albrecht Augusti, *Merckwürdige Lebens=Geschichte*. The biography, ostensibly written by a friend, was undoubtedly inspired by Augusti himself, a reversal of the more usual pattern. See the early criticism of Augusti's Jewish expertise by Baumgarten, *Nachrichten*, 1:341–51; *Jewish Encyclopedeia*, s.v. "Friedrich Albrecht Augusti"; and le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 1:381–86. See the extensive and defensive portrait written by his son, Ernst Friedrich Anton Augusti, *Nachrichten*.
48. J. C. Gottfried, *Yeshua mashiach ha-amiti*, t.p.
49. Schwab, *Detectum velum Mosaicum*, introduction, n.p. On the iconography of elephants and trees as they related to Jews, Christians, and the Law, and a possible reason for Schwab's choice of this image, see Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion*, 39–69: "The Elephant and the Law: Lex Militans."

50. Yuval, “An Ashkenazic Autobiography,” 564; Marx, “Seventeenth Century Autobiography,” 269–70.
51. Le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 1:378; Hess, *Der Juden Geissel*, pt. 2, ch. 4; Schwab, *Detectum velum Mosaicum*, ch. 2, pt. 1.
52. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 30–31.
53. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 9.
54. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 34.
55. *Ibid.*, 36.
56. *Ibid.*, 41–42.
57. “Sich würde Schmadden, d.i. taufen lassen, und ein Christ werden”: Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:8–9.
58. Fried, *Neupolierter*, 33. Fried cited a text of the “ma’aseh Tola” that he discovered as a child, in which Jesus is called “cozof” and “Asuspanim” (brazen and impertinent). When Jews wanted to use strong words of opprobrium against Christians, he reported that they said “Jeschu Netz”; they used the name of Jesus alone as a curse word. Colloquial anti-Christian usages among Jews were frequently listed by converts.
59. Corvino, *Israel’s und des Jüdischen Volckes*, 2, 7. Corvino based his sermon on Job 4:12, “davar yegunav . . . ein heimliches Wort.”
60. Gerson, *Jüden Thalmud*, introduction, n.p.
61. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 48.
62. See, e.g., *supra* p. 167.
63. Christian, *Jüdischer Hertzklöpffer*, n.p.
64. Matthia Roth, *Die Hoffnung Israels*, 2.
65. *Ibid.*, 98.
66. Guggenheim-Grünberg, “Pfarrer Ulrich,” 4–5.
67. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 52.
68. Jacobs, *The Life*, 12.
69. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, 4–5. Bon included the text of a letter of introduction from Christian Friedrich Knorr, superintendent of Hannover, which described him as “a Jew born in Wittling, once a slaughterer, now a soldier, whose eagerness for conversion attested to his status as a lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
70. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 55, “Schiffeles garten.”
71. Fried, *Neupolierter*, 122.
72. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 26.
73. *Ibid.*, 30–31.
74. Felix, *Sendschreiben eines Proselyten*, 8.
75. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 53–54.
76. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 24–25.
77. Jacobs, *Life*, 16.
78. Guggenheim-Grünberg, “Pfarrer Ulrich,” 7.
79. Guggenheim-Grünberg, “Pfarrer Ulrich,” 7.
80. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 55.

81. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, 22. Bon noted that he used the tefillin thrice daily. This is probably an error of his Christian editor, who thought it an accoutrement to all prayers, not just the morning prayer.
82. *Ibid.*, 5–6.
83. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 54–57.
84. Guggenheim-Grünberg, “Pfarrer Ulrich,” 5–6.
85. Bugenhagen, *Tröstlicher warhaffter Unterricht*, 62a–63a.
86. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, 16–17. Bon’s descriptions, written within three months of his conversion, are particularly detailed and vivid.
87. *Ibid.*, 21.
88. Spiess, *Geistliche Reden*, 23–26.
89. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, Exorcismum: “Ich beschwere dich/du unreiner Jüdischer Geist/bey dem Nahmen des Vaters, Sohnes, und heiligen Geistes/das du ausfahret und weichest von diesem Diener Jesus Christus, Amen . . . Fahre aus du unreiner Jüdischer Geist/und gib Raum dem heiligen Geiste.”
90. Holländer, *Die Wahrheit*, 2: “Ich bin . . . dein liebes Kind trotz Teufel Welt und aller Sünd.” On the history and influence of exorcism within Christian conversion ceremonies, see Reitzenstein, *Die Vorgeschichte der Christlichen Taufe*, 188 ff., and the relevant documents in Hillgarth, *Christianity and Paganism*.
91. Gerson, *Chelec*, 678. Gerson, for one, internalized this. He wrote *Jüden Thalmud* “to refute the devil and his church,” n.p.
92. Heunischen, *Gerader Himmels=Weg*, 44, 7.
93. Corvino, *Israel’s und des Jüdischen Volckes*, vii.
94. Fried, *Neupolierter*, 112.
95. Horwitz, “Judaism despite Christianity,” 315.
96. See the comments in Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, 114–18; Kalkar, *Israel und die Kirche*, 152–53; and the baptismal/exorcism proceedings of Marcus Moses in M. Roth, *Die Hoffnung Israels*, 122.
97. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, 27.
98. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 32. Of course, this was the custom outside Germany as well, and in many other religions.
99. *Ibid.*, 33.
100. M. Roth, *Die Hoffnung Israels*, introduction, n.p.
101. Moses Aaron of Cracow became Johannes Christianus Jacobus: Heunischen, *Gerader Himmels = Weg*, 44.
102. *Ibid.*, 7, 30–32.
103. Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 111, concerning the baptism of a twenty-three-year-old Jew, Michael of Prague, on 21 Dec. 1659.
104. Koch, *Sieg der Wahrheit*, 1, described an audience of thousands come to witness the rebirth of his protégé. Oettinger, *Heilsame Mittel*, introduction, described his baptism in 1711 as “volkreich.” Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, 27, remarked that the church was never so full as on the day of his baptism.
105. Schwab, *Detectum velum Mosaicum*, 8, was baptized in 1613 on the day of penitent Mary Magdalen in full assembly of the Catholic church in Paderborn.

106. *Il eut pour Parrain et Marraine*

*Le Roy, nôtre Sire, et la Reine;
Ce fur l'Evesque de Soissons
Qui le baptiza sur les Fonts;
De Gens, une troupe infinie,
Voyans cette cérémonie . . .*

Cited in de Weille and de Weille, *Het Geslacht de Weille*, 59.

107. See Jakobowicz, *Jews and Gentiles*, 47–48.

108. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, 111, cites the research of psychologist Chana Ullman, who found that a significant proportion of contemporary converts came from homes with absent or weak fathers; the relationship they formed with the converter was often that of child to father-surrogate.

109. Kaufmann, “Rabbi Zevi Ashkenazi”; Schieber, “Mendel of Buda in Nuremberg.”

110. See P. Christian, *Jüdischer Hertzklöpffer*.

111. From the memoir of Aron Isak, first Jew to secure the right of residence in Sweden, in Leo Schwarz, ed., *Memoirs of my People*, 172–73.

112. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 7.

113. Besser, *Die Mittel*, 2.

114. Koch, *Sieg der Wahrheit*, 17, 18.

115. F. A. Augusti, *Merckwürdige Lebens=Geschichte*, 18, 81.

116. Lebrecht, *Authentic Narrative*.

117. Austerlitz, *Die Gewissheit*. He mentioned writing his *Lebens=Lauff* as the introduction to a different work, “Erklärung und gottseelige Gedancken über das Hohe Lied Salomo,” but I have been unable to locate it.

118. *Ibid.*, 4.

119. Besser, *Die Mittel*, 14.

120. Felix, *Sendschreiben eines Proselyten*, title page.

121. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, title page.

122. F. A. Augusti, *Merckwürdige Lebens=Geschichte*, introduction, iii.

123. The colorful life story of Augusti was issued in numerous versions and reprints. It first appeared as a biography, ostensibly written by a friend: *Merckwürdige Lebens=Geschichte* (Erfurt, 1751). It was immediately attacked as overstating the Jewish qualifications of the convert: S. J. Baumgarten, *Nachrichten von merkwürdigen Büchern*, (Halle, 1752), 1:341–51; see also *Jewish Encyclopedea*, “Friedrich Albrecht Augusti”; le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 381–86. His son, Ernst Friedrich Anton Augusti, published his memoir of his father, *Nachrichten von dem Leben, Schicksalen und Bekehrung Friedrich Albrecht Augusti eines vormaligen jüdischen Rabbi . . .* (Gotha, 1783). In 1885, Wilhelm Faber reworked and published *Herschel-Augusti: Eine abenteuerliche, wunderliche, und doch durchaus wahre Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1885). Rediscovered by Thuringian pastor Wesselhöft, the tract came to the attention of Delitzsch, who published it as part of a series by the Institutum Judaicum Delitzchianum; reprinted from the institute’s periodical *Saat auf Hoffnung*, 4 (1866); and in Carl Axenfeld’s *Leben von den Toten* (Bremen, 1874). Axenfeld lists other editions of Augusti biographies in the possession of the institute: *Friedrich Albrecht Augusti, ein Bekherter aus dem*

- Judenthum* (Berlin, 1824; 1831). Thus, versions of this biography continued to be read, published, and circulated through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
124. Reineccius republished the *Lebens=Lauff* in 1705, almost a decade after Christiani's reversion. Reineccius, introduction to *Juden Glaube*, 81.
 125. Besser, *Die Mittel*, 2:19–21.
 126. Austerlitz, *Die Gewissheit*, 5, 9.
 127. Xeres, *An Address*, 1.
 128. I have used the 2nd ed., *Riti e costumi degli ebrei* (Madrid, 1738). See the remarks of Segre, "Neophytes," 138.
 129. Wagenseil, *Hoffnung der Erlösung Israels*; Matthia Roth, *Die Hoffnung Israels*, 5. In contrast to the German lands, where theologians hoped for mass conversions but faced disappointing results, in Italy Jews were being induced to convert by the large numbers of Jews who had already converted. Pullan, "Conversion of the Jews," 53.
 130. Even in the nineteenth century, converts of widely disparate backgrounds were clustered together as a distinct historical entity, often by scholars who were converts themselves: A. Fürst, *Christen und Juden*; Kalkar, *Israel und die Kirche*; Hausmeister, *Merkwürdige Lebens- und Bekehrungsgeschichten*.
 131. Fried, *Neupolierter*, 121.
 132. Guggenheim-Grünberg, "Pfarrer Ulrich," 9.
 133. F. A. Augusti, *Merckwürdige Lebens=Geschichte*, 113. "Frommer Proselyten Trost und Aufmunterung zur Glaubensbeständigkeit, mit einer Vorrede Herrn JC Brückners." According to Augusti's son, this work was prepared for publication but never actually published.
 134. M. Roth, *Hoffnung Israels*, 100. Among the works he gave Marcus Moses to read were Gerson's *Jüden Thalmud*, Ragstadt von Weille's *Herrlichkeit*, as well as Wagenseil's *Tela Ignea Satanae*, 98.
 135. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 75.
 136. Gottfried, *Geschichte des Lebens*, 3–5, 68, 72–75.
 137. Hirsch, *Sefer megalleh tekuphot*, introduction, n.p.; Christfels, *Hilkhot shevu'ot ha-yehudim*, t.p.; Frey, *Converted Jew*, 34. See, e.g., *ibid.*, ch. 4: "Remarkable Circumstances which led him to a Farther Acquaintance with Divine Truth."
 138. E. F. Augusti, *Nachrichten*, 59.
 139. Frey, *Converted Jew*, introduction (1816 ed.), vi.
 140. Le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 1:371.
 141. See, e.g., Ernst Bertling, introduction to Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, n.p.
 142. Wegele, *Geschichte der Universität Würzburg*, 2: 42–43, no. 20.
 143. F. A. Augusti, *Merckwürdige Lebens=Geschichte*, 65.
 144. Kirn, *Das Bild*, 11, asserts incorrectly that Meir Pfefferkorn was unknown. See the anonymous work, *A Hebrew Chronicle from Prague*, ed. A. David, 23.
 145. Staffelstainer, *Von der Iuden Ceremonien . . . durch Staffelstehnum*, aus dem Geschlechte Aarons (n.p., 1583), cited in Hsia, "Christian Ethnographies of Jews," 234, n. 9; Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 108–09.
 146. Paul of Prague, *Der Apostel Symbolum*, cited in Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 110.
 147. Bertling, introduction to Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, n.p. Bertling cited this "güldene

- Kette,” golden chain of descent, to enhance Anton’s qualifications to write about Jews and Judaism.
148. Serpilius, introduction to J. C. Gottfried, *Yeshua mashiach ha-amiti*.
 149. Besser, *Die Mittel*, n.p.
 150. Friedenreich, *Buch des wahren Glaubens*, last page. On the title page he also characterized himself as a “rabbi converted from Judaism.”
 151. Fried, *Neupolierter*, 30.
 152. On the belief that converts descended from impure families, see Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 28, 85.
 153. Rosenfeld, *Jewish Printing in Wilhermsdorf*, viii.
 154. Pfeiffer, introduction to Christiani, *Der gelehrte und bekehrte Spieler*, 9. Lyra was not a convert but was widely believed to have been one in early modern Germany. Perhaps this impression was strengthened by the late fifteenth-century publication of his book in which he promised to confute the Jews out of “their own words.” Nicholas de Lyra, *Libellus contra Judaeorum*.
 155. Rehbinder, *Judaeus Baptizatus*, n.p. His by now familiar list included the tenth-century convert R. Samuel, Lyra, Margaritha, the physician Carettas, Paul Weidner, and Julius Conrad Otto.
 156. Serpilius, introduction to J. C. Gottfried, *Yeshua mashiach ha-amiti*.
 157. Pablo de Santa Maria (1350–1435; Solomon of Burgos before his conversion) provides a parallel among medieval Iberian conversos. In the dedication of his book, *Additiones ad postillam Magistri Lyra* (1429) to his son Alonso, he reminded his son of his Jewish, Levitic ancestry and urged him to continue in the priestly tradition: cited in Castro, *La realidad histórica*, 49.
 158. On da Costa, see le Roi, “Isaak da Costa.”

Chapter 6. The Professions of Conversion

1. For late eighteenth-century Berlin, see Hertz, *Jewish High Society*, 211–50; for England, Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 44–52; for Poland, Goldberg, *Ha-mumarim*, 49–60.
2. Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 112b. Ernst Wilhelm Christfels, converted with his father as a child, married Christiane Christhold, Judith before she was baptized: Rosenfeld, *Jewish Printing in Wilhermsdorf*, 229. On the entire question of social mobility of Jewish converts in this period, and for several other examples, see Hertz, “Women at the Edge.”
3. For an egregious example, see the case of Jacob Lämmlein of Vorchheim, baptized as Christoph Gustav Johann Leonhard, in Nuremberg, 8 Sept. 1717. He settled in nearby Fürth, which had a substantial Jewish community, as the Provost’s “Schutz Jew,” protected Jew: Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 117.
4. Bloch, *Ein vielbegehrter Rabbiner*, 126.
5. Von Carben, *Ain schön*, t.p.: “vor zeyten ain Jud und Rabi der jüdischen geschrift.”
6. See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 758, and sources cited there.
7. For other printed works by Christfels see Graf, *Judaeus Conversus*, 399; le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 1:377; Hertz, “Women at the Edge,” 87.

8. John, *An Account*, preface, n.p.
9. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 17.
10. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, n.p.
11. Hertz, “Women at the Edge,” 106, n. 20.
12. On the emergence of a true intelligentsia in the first half of the eighteenth century in western and central Europe, see Feiner, “The Early Enlightenment.”
13. Tauffenburg, *Formula Juramenti*, t.p.: “vormahls genannt Rabbi Abraham Oppenheim gewesenen Juden=Rabbiner zu Arenheim im Gelder=Land/Unter=Rabbiner in Coblentz/Cöllnischen und Jülichischen.”
14. Jacobs, *The Life*.
15. Ducreux, “Reading unto Death.”
16. Christiani, *Lebens=Lauf* (1713), 66: “Wurde ich von dannen nacher Bruchsaal am Rhein gefodert/und zu einem Chasan oder Vorsinger in der Synagoge daselbsten auffgenommen.”
17. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 17.
18. Wällich, *Die Mayerische Synagoga*, 7: “Der ich ein [Sofer] Schreiber unter den Juden war.” See his own “modest” testimony that among converts he was by far the best educated in religious matters: introduction, p. iv; and repetition of this in Selig, *Der Jude*, 9:23.
19. On the position of cantors in late medieval Ashkenaz, see Rosensweig, *Ashkenazic Jewry*, 67; Landman, *The Cantor*, 20–27. For descriptions of the plight of late seventeenth- and early-eighteenth century cantors, see Yehudah Leib of Zelechow, *Shire Yehudah*; Solomon Lipschütz, *Te’udat Shlomoh*.
20. R. Yom Tov Lipmann Heller recorded his exchange with the Imperial official in Vienna, through whom he channeled his request to be reinstated as chief rabbi of Prague after he was exonerated of the false charges brought against him. When the Imperial councillor remonstrated that surely he could have any rabbinic post in Germany, R. Heller replied that there was not even one that would support his family. Heller, *A Chronicle*, 46.
21. Guggenheim-Grünberg, “Pfarrer Ulrich,” 1.
22. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 29.
23. Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 113.
24. See Segre, “Neophytes,” 134–35, for a similar sequence among Italian Jews who converted. Following the brilliant ceremonies, even the most prestigious Jews with the best godparents rarely entered the ranks of high society.
25. See, for example, the law passed in Marburg, 1629, cited in Bursch, *Judentaufe*, 39, and the complaint cited, *ibid.*, 40.
26. Gerson, *Jüden Thalmud*, 478–80, in Bursch, *Judentaufe*, 38.
27. Jacobs, *The Life*, 16, 20.
28. Kaufmann, “Rabbi Zevi Ashkenazi”; Schieber, “Mendel of Buda.”
29. Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 111. Würfel reports that the wife was denied entry because of her “liederlich und ärgerlichen Lebens,” but does not specify whether she remained Jewish.
30. Rotscheidt, *Stephan Isaak*, 53: “Durch diese und dergleichen seltzame händel/auch Widerwertigkeit/geriet ich in grosse Melancholey/und endlich auch in Leibs

schwachheit/denn ich wust nicht wo hinaus/und ob ich wol nun genugsam vermerckt/dass meine Sachen in Gottes wort keinen Grundt hetten/." While these words justified his ultimately abandoning the Catholic Church for the Protestant, the feelings described by Isaac were common among converts.

31. Guggenheim-Grünberg, "Pfarrer Ulrich," 6, 8, 10.
32. Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 29–30.
33. Rotscheidt, *Stephan Isaak*, 115–19.
34. Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, 85.
35. Richarz, *Der Eintritt*, 15.
36. Wegele, *Geschichte der Universität Würzburg*, 2: no. 20. For German translation of this letter, see Hermann Gundersheimer, *Bayerische Israelitische Gemeindezeitung* 6 (1930): 69–70.
37. Professor Stephen Burnett has compiled a list of 275 professors of Hebrew for these years, of whom he was able to positively identify 15 as of Jewish origin. I thank him for sharing his preliminary findings with me.
38. Le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 1:387. Liepmann became a preacher.
39. J. A. Gottfried, *Wahrhafter Bericht*, 71.
40. *Ibid.*, 7.
41. *Ibid.*, 11–12.
42. Kalkar, *Israel und die Kirche*, 95.
43. Gay, *The Enlightenment*, 1:349.
44. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, "On the Periphery," 630: "gleich wie meine Voreltern."
45. Rotscheidt, *Stephan Isaak*, 11.
46. Egmont, *Manuscripts*, 2:276.
47. Tauffenburg, *Formula Juramenti*, introduction. He was referring undoubtedly to Christfels, *Hilkhot shevu'ot ha-yehudim*.
48. C. M. Clark, *Politics of Conversion*, 33–82.
49. Friedenheim, *Yehudi me-ba-hutz*, 122.
50. Besser, *Die Mittel*, 18.
51. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 35.
52. Friedenheim, *Yehudi me-ba-hutz*, 121–22.
53. Selig, *Geschichte des Lebens*, in Graf, ed., *Judaeus Conversus*, 138.
54. Besser, *Die Mittel*, 18–19.
55. However, Friedenheim, *Yehudi me-ba-hutz*, 123, later reverted to the age-old anti-Jewish formulae, perhaps at the urging of a mentor. He advised all Christian potentates to use all their powers to gather the Jews, led by their rabbis, to one place, and ask them this question: Has the messiah come? Or is he still expected? Then call three representatives of the religions tolerated in the Roman Empire, learned in Oriental languages, who could demonstrate, using Hebrew prooftexts, that the Jews were mistaken. Friedenheim did not specify whether he envisioned himself or other converts in this role, but he predicted that thousands of conversions could be produced in this way.
56. Austerlitz, *Die Gewissheit*, 14.
57. *Ibid.*, 13.
58. Frey, *Converted Jew*, 27.

59. *Ibid.*, 57.
60. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, 28–29.
61. Felix, *Sendschreiben eines Proselyten*, 45.
62. Feiner, “Early Enlightenment.”

Chapter 7. Conversion and Rupture of the Family

1. Levi, *Recueil important*.
2. Calman, *Carrière of Carpentras*, 189. When Joseph-Marie Buisson was baptized in 1773, his wife was able to marry another Jew: *ibid.*, 180.
3. Tauffenburg, *Formula Juramenti*, 12. On Protestant use of the Jewish model of divorce, in contrast to that of the Catholic Church, see, for Reformation German law, Witte, “The Transformation of Marriage Law”; for England, M. L. Kaplan, “Subjection and Subjectivity.”
4. There were some exceptions to this rule. Thirteenth-century Thomas of Cantimpré reported the ritual murder of a Christian girl in Pforzheim, Bavaria, in 1261: Netanyahu, *Origins*, 823.
5. For the ritual murder accusation, see the iconographic material in Hsia, *Myth of Ritual Murder*; Schreckenberg, *The Jew*, 273–91.
6. Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 77.
7. *Ibid.*, 173. On the rise and wane of the ritual murder accusation, see Hsia, *Myth of Ritual Murder*, and the studies collected in Dundes, ed., *The Blood Libel Legend*. For German-language texts, see Schreckenberg, *Jew*, 273–90. For the host desecration accusation, see Schreckenberg, *Jew*, 265: “Eins kindes angesicht erschyne,” and the illustrations at 268, no. 3; 269, no. 6.
8. This account from Fried, *Neupolierter*, 60–61. Cf. the report of eighteenth-century convert Tauffenburg, *Formula Juramenti*, 10, concerning a Jewish father who allegedly killed his son for wishing to convert to Christianity and, when arrested, strangled himself on his tefillin; text and images reproduced in Stock, *Die Judenfrage*, 108–11. The report ostensibly dated from the thirteenth century; it was translated and circulated in the early eighteenth in *Heiliges Bayer-Land*, Stock’s source.
9. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:151.
10. I. G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, 94–101.
11. Habermann, *Sefer gezerot*, 36.
12. Abulafia, “Theology,” 27.
13. Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 78, n. 53.
14. Selig, *Der Jude*, 9:53.
15. *EJ* 4:303, s.v. Basel.
16. *Ibid.*, 16:122, s.v. Vienna. On the expulsion from Vienna of 1421, see Krauss, *Die Wiener Gesera*; Zehavi and Stowasser, *Zur Geschichte*.
17. Sonne, “Toward a Criticism of the Text,” 399, lines 24–25.
18. Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 29, 148, no. 18.
19. C. Roth, “Forced Baptisms in Italy.” See the diary of a girl taken against her and her family’s will to the house of catechumens in the mid-eighteenth century: del Monte, *Ratto della Signora*.

20. C. Roth, "Forced Baptisms in Italy," 121.
21. On this entire episode and the differences between these two events, see Gross, "On the Ashkenazi Syndrome of Martyrdom," 87–91, and sources cited there. "Fathers feared . . .," cited by Gross from S. Usque, *Consolação*.
22. Minty, "Kiddush Hashem," 231.
23. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:40.
24. Frankl, *Der Jude*, 52, from "Daz Jüdel," Wiener MS 2696. For further examples see Schreckenber, *Jews*, 255.
25. The story of Simon Abeles, whose father was tried in Prague in 1694, appears in a lengthy appendix in Fried, *Neupolierter*, 104–240. Although it took place in Bohemia, the narrative circulated throughout German lands (123); Schreckenber, *Jew*, 256. The age of the child varied from account to account. On the background of the Abeles case, see Putík, "The Prague Jewish Community." I thank Dr. Putík for sharing his work with me prior to publication.
26. Tauffenburg, *Formula Juramenti*, 10.
27. Fried, *Neupolierter*, 115.
28. *Ibid.*, 119.
29. I. G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, 117.
30. Güde, *Die rechtliche Stellung*, 38–42.
31. Browe, *Judenmission*, 15.
32. *Ibid.*, 26, on the inclusion of children from the age of twelve in a 1415 decree; 33, on a Protestant prince who ordered children to coerced sermons from the age of eight in 1539 and 1543; 44, the recommendation of convert Paul Weidner, in 1561, for separate conversion sermons directed at young Jewish boys in Prague.
33. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 14.
34. See, e.g., the sermon preached by Johann Helwig Engerer on 13 Jan. 1732: "Die verlohrenen Kinder," 22. It was preached at the "reconciliation" of a relapsed convert, Isaac Joseph of Paderborn.
35. My discussion of Zasius's work is based on Rowan, "Ulrich Zasius and the Baptism of Jewish Children"; *idem*, *Ulrich Zasius*, 44–67.
36. Minty, "Kiddush Hashem," 230, situated Zasius's ruling as a reaction to the Waldkirch blood libel. See also Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, 115–42, and Schreckenber, *Jew*, 283.
37. For a thirteenth-century decision by Pope Gregory IX awarding custody of a four-year-old child to a baptized father, see Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews*, 181–83. Even the Jewish community apparently believed that, after the age of infancy, custody of children went to the father in case of dispute.
38. On the Mayr family, see Kalkar, *Israel und die Kirche*, 94. This youth grew up to be Georg Friedrich Lichtenstein, who ultimately became a pastor in Frankfurt and was eulogized by Pietist founder Jakob Spener. Kalkar did not specify whether the mother converted in the end.
39. Gerson, *Juden Thalmud*, introduction, n.p.; le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 1:119. For the baptismal sermon of Gerson's son, see Terrel, *Juden Tauff*, 658.
40. Fried, *Neupolierter*, 112.

41. Le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 1:406. The child Moses was given the Christian name Ernst Wilhelm Christfelss; he became a pastor.
42. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724), 209–14; repeated in Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:137.
43. Guggenheim-Grünberg, “Pfarrer Ulrich,” 7.
44. Fried, *Neupolierter*, 131, 133–34.
45. Hess, *Speculum Iudaeorum*, introduction, n.p.
46. Glückel of Hameln, *Memoirs*, 182.
47. Müller, *Judaismus oder Jüdentumb*, 1402–13.
48. Jacobs, *Life*, 13.
49. Corvino, *Israel’s und des Jüdischen Volckes*, esp. introduction, iii–vi.
50. Anonymous, “Wunderbahre und recht Göttliche Bekehrung”. See Graf, *Judaeus Conversus*, 387, for a second edition with a slightly different title.
51. The anonymous treatise was published by Christian Fr. Weygand; some library catalogues attribute it to him. The only case of this type that I have found for this year, took place in Mainz in 1753. A convert named Bonum attempted to take his small children with him to his baptism. The Parnassim of the Jewish community objected. Eventually the case came to the attention of the authorities, who ruled that he could take them. Schaab, *Diplomatische Geschichte*, 359.
52. Anonymous, *Das Recht*, 21–22.
53. *Ibid.*, 24.
54. References to Judaism as “Aberglauben,” in *Das Recht*, 9; Christianity and natural law, 21.
55. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, ch. 1.
56. Anonymous, *Das Recht*, 9–10.
57. On the Papal States in nineteenth-century Italy, see Kertzer, *The Kidnapping*. Cf. the case analyzed by Putik, “Fight for a Conversion,” in which the role of the sixteen-year-old protagonist, her family, the Jewish community, and the local civil and ecclesiastical powers are documented in great detail.

Chapter 8. Conversion, Language, and Identity

1. Blackall, *The Emergence of German*, 109–25.
2. From Henricus Agrippa, *De incertitudine* (1532), ch. 54; Pietro Aaron, *Lucidario in musica* (1545), book. 4, ch. 6, cited and trans. in Clement A. Miller, review, 198. Later linguistic theories, such as those of Whorf and Sapir, tied cultural conceptions such as time and space to the evolution of language within a culture.
3. Folz, “Von der Juden Messias,” 1225.
4. “Jüdischer gelber Ring” (1618); reproduced in Stock, *Die Judenfrage*, 168.
5. Cited in Yardeni, *Anti-Jewish Mentalities*, 75.
6. Cited in Davis, *Women on the Margins*, 9.
7. Campe, *Wörterbuch*, 2:852, cited and trans. in *The Jew in the Modern World*, eds. Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 157.
8. By way of contrast, Peter Burke, *Art of Conversation*, argued that for Italy the vernacular did not emerge until the eighteenth century as a component of national identity.

9. Rowland, “Revenge of the Regensburg Humanists,” 317; Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 91–100, on the revival of German humanist pride in the early sixteenth century.
10. Hughes, *Early Modern Germany*, 20.
11. Van Cleve, *The Emperor Frederick II*, 31–32.
12. Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, 145–50.
13. Weinreich, *A History of the Yiddish Language*, 319.
14. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 24. Carlebach, “Attribution of Secrecy and Perceptions”; Shank, “*Unless You Believe*,” 149.
15. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 68–86.
16. Schrijnen, “Le Latin chrétien”; A. Langer, *Der Wortschatz des Deutschen Pietismus*, on the use of language in German Pietism.
17. See Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, for an extensive discussion of this entire subject.
18. For this interchangeable usage see Hess, *Speculum Iudaeorum*, introduction, n.p.; Anton’s announcement that he would translate a tale “aus der jüdischen in unserer reinen Deutschen Sprache” (from the Jewish into our pure German language), *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3:ix.
19. E. F. A. Augusti, *Nachrichten*, 82–84.
20. *Ibid.*, 107.
21. Burke, *Art of Conversation*, 86, 88.
22. “. . . wie denn die Kunst der Deutschen Rhetorica erheyscht . . . das ich nicht so gar wol der Deutchenn sprach bericht bin.”
23. Christian Reineccius undertook to correct and improve the orthography and, more significantly, to remove words that were un-German and replace them with pure German. His words, “und die *undeutschen undeutlichen* Redens=Arten (wie denn der Antonius Margaritha nach seiner eigenen Klage und Bekänntniss . . . der Teutchen Sprache gar nicht wohl kundig gewesen) mit andern reinen deutlichen expressionen sind verwechselt worden” (my emphasis) sent the message that language which was unclear was un-German. Reineccius, introduction to Margaritha, *Der gantze Jüdische glaube* (1705), ixx.
24. Fried, *Neupolierter*, n.p.
25. Wallich, *Die Mayerische Synagoga*, 54.
26. Anton, *Einleitung*, introduction, n.p.
27. *Ibid.*, 292. Anton referred to “der elenden jüdisch-deutschen” and “reinen deutschen Sprache” and apologized, “und dahero wegen ihren trockenen und im Deutschen ganz unverständlichen Vortrag, einige Veränderungen vornehmen muss.”
28. Ben Shalomoh, *A true narrative*, introduction, i.
29. “Gantz accurat, nett und zierlich (welches bey den Juden etwas seltzames . . . ist)”; Reineccius, introduction to Christiani, *Juden Glaube* (1705), 84.
30. Hess, *Speculum Iudaeorum*, n.p.
31. Selig, *Der Jude*, 1:ix.
32. *Ibid.*, 1:78. On Selig’s place in the representation of Yiddish to Christian readers, see Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 99.
33. Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 96–97. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism*, has argued

- that Christian scholars could begin to study Hebrew independently with the works of Johannes Buxtorf.
34. Cited in Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 16.
 35. Anton, *Einleitung*, 195.
 36. Walde, *Christliche Hebraisten*, 85, cites his Hebrew poem.
 37. Cited in Browe, *Die Judenmission*, 69. Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, 319, speculates that the comma might indicate a second language, Yiddish, in addition to Hebrew. While this may be doubtful, the entire phrase indicates the value of a Jewish language as a missionary tool.
 38. See Friedman, “Sebastian Münster.”
 39. See Rotscheidt, *Stephan Isaak*, 8, n. 1, on Draconites. According to Strobel, *Neue Beiträge* 4 (1793): 60–61, “Bei seiner grossen Kenntniss im Hebräischen hat er auch verschiedene Juden convertirt und getauft.” In 1546, Draconites converted six Jews at once in Marburg (Johannes and Stephan Isaac among them) and published the proceedings along with his sermon, “Eine Predigt von des Weibes Samen.”
 40. Yardeni, *Anti-Jewish Mentalities*, 74–75.
 41. Besser, *Die Mittel*, n.p.
 42. Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*, 106b.
 43. Rotscheidt, *Stephan Isaak*, 8, n. 1.
 44. *Ibid.*, 126, n. 2.
 45. *Ibid.*, 69–70. A complete list of Johannes and Stephan Isaac’s published works, 168–70.
 46. On the earliest Hebraica of early sixteenth-century converts and theologians, see Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*; Manuel, *Broken Staff*, 66–107. On Pfefferkorn’s simultaneous Hebrew and Latin credos, Kirn, *Das Bild*, 20–22.
 47. The book was reprinted many times through the nineteenth century.
 48. Le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 1:52–55; Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 250–51. Becker, *Immanuel Tremellius*.
 49. Leipzig, 1673; Halle, 1734; Florence, 1766. He translated the Book of Jonah, *Jonas illustratus sive Hebraicè et Chaldaicè*, to teach Christian Hebraists.
 50. See, e.g., Johann Christoph Gottfried, *Yeshua mashiach ha-amiti be-nigleh u-ba-nistar, Das ist Jesus der wahre Messias . . .* (Regensburg, 1721). It begins with a letter addressed in Hebrew to “My brothers who are dispersed throughout the World” (אגרת אל אחי הנפזרים בכל העולם).
 51. Friedenheim, *Yehudi me-ba-hutz*, t.p.
 52. *Ibid.*, 112.
 53. Stow, “Conversion, Christian Hebraism,” 221.
 54. Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, 319.
 55. Harzuke, *Evangelion*. In Delitzsch, *Wissenschaft*, 137; le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 58.
 56. Balaban, “Zur Geschichte der Hebräischen Druckereien in Polen,” 2–3, 7–9, and n. 44. Halicz later reverted to Judaism. I thank Professor Edward Fram for this reference.
 57. Zinberg, *History of Jewish Literature*, 7:93–95; Shtif, “Michael Adam’s.”
 58. Kalkar, *Israel und die Kirche*, 89. Adrian established Hebrew studies at the University

of Löwen, and later lectured on Hebrew language and literature in Wittenberg in Luther's time.

59. Wagenseil, *Belehrung der jüdisch-teutschen Red- und Schreibart*; Callenberg, *Jüdisch-teutsches Wörterbüchlein*.
60. *Novum Testamentum Hebraeo-Teutonicum* (Frankfurt a.d. Oder, 1700), cited in Faber, *Herschel-Augusti*, 19.
61. P. Christian, *Jüdischer Hertzklöpffer*, n.p. Christian wrote his entire memoir in verse:

*Ein Buch kam mir ungefähr zur Hand
Geschrieben in Jüdisch Currant.
Das warn die vier Evangelisten . . .*
62. E. F. A. Augusti, *Nachrichten*, 115: "In der Meynung dass es ein jüdisches Buch wäre."
63. *Ibid.*, 76.
64. Bon, *Wolgemeintes Sendschreiben*, 29.
65. Guggenheim-Grünberg, "Pfarrer Ulrich," 2–3.
66. Possibly a reference to a Judeo-German translation of the Sermon on the Mount, "Eine schöne Drosche welche Jesus der messias gehalten hat von der Seligkeit," published by the Callenberg institute (Halle, 1730); see Guggenheim-Grünberg, "Pfarrer Ulrich," 14.
67. Drawn from Callenberg, "Was bey Austheilung der zum Gebrauch der Juden gedruckten Schriften zu beobachten" (1743). Between 1728 and 1732 the institute published 21,000 copies of conversionary books for distribution among Jews: Guggenheim-Grünberg, "Pfarrer Ulrich," 16–17.
68. Guggenheim-Grünberg, "Pfarrer Ulrich," 18.
69. Shohat, *Im hilufei*, 175.
70. *Ibid.*, 176 for Cologne, 175 for Nuremberg. In each case, about half the converts were from German cities, the rest from eastern or central European.
71. F. A. Augusti, *Merckwürdige Lebens=Geschichte*, 62. Augusti is referring to *Bukh der Farzaykhnung* (Amsterdam, 1696). Polemics such as Isaac Troki's classical anti-Christian polemic *Hizzuk emunah*, which was translated into Yiddish (Amsterdam, 1717), may also have come Augusti's way before he converted.
72. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community*, 223.

Chapter 9. Revealing the Secrets of Judaism

1. See, e.g., Wallich, *Mayerische Synagoga*, introduction, i; Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724), 116: "We will adhere to our usual method and tell only of the currently practiced customs"; Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3:170: "Contemporary Jews are living testimony to the customs described within"; Selig, *Der Jude*, 1: introduction: "not the way they were in old times but as they are presently practiced"; 5: introduction: "heutigen Juden" (contemporary Jews).
2. Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 76.
3. Arthur Cohen, afterword, in Markish, *Erasmus and the Jews*, 149.
4. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 397–415.
5. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism*, 191–209, "Infelicitous Performances and Ritual Criticism."

6. Morosini, *Via della Fede*, built his entire book around this argument; Hirsch, *Sefer megalleh tekuphot*, advertised that his book contained “Information on the fundamentals of the six hundred and thirteen commandments . . . along with their refutation.” Leberecht, *Tariack mitzvoth*, t.p., stated that Jews adhere to all these customs “because their messiah has not yet come, therefore the ceremonial and ‘shadow laws,’ have not yet been elevated and fulfilled.”
7. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724), 116. This observation appeared only in the later edition. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5: introduction: “. . . contemporary Jews and their deviation from the old authentic Israelite worship,” and similarly at 3:73.
8. For the pagan anti-Jewish accusation of xenophobia and misanthropy, see Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 167–79; 197–211; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 46, 128–49.
9. Kelley, “Second Nature,” esp. 133.
10. For a summary of early Christian anti-Judaism, see McDonald, “Anti-Judaism”; for Luther’s thought, Tavad, *Holy Writ*.
11. *LW* 54:436–37, Table Talk no. 5504.
12. Hsia, “Christian Ethnographies,” 223.
13. See the suggestive essays of Friedman, “Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and the Reformation,” and Yerushalmi, “Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism.”
14. Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 94; *idem*, “Christian Ethnographies,” 224.
15. Italian exceptions include Medici, *Riti e costumi*; Morosini, *Via della Fede*. Note the perception of Aufhausen, *Jüdischer Theriak*, introduction, i: “Everyone knows how many *mumarim* (baptized Jews) there are in German lands who have written and published venomous and false books against us.”
16. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 62. Although Margaritha’s work was no less polemical than Pfefferkorn’s, Gilman’s suggestion of an internal and generational rivalry on Margaritha’s part is intriguing.
17. Elukin, “Jacques Basnage,” 617–18.
18. For instance, one of the goals of Buxtorf’s *Synagoga Judaica* was the delegitimization of Judaizing trends within Protestantism. Elukin, “Jacques Basnage,” 620; Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism*, 62.
19. Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 99–118.
20. J. Roth, *The Halakhic Process*, 205–30.
21. Yuzpa Shammash’s *Minhag Book* of Worms was annotated by Yair Haim Bacharach: A. Epstein, “Die Wormser Minhagbücher,” 308. For a later example see Sinai Loans’s eighteenth-century description of how he found the mangled, barely legible text of Kircheim’s early seventeenth-century *minhag* book. He incorporated the marginalia into the text and added comments of his own: *ibid.*, 302–03.
22. On the origins of this emphasis in medieval German Jewry, see Ta-Shma, *Minhag Ashkenaz he-kadum*, 9–105; *idem*, *Halakhah, minhag u-metzi’ut*, 13–19; Zimmer, *Olam ke-minhago noheg*, esp. introduction. On its persistence, see Hildesheimer, “German Jewry in the Seventeenth Century,” 189.
23. Hahn, *Sefer Yosef ometz*, introduction, n.p.
24. M. Marcus, *Ceremonies of the Present Jews*, vii.
25. Ta-Shma, *Halakhah, minhag u-metzi’ut*, 94–111.

26. Epstein, “Wormser Minhagbücher,” 288–317.
27. On minhag in fifteenth-century Ashkenaz, see Dinari, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 190–228, 271–313; Breuer, “The Early Modern Period,” 1:53.
28. Margaritha’s source was *Sefer orhot tzadikim*: Diemling, “Christliche Ethnographien,” 64.
29. Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*, 39a.
30. Kermode, *Genesis of Secrecy*, 162–3, n. 20.
31. G. C. Christian, *Entdeckung*, t.p.; see citation from Wagenseil in Kalir, “The Jewish Service,” 52–53.
32. Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3:19.
33. Reichling, *Ortuin Gratius*; Mehl, “Ortwin Gratius.”
34. E.g., von Carben, *Juden Büchlein*, ch. 10, n.p., has Jews waiting nine hours between meat and dairy foods.
35. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism*, lists several “first hand” descriptions by Christians that were, in fact, drawn from Buxtorf; even converts borrowed such descriptions from Buxtorf’s *Juden Schul*. “Insider” depictions of Judaism were expected of converts; those who could not write original material simply incorporated segments from existing books, validating the expectations and often recycling the same, sometimes erroneous, information.
36. On the role of Dominicans in Pfefferkorn’s writings, see Kirn, *Das Bild*, 181.
37. *Ich heysß eyn buchlijn der iuden beicht . . .* Cologne, 1508; *In deisem buchlein vindet yr ein entlichen furtrag wie die blinden Juden yr Ostern halten* Cologne, 1509. For a full bibliographical listing of editions and Latin versions, see Kirn, *Das Bild*, 201–02.
38. Von Carben, *Opus aureum ac novum*; *idem*, *De vita et moribus Iudeorum*.
39. The term “ethnography” was first introduced to describe this literature in an insightful essay by Hsia, “Christian Ethnographies of Jews,” and was subsequently adopted by Burnett, “Distorted Mirrors,” 276, n. 3, Diemling, and others.
40. All references are to the 1531 edition, unless otherwise noted. That “improved” edition served as the basis for those that followed. Mieses, *Die älteste*, wrote the first modern attempt to discredit its scholarship, citing numerous errors and misquotations.
41. On Augsburg as a book-publishing center, see Kunast, *Getruckt zu Augspurg*; Benzing, “Die Buchdrucker,” 12. I thank Stephen Burnett for this reference.
42. Rosenfeld, *Jüdische Buchdruck*, 5, lists works such as “Errores iudaeorum ex Talmud” as early as 1477. In 1523, Steyner published *Von ainer grosse meng/ unnd gewalt der Juden die lange zeyt . . . verborgen . . .* about the imminent approach of the long-hidden tribe of Red Jews (see fig. 5). In 1531, Steyner published Cicero’s *De Officiis*, illustrated by a woodcut of a peasant and a Jewish moneylender. The peasant says to the Jew:

*Ich bitte euch jud leicht mir zuo hand
Bargelt auff bürgen oder pfand
Was euch gebürt gebt mir verstand.*
43. See Richard Cohen, *Jewish Icons*, 17–22, on the iconography in the woodcuts and the relationships between them.
44. Margaritha’s other known books were printed only once so far as I am able to ascer-

- tain: *Psalterium Hebraicum: cum radicibus in margine. Cui acc. aliquot capita ex Ev. Matthai versa* (Leipzig, 1533); *Wie aus dem heylligen. // 53. Capittel/ . . . Moschiach schon khomen . . .* (Vienna, 1534); *Ain kurtzer Bericht . . . vom Balmesel . . .* (Vienna, 1541); *Kurtze ausslegung uber das wort Halleluia* (n.p., n.d.). The first of these was kindly brought to my attention by Stephen Burnett; the last is cited in Yacov Guggenheim, “Meeting on the Road,” 127, n. 8.
45. *Correspondence of . . . Charles V*, 496.
 46. Romano and Tenenti, *Die Grundlegung der Modernen Welt*, 29–30.
 47. Lorchner, *Das aller edlest vn bewer=test regiment der gesundtheit . . .* (Augsburg, 1530, 1531, 1532). This book appears to be a German vernacular version of the medieval pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum* (Secret of Secrets). A pseudepigraphic letter from Aristotle to Alexander the Great, it merged medieval forms with the “mirror for princes” genre: Ryan and Schmitt, *Pseudo Aristotle*, introduction. On its diffusion in the West, see M. Grignaschi, “La Diffusion du *Secretum secretorum*.”
 48. Convert Brenz similarly accused the Jews of disloyalty, and his Jewish opponent, Aufhausen, chose to refute this charge: “He alleges that we curse the authorities and humiliate their religion”: Aufhausen, *Jüdischer Theriak*, introduction, i.
 49. Boschenstein, *Tefillot ha-ivrim*, contained brief excerpts in translation of *Tēfilla kall haschana* (prayers for the entire year). Since Imperial and canon law prohibited blasphemy, the charge could do serious damage. See Burnett, “Hebrew Censorship,” 204, 210.
 50. As the genre matured, authors took more care. Cf. the statement in eighteenth-century Selig’s *Der Jude*, 1:1: “Alone among the nations, Jews have a large number of customs which they regard as ‘gesetzlich’ (mandated by law). Some originated in ancient times, and are carried forward by practice or oral transmission. Others are recent, arbitrary, and offensive. . . . We will try to investigate the historical sources for each.”
 51. The notion of secrecy dominated the titles or title pages of many books in the genre: e.g., Julius Conrad Otto, *Gali Razia, occultorum detectio* (Nuremberg, 1605); Johann Müller, *Judaismus oder Judenthum* (Hamburg, 1644); Johannes Buxtorf, *Synagoga Judaica: de Judaeorum fide, ritibus, ceremoniis, tam publicis et sacris, quam privatis, in domestica vivende ratione* (Basel, 1661); Samuel Friedrich Brenz, *Jüdischer abgestreiffeter Schlangen-Balg, Das ist: gründliche Entdeckung und Verwerfung aller Lästereien und Lügen*; Abraham Hinckelman, I.[n] N.[omine] J.[esu] C.[hristi] DETECTIO FUNDAMENTI BÖHMIANI . . . Worinnen unter andern der Recht=Gläubige Sinn der alten Jüdischen Cabalae . . . **entdeckt** wird . . . (Hamburg, 1693); cited in Hans Jürgen Schrader, “Shulamiths verheissene Wiederkehr,” in *Conditio Judaica*, eds. Hans Otto Horch and Horst Denkler (Tübingen, 1988), 1:79; Johann Andreas Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 2 vols. (Königsberg, 1711). J. C. Wagenseil’s collection of medieval Jewish polemics against Christianity, *Tela Ignea Satanae* (The Fiery Darts of Satan) advertised in its subtitle, “Hoc est **Arcani** & Horribiles Judaeorum Adversus Christum Deum, & Christianum Religionem Libri [Anecdotoi] (Nürnberg/ Frankfurt a.M., 1681); Christoph Gustav Christian, *Entdeckung der gantzen Jüdischen Synagog, oder immerwähner Ceremoniel-Calender* (Nuremberg, 1731); Paul Nicol Einert, *Entdeckter Jüdischer Baldober* (Coburg, 1737). (emphasis added)

52. Berger, “Christians, Gentiles and the Talmud” and sources cited there; Degani, “Medieval Anti-Semitism in the Works of Luther.”
53. *LW* 47:170.
54. But see the image from 1480 (reproduced in Stock, *Die Judenfrage*, 177–78) which shows a Jewish wife and child alongside a Jewish money lender when Christians come to repay a rapidly multiplying loan. The presence of the woman and child reflect both the domestic setting of this type of transaction and a more sinister theme: all Jews participate in the swindle.
55. “Wie manig Jud Christen wurdts wan er nicht durch sein Weib verhindert wer/ darneben meldet auch warumb die Weiber der Juden standhafftiger dann die Mann im glauben seindt.” This is the title of chapter 19 of von Carben’s *Juden Büchlein*. On the place of women in von Carben’s work, I benefited from hearing the paper read by Maria Diemling at the World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1997.
56. Von Carben, *Juden Büchlein*, ch. 16: “Wie die Juden Weib und Man die Christen verfluchen/ . . . das die Jud[in]en den Christen vil mehr dann die Mann hesszig seindt.” Similarly, later in the chapter: “Und man findt vil der weiber die vil böser dann die mann sein.”
57. *Ibid.*, ch. 16. n.p.
58. *Ibid.*, ch. 19.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Von Carben, *Ain schön und seüberlich Tractat vo’ der edlen . . . Marie*.
61. *Ibid.*, ii.
62. *Ibid.*, n.p.
63. Von Carben, *Juden Büchlein*, ch. 15.
64. Friedman, “Sebastian Münster,” 247, citing from Münster’s translation of the *Book of Matthew* into Hebrew. Martin Luther expressed his revulsion for circumcision: “I hope I shall never be so stupid as to be circumcized. I would rather cut off the left breast of my Catharine and of all women.” Cited in Friedman, “Münster,” 252.
65. Würfel, *Historische Nachrichten*, 108–25. Other eighteenth-century converts mentioned that the number was rising: see, e.g., Wallich, *Die Mayerische*, 54: “Although in these times it is easier to bring a Jew to baptism, it is more difficult to bring them to true conversion.” Cf. figures cited in Ulrich, *Sammlung*, 310 ff.
66. Hertz, “Women at the Edge,” 103. There are few primary sources by or about women before the late eighteenth century. Exceptions include Rueker, *Christliche Juden-Predigt* (Strassburg, 1647); for the later eighteenth century, Steinhardin, *Lebens=Geschichte und Glaubens=Bekentnis* (Nuremberg, n.d. [c. 1775]).
67. Guggenheim-Grünberg, “Pfarrer Ulrich,” 16–17. Bella Perlhefter’s staunch refusals to travel to Altdorf, where her husband Ber was employed by Hebraist Wagenseil, may well have stemmed from fear of being proselytized. Weinryb, “Historisches und Kulturhistorisches,” 327, n. 8, cites an example of the conversionary pressure that was applied to Ber. Bella’s refusals: 338, no. 3; 339–40, no. 5.
68. Aufhausen, *Jüdischer Theriak* (1680): “Algemeine yidn und yidenes.”
69. For a preliminary discussion, see Shmeruk, *Ha-iygurim*, ch. 2, esp. the illustrations at 44–55; Heyd, “Illustrations.”

70. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724), 66–67.
71. Matzah-baking scene, *ibid.*, 86. Description of women's candle lighting for Shavu'ot, *ibid.* (1717), 30; (1724), 104.
72. Examples from Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*: on women's exemption from time-bound obligations, 1:27; on women's observance of Rosh Chodesh (the New Month), 1:156; on women's obligation to hear the *megillah* reading on Purim and the section reserved for them in the synagogue, 1:173. Examples from Selig, *Der Jude*: on women's obligation to wash their hands ritually before preparing food, 1:16; on Jewish women spinning the wool for ritual fringes, *tzitzit*, followed by a discussion of whether women were permitted to wear them, 1:20; concerning the equal obligation of women to observe the Sabbath, 1:390; on women's candle lighting and special prayers, 1:417; on the distinctive obligations of women in mourning, in preparing other women for burial, and for sewing all the shrouds, "For they brought death into the world," 5:171–85.
73. Von Carben, *Juden Büchlein*, 97.
74. Steinhardin, *Lebens=Geschichte*, 4–5: "Weil es nicht Sitte ist bey den Juden die Mädchen etwas von der religion beyzubringen." She blamed the Talmud for this unmerciful attitude "gegen die armen Mädchen." While individual educations differed, seventeenth-century Ashkenazic women's writing leads to a different conclusion from Gütgen's. In addition to Davis, *Women on the Margins*, see the Hebrew letters of Bella Perlhefter and Chana bas Simon Ha-levi of Schwabach, in Weinryb, "Historisches und Kulturhistorisches," letters nos. 3–7.
75. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:116.
76. Frey, *Converted Jew* (1816), 6–7.
77. Anton, *Wahre Gründe*, introduction, vi.
78. Anton, *Einleitung*, 233.
79. *Ibid.*, 238–41.
80. Selig's *Der Jude* opened with a description of a Friday weekday routine: awakening, washing, praying, visiting the synagogue, preparations for the Sabbath. From this, Selig proceeded to other topics of related interest. For an example of organization according to the 613 precepts, see Leberecht, *Tariack Mitzvoth*.
81. Von Carben, *Juden Büchlein*, chs. 15, 16.
82. Friedenheim, *Yehudi me-ba-hutz*, 10–12; similarly, Selig, *Der Jude*, 6:28: "The repentance of today's Jews is like the rest of their religion, nothing but outward ceremony."
83. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724), 5.
84. C. Roth, "The Feast of Purim." For a fifth-century example, see Linder, *The Jews*, 236–38.
85. Von Carben, *Juden Büchlein*, ch. 24.
86. Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, vol. 4, ch. 35, 378.
87. Hosmann, *Das Juden-Buch des Magister Hosmann*, 146. Honorius and Theodosius wrote that Jews should not be allowed on "Haman's-Fest, ist das Fest Purim, eine gestalt das Creutzes zu nehmen" (to take the figure of the cross on the Haman Festival, the Festival of Purim).

88. Christiani, *Seudas Purim. Das ist kurtze Beschreibung von den Jüdischen Fast-Nachten/ Wie sie sich dabey so wol in ihren vermeynten Fasten/ und Beten/ als auch Fressen und Sauffen verhalten: Allen rechtschaffenen Christen zu Nachricht auffgezeichnet.*
89. Von Carben, *Juden Büchlein*, ch. 12. Ch. 13 deals with Jewish messianic aspirations.
90. *Ibid.*, ch. 21.
91. Frankl, *Der Jude*, 10, cites a medieval drama in which the figure of the Christian held a flag with a cross, while Judaea's bore an idol. See M. R. Cohen, "Leone da Modena's *Riti*," 298–301, for Johannes Buxtorf's emphasis on, and Modena's apologetic suppression of, customs deemed superstitious.
92. Lewien, *Tractätlein von denen Jüdischen Fabeln und Aberglauben*, introduction, iv–v.
93. Reich, *Das andere Tractätlein*; Magnus Christian, *Tractätgen von denen jüdischen Fabeln und Aberglauben.*
94. Seeligman, *Jüdische Ceremonien*, 20.
95. Von Carben, *Juden Büchlein*, ch. 14.
96. Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub*, 14a. Selig, *Der Jude* 5:41.
97. Cited from Hsia, *Myth of Ritual Murder*, 139, no. 12. On Osiander's statement, see Oberman, "Three Sixteenth Century Attitudes," 337–38.
98. Other converts who advocated similar anti-Jewish canards include Hirsch, *Sefer Megalleh Tekuphot*; Friedenheim, *Buch über die Thorheiten*; Fundam, *Schatkamer der Talmud*. For Brenz, see Burnett, "Hebrew Censorship," 208.
99. Gerson, *Jüden Thalmud*, introduction, n.p. Gerson referred to Hess's *Juden Geissel* as "Juden Geckel."
100. Aufhausen, *Jüdischer Theriak*, 2b–3a. On 8a, Aufhausen wrote that convert Brenz had accused Jews of needing Christian blood for magical/medicinal purposes: "When our women are in childbirth, we write secret amulets 'heymlikhe tsettel' which we place in their mouth or hand . . . written with Christian blood."

Chapter 10. Representation and Rivalry

1. Rowland, "Revenge of the Regensburg Humanists," 317, particularly the oration of German humanist Conrad Celtis: "Do away with that old disrepute of the Germans in Greek, Latin and Hebrew writers. . . . Young men of Germany, . . . learn to know the secrets of literature which these writers allege to be beyond our grasp."
2. On the theological significance of Christian study of Jewish sources, see Jeremy Cohen, "Scholarship and Intolerance."
3. Reuchlin published the first Hebrew grammar written by a Christian, *Rudimenta Hebraica* (Pforzheim, 1506); followed by an improved version, *De Accentibus et Orthographia Hebraeorum Libri Tres* (Hagenau, 1517). Münster published a Hebrew grammar (Basel, 1552), an Aramaic grammar (Basel, 1526), and a dictionary (Basel, 1527). Friedman, "Sebastian Münster," 242, remarked that while Münster's comparatively benign polemical treatise contained disparaging references to Jewish superstition, "how else would a Protestant view any religion built primarily upon ritual and observance."
4. "Tissart . . . revealed a modicum of detachment in observation and fairness in judgment, unusual among Christian apologists of the Late Middle Ages, or among

- Northern humanists such as Ortuinus Gratius . . . [Tissart] paid more than lip-service to the basic dignity of non-Christian individuals, an approach that ran counter to the discriminatory treatment of these individuals”: *ASRHJ* 13:181. On Tissart’s scholarly interests, see Porges, “Die Anfangsgründe.”
5. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism*, 86, 96, 99.
 6. Manuel, *Broken Staff*, 75–92. Shickard exemplified Christian scholars who took liberties with Hebrew texts, due to ignorance or deliberate distortion, which they would never have dared to take with other classical texts, 75–77.
 7. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy*, 315, 382, 396–99. See also the remark of Frederick following his annexation of Poland: “It’s a curious land.” The remark conveyed the western European sense that one was not only traversing a geographical boundary, but entering a completely different world. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 18.
 8. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724); Selig, *Der Jude*, 5: introduction; see Carlebach, “Attribution of Secrecy,” for an expanded discussion.
 9. Wallich, *Mayerische Synagoga*, introduction, iv–vi; Moritz Wilhelm Christiani, *Kurtze Beschreibung*.
 10. Wallich, 53.
 11. Aufhausen, *Jüdischer Theriak* (1680), introduction, i.
 12. On Buxtorf’s borrowing, see Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism*, 66–67, esp. the letter, 67, n. 47, in which Buxtorf described convert writings as generally unreliable.
 13. On Margaritha’s errors, see Mieses, *Die älteste*. Mieses demonstrated Margaritha’s indebtedness to von Carben’s *Opus aureum* in his translation of the prayer book, but he failed to credit Margaritha for the aspects of his work that were original.
 14. Wagenseil, *Sota*, 1105.
 15. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724), 101; 106, note a.
 16. *Ibid.*, 38, 70, for corrections of Margaritha.
 17. See *ibid.*, 112, note a, where Jugendres cited both Jews and converts.
 18. Weinryb, “Historisches und Kulturhistorisches.”
 19. *Ibid.*, 327, n. 8.
 20. *Ibid.*, 338, letter no. 3.
 21. *Ibid.*, 349–40, letter no. 5.
 22. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (Erfurt, 1717). The Erfurt edition was reissued several times: Regensburg, 1720; n.p., 1720; Frankfurt, 1726. Sebastian Jugendres’s revised and expanded edition, Nuremberg, 1724, 1734. Because Jugendres’s edition differed in substantial ways from the first edition, I have indicated the edition I used whenever I refer to this book.
 23. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1717), introduction, vii.
 24. *Ibid.*, 59–61. The running head for the chapter on oaths was “On Jewish Deceit,” although there is nothing about deceit in the text.
 25. *Ibid.*, 5, 26, 43. The story of R. Zeira on Purim from BT Megillah, in (1717), 48; (1724), 140.
 26. *Ibid.* (1724), 121, note c.
 27. *Ibid.*, 138.
 28. *Ibid.*, 15, 21.
 29. *Ibid.*, 19.

30. Ibid., 32.
31. Ibid., 55.
32. Ibid., 111.
33. Ibid., 128, note a.
34. Ibid., 136, note a. On Christmas Eve practices of medieval Jews, see Marc Shapiro, "Torah Study on Christmas Eve."
35. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1717), 72–73; (1724), 148–49.
36. Ibid. (1724), 150, note a.
37. On the subversive power of footnotes, see most recently Grafton, *The Footnote*.
38. This interplay did not go unnoticed by subsequent generations of authors on the subject. Carl Anton, a convert whose *Kurzer Entwurf* defended Jews from just such spurious charges, referred to Kirchner contemptuously: "ein gemeiner Jud gewesen ist," "a common Jew," not a scholar. Anton noted that Kirchner had undermined his own credibility with his parenthetical admission that he had never seen what he described, and by Jugendres's note which Anton cited in full: *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3:ix.
39. Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724), 207–09.
40. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:135, citing from *Kehillat Shlomoh*. Selig also cited the text from Kirchner, *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* (1724), 208.
41. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:154.
42. Selig repeated the incident with additional details, *ibid.*, 5:154–55. The most important change was his conclusion. In the autobiography he concluded that, although this story was not true, his readers should be aware that Jews had many strange funerary rituals. Several years later he concluded, "We are bringing this example only to illustrate that many unjust and invented accusations are brought against Jews by Christians, who do it as a mockery."
43. Ibid., 5:157.
44. Ibid., 5:160.
45. Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction*, 14.
46. "Register derjenigen Bücher welche von einigen zur Christlichen Religion bekehrten Juden geschrieben worden und in diesem Werck angezogen werden." Among the works listed in this bibliography were Margaritha's *gantzer Jüdischer Glaube* [*sic*] (Eisenmenger used the recently published edition of Frankfurt, 1689); Schwab's *Jüdischer Deckmantel* (Cologne, 1616); Hess's *Flagellum Judaicum oder Juden Geissel* (Strasbourg, 1601); Brenz's *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlangen=Balg*, with Wulfer's commentary to its Yiddish refutation by Solomon Zvi Aufhausen, *Jüdischer Theriak* (Nuremberg, 1680). Hieronymus de Sancta Fide's *Libri duo contra Judaeos* (Zurich, 1552); Johann Adrian's *Send und Warnungs=Schreiben* (Wittenberg, 1610); Johann Phillip Bleibtreu's *Erleuchtete Meyr* (Frankfurt, 1687), and Victor von Carben's *Juden Büchlein* (n.p., 1550).
47. Brenz, *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlangen-Balg*; Schwab, *Detectum velum Mosaicum*; Hess, *Der Juden Geissel* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1703); *idem*, *Speculum Judaeorum*.
48. Eisenmenger used Wulfer's edition of Brenz's *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlangen-Balg* (Nuremberg, 1681) in *Theriaca Judaica*, which Wulfer published together with Aufhausen's refutation.
49. For examples, Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 1:82 ff., regarding the Jewish in-

- tent when saying the words “hevel va-rik” in the alenu prayer. “That Jews intend our Savior [by that expression] can be seen not only from Buxtorf, but from converted Jews Brenz, Hess, Schwab and Margaritha”: 1:536. He cited Schwab, *Detectum velum Mosaicum*, ch. 8, p. 64: “When Jews saw a Christian child being taken to baptism, they would say, ‘Look, they are taking the bastard to the impurity to baptize him’” (*Siehe, man battern den Mamser in die Tuma zu schmadden*).
50. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 1:88.
 51. *Ibid.*, 1:225. He cited Rader in *Bavaria Sancta*, 3:172, 179, and Eck, *Ains Judenbuechclins*, ch. 2.
 52. *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 1:225. Citation from Brenz in Eisenmenger: “Ist aber eine Jüdin vorhanden die ihrer Weiblichen Bürden nicht kan loss werden/ und in grossen Nöthen stehet/ so nimt der Rabbi oder der oberste Jude nach ihm/Parnas genannt/ ein rein hirschen Pergament und schreibet drey unterschiedliche Zettel . . . Was aber das für eine Dinten muss seyn damit diese Zettel geschrieben werden *halten sie ganz verborgen*. Ich habe aber solches durch warhaffte und glaubwürdige Geschichte dass die Juden bissweilen Christen=Kinder gekaufft oder gestohlen und dieselbe gemartert/mit deren Blut *vielleicht* solche Zettel geschrieben werden” (emphasis added).
 53. *Ibid.*, 1:227.
 54. *Ibid.*, 2:980.
 55. *Ibid.*, 2:980–88. Eisenmenger cited a convert who informed him personally that Jews referred to the children of converts as “manserim” [*sic*] (bastards). In the beginning of the same section he complained that the general character of converts from Judaism was so “inclined to evil and wickedness” that most fell back to their earlier blindness.
 56. *Ibid.*, 2:991–1006.
 57. See Michael Graetz, “The Jewish Enlightenment,” 379–80.
 58. According to Bertling, Anton was born in Mietau, in Curland, 11 Sept. 1722: introduction to *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3:xii.
 59. See Anton’s *Kurze Nachricht* and its sequel, *Nachlese zu seiner letztern Nachricht*. In his introduction to the former, Anton remarked, “I hope that all those who acknowledge true merit will agree with me that R. Jonathan . . . is the most rational and sincere (*vernunftstige und aufrichtigste*) Jew of our times.”
 60. Anton, *Einleitung*, introduction.
 61. Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3:ii.
 62. *Ibid.*, 3:vi.
 63. *Ibid.*, 3:viii, note d; similarly, *Einleitung*, 100.
 64. Anton, *Einleitung*, 143, and similarly, 159, 160.
 65. *Ibid.*; pp. 9–95 are taken verbatim from Eisenmenger.
 66. Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3:xxxvii.
 67. On Selig’s autobiography, see the detailed introduction and annotated first volume in Graf, ed., *Judaeus Conversus*.
 68. He made many references in the introduction to each volume to “the readers,” e.g., 5:134: “This is only an example so that the readers can see their [the Jews’] very unique way of thinking and amazingly exotic customs and interpretations.”

69. See introductions to *Der Jude*, vols. 8 and 9. The German expression “ewige Jude” denotes the Wandering Jew of legend.
70. *Ibid.*, 1: introduction.
71. *Ibid.*, 5:90. Bodenschatz, *Kirchliche Verfassung*, 4:82, par. 4, distinguished between *unzeitigen Geburth* (premature birth) of one or more months’ duration, which rendered the next healthy birth invalid as a *bekhor* (firstborn), and a *missgeburth* (malformed fetus), which the rabbis say does not “break the mother’s womb,” so that the next birth can still be considered a *bekhor*.
72. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:104–07, citing Schudt, *Jüdische*, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 39, 374; Bodenschatz, *Kirchliche Verfassung*, 4:91, illustr., fig. XVII: 179b. On the development of Ashkenazic halakhah concerning the firstborn animal, see Ta-Shma, *Halakhah*, 201–15.
73. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:150–51.
74. *Ibid.*, 9:355.
75. For criticism of Christian Hebraists, *ibid.*, 1: introduction; against Buxtorf, 1:397; against Bodenschatz, 1:373, 381, 385, 412–13; 2:218, 235; 3:51.
76. *Ibid.*, 5:115.
77. Anton, *Einleitung*, 184–85.
78. *Ibid.*, introduction.
79. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:151.
80. Anton, *Einleitung*, introduction, n.p., and similarly, 132, par. 157.
81. Selig, *Der Jude*, 9:390, similarly, 9:393.
82. Anton, *Einleitung*, 141.
83. Selig, *Der Jude*, 9:390, 396.
84. Anton, *Einleitung*, 134.
85. *Ibid.*, 130.

Chapter 11. Conclusion

1. Anton’s major works, *Kurzer Entwurf* and *Einleitung*, as well as some of the minor ones were devoted to this cause. His *Commentatio . . . de Judaeo immortalis*, confuting the myth of the Wandering Jew, was published in at least two editions in Helmstedt, as well as in Berlin, Wolfenbüttel, Darmstadt, Giessen, and in translated editions. On the entire episode, see Anderson, *The Legend*, 124–25 and n. 62.
2. Both Anton and Selig ended their works on Jewish customs with negative evaluations. Anton expressed his gratitude to God and his Savior for “tearing me from this sea of corruption,” while Selig ended with an entire volume on Jewish anti-Christianity. Both works were interlaced with derogatory comments. See, e.g., Selig’s comment on one Jewish washing ritual, “What a fiction!,” *Der Jude*, 1:17; he apologized for spoiling the reader’s appetite after a reference to toilet etiquette, 1:30; his entire section on the alenu prayer sympathizes with hostile interpretations, 1:227–38.
3. Selig, *Lehrbuch*, introduction, iii: “in unsern toleranten Zeiten.”
4. Bertling, introduction to Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, 1.
5. Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3:xvi. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:151.

6. Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3:ix.
7. Selig, *Der Jude*, 1:189. However, Selig departed from almost all his principles in the ninth volume of *Der Jude*. Whether he was caving in to external pressures or had intended all along for his finale to be much more openly anti-Jewish is impossible to know. Selig devoted most of the ninth volume to a comprehensive collection of terms and phrases which “show the posture of contemporary Jews towards Christianity. Edom is the hateful name by which Jews designated the Christian religion with dishonor. We will proceed with other blasphemies and vilifications,” 9:33. After this preamble, Selig spared no effort to comb the works of converts from earlier times for sections on popular Jewish anti-Christian material. By doing so, he abandoned all the methods he had purportedly adopted to ensure that his work remained objective, since there were no Jewish sources to confirm any of this material, and, as Selig admitted, “We state here openly that such talk was never known to us personally,” 9:67. This is the only portion of Selig’s opus in which he quoted from Eisenmenger frequently and without criticism. Selig announced that “love of our readers compelled us to share some of these blasphemies with them,” 9:175.
8. Anon. *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 15 (1790), 377–81.
9. Selig, *Der Jude*, 3:212–27.
10. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew*, 61.
11. Selig, *Der Jude*, 3:392.
12. Anton, *Kurzer Entwurf*, 3: introduction.
13. Anonymous, *Allerunterthänigste Adresse*, 6–7.
14. For an example, see *Der Jude*, 9:349.
15. See the illuminating discussion in Feiner, “The Early Enlightenment.”
16. Selig, *Der Jude*, 7: introduction.
17. *Ibid.*, 9:21. See similarly 9:199: “It never occurs to a good Jew that their rabbis might be misleading them”; 9:209: “We will bring examples of the absurd manner in which the rabbis interpret the scriptures.”
18. *Ibid.*, 1:1.
19. *Ibid.*, 9:352.
20. *Ibid.*, 9:380.
21. On the social and demographic differences of the new wave of converts, see Lowenstein, *Berlin Jewish Community*, 120–76.
22. Cf. Meyer, “German Political Pressure,” 9. Meyer argues that direct borrowings from the Christian sphere occurred primarily in external forms, whereas internal redefinition did not stem from overt Christian pressure.
23. Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, 4:419. Panitz, *Modernity*, 97–98. I have followed Panitz’ careful account of this incident.
24. Selig, *Der Jude*, 5:191.
25. Panitz, *Modernity and Mortality*, 93; Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 287–94.
26. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 308–09.
27. Stahl (1802–61, converted Nov. 1819) was the author of many works articulating a conservative vision of German government, esp. *Der Christliche Staat* (Heidelberg, 1848, 1858). On Stahl, see Meyer, “German Political Pressure,” 7.
28. According to Jacob Katz, “To Whom did Mendelssohn Reply,” Mendelssohn was

responding in his *Jerusalem* (1783) to Sonnenfels's *Das Forschen nach Licht und Recht* (1782), which called upon Mendelssohn to convert. Sonnenfels had been converted along with his father Aloys, a son of Yehiel Michel Hasid, who converted to Christianity in 1735.

29. Meyer, "German Political Pressure," 7.
30. *Ibid.*, 8 and n. 19. For enlightened Christians, just the reverse was true. See the comment of Meyer, *Origins of the Modern Jew*, 62, concerning David Friedländer and his generation: "They accepted the point of view of the Christian community which could not understand why enlightened Jews persisted in remaining orthodox."
31. Selig, *Der Jude*, 9:21.
32. Anon., *Rabinismus*, attrib. Wüñch; anon., *Der Rabbiner*.
33. This list is from Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, ix. Breuer cites these terms in the context of terms borrowed by the Reform movement to characterize Jewish Orthodoxy.
34. Selig, *Der Jude*, 9:225.
35. Library catalogues attribute *Rabinismus* to eighteenth-century astronomer/physicist Christian Ernst Wüñch. The title page attributes the book only to "the author of the *Horus*." *Horus*, an "astrognostic interpretation of the revelation of John," which appeared in 1783, aroused a tremendous tumult in learned circles when it appeared. The book showed that there were many Assyrian and Egyptian precedents for Judeo-Christian doctrines and explained biblical events as the result of astrological or natural occurrences. Although many ascribed it to Wüñch, his authorship has never been proved. Indeed, as one Wüñch scholar has argued, there is nothing in Wüñch's entire career to tie him to a book like *Rabinismus*. If the attribution on the title page of *Rabinismus* is correct, it may be proof that the author of *Horus* was not Wüñch either. For a complete discussion, see Biedermann, "Christian Ernst Wüñch," 406–21. On the other hand, some of the material in the introduction does seem to be argued along the lines of *Horus*, and the author's complete dependence on garbled secondary sources for all things Jewish may be taken as a sign of an author who never investigated the subject except in preparation for this book.
36. Anon., *Rabinismus*, ii–iv.
37. *Ibid.*, 263.
38. A close reading of the account of the rabbi in Heine's story reveals the allusions to the tale of the count. Heine, of course, had completely different goals and conclusions for his rich, perplexing tale. The copy of *Rabinismus* in New York Public Library's Jewish Division once belonged to a member of the Van Geldern family, the family of Heine's mother (see fig. 25). Heine, *Rabbi of Bacherach*, 6–7; Sammons, *Heinrich Heine*, 303–13.

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Abbreviations

AJS Review = *Association for Jewish Studies Review*

ASRHJ = Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 18 vols. New York and Philadelphia, 1952–83.

EJ = *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Jerusalem, 1972.

HTR = *Harvard Theological Review*

HUCA = *Hebrew Union College Annual*

JQR = *Jewish Quarterly Review*

LW = *Luther's Works*, ed. Franklin Sherman, vols. 47, 54. Philadelphia, 1971.

REJ = *Révue des études juives*

SCJ = *Sixteenth-Century Journal*

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- an meine geliebte fünff Brüder und zwo Schwestern/ . . ./Darin ihnen die Ursach meines Abtritts vom Jüdenthum samt dem gantzen Verlauff meiner Bekehrung zum Christenthum auch meines jetzigen Ergehens beweglich zur Nachfolge fürgestellt wird.* Nordhausen, 1694.
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Index

Note: Converts from Judaism are listed by the Christian names that appear on their publications, with Jewish names, if known, following in parenthesis.

- Abeles, Simon, 103, 117, 145–46, 151
Abraham, Marcus, 153
Abun family, baptism of son, 14–15
Adam, Michael, 167
Adrian, Matthew, 50, 167
Agunah (chained woman), status of converts' wives, 25–26, 31, 139
Alenu prayer, 207, 230
Alfonsi, Petrus, 45, 90
Allendorf von, Phillip, 35
Altdorf, 204–05
Altdörfer, Paul, 120, 130
Amelander, Menachem, chronicler, 24
Amnon, R., resists conversion, 19
Amsterdam, 150, 153, 207
Andree, Jacob, 40, 42
Anstedt, (condemned Jew), 40–42
Antichrist, 68–71
Anton, Carl (Moses Gerson Cohen), 86, 98, 120, 122, 161, 177, 187, 190–91, 203, 215–17, 219–23, 226
Apostate from Judaism: Jewish appellation for, 244, n. 3, n. 6; in medieval Jewish law, 24–25, 247 ns. 64–66; in Jewish historical writing, 23; repentant, 29; social contact with, 26; in liturgy, 26–28
Aquinas, Thomas, 146; converts Jews, 33–34
Ashkenaz, definition, 11; attitude to baptism, 29–30; to converts, 22, 31; minhag literature, 175–76; reaction to forced conversion, 11–12, 19; self perception of A. Jews, 22
Aufhausen, Solomon Zevi, 185, 202, 209, 214
Augusti, Ernst, 97, 119–20, 160
Augusti, Friedrich Albrecht (Joshua ben Abraham Hirschel), 65–66, 91, 98, 114–15, 117–19, 121, 132, 134–35, 167–69
Augustine, St., 90, 115
Augsburg, 167, 179–80; Imperial Diet of, 51, 180
Austerlitz, Christian Gottfried, 114, 116, 135–36
Autobiography: convert, 115, 118, 121–22, 217–18; Haskalah, 97; Jewish, 94, 98
Bacharach, Yair Hayim, 3
Baptism, ceremony, 106; fraudulent, 37, 43–44; indelibility of, 36; reversal of, 29, 248, ns. 81, 83. *See* conversion
“Baptized Jew,” as derisive label, 1, 36
Basel, 43, 144
Basnage, Jacques, 76, 174
Berlin, 113, 118, 137, 154, 228
Bertling, Ernst, 223
Besser, Johann Polycarp, 113–14, 116, 122, 135, 163
Black Death, 143
Bodenschatz, Georg, 203, 212, 218
Bon, Daniel Jacob, 103–04, 107–09, 115, 136, 167
Boschenstein, Johannes, 162
Brenz, Samuel Friedrich, 90, 202, 209, 213–14, 220
Brody, Abraham, 112–13

- Bruchsaal, 126
 Bruna, Israel, 21–22
 Bucer, Martin, 162
 Buchenroeder, Michael, 79
 Burial practices, Jewish, 229–30
 Buxtorf, Johannes, 201, 203, 219–20
- Callenberg, Heinrich, 59, 85–86, 168
 Calvor, Caspar, 167
 Carben, Victor von, 22, 27, 36, 47, 56, 122, 125, 132, 139, 165, 172, 177–79, 181–85, 193, 195, 197, 213
 Ceremonial, Jewish, 170; literature of, 172–5; mockery of specific observances: Purim, 195–97; Passover, 197, 212, 214, 226; Simhat Torah, 64; Tish'a be-Av, 197
 Charles V, Habsburg emperor, 50, 61
 Christfels, Phillip Ernst (Mordechai She-maya b. Moses), 84, 99, 122, 125, 133, 150
 Christian Hebraism, 53–56, 73, 131, 161–63, 200–201; competition of converts, 200–21
 Christian, Paul (Malachi b. Samuel), 94–95, 101, 112, 167
 Christiani, Friedrich Albrecht, 68, 82, 91, 95–97, 116, 123, 126, 161, 166, 198, 213, 222
 Christiani, Pablo, 45
Chronicle of Le Mans, 13
 Cologne, 48, 61–62, 129, 132, 150–51, 164, 177–78
 Conversion: ceremonies, 106–111; child, 140–156, 254 n. 10; coerced, 2, 5–7, 11–12, 14–19, 23, 28, 37–38, 143, 248 n. 78; 250 n. 24; efficacy of, 1, 37; image of rebirth, xiii, 3; in pre-Crusade Europe, 14, to Islam, 4, 5. *See also* Baptism
 Conversos, 7
 Converts, Jewish pedigree, 122–23, 132
 Corvino, Pastor, 153–54
 Coryate, Thomas, 158, 163
 Costa, Isaac da, 83, 123
 Criminals, Jewish, 37, 39; conversion before execution, 39–40; hanging, 40
 Crusade, first, 1, 2, 15, 37–38, 143, 145
 Crusade chronicle, Hebrew, 16–18, 143–44
Der gantz Jüdisch glaub, 56, 73, 93, 160, 180–81, 198
 Desecration of the host libel, 141–42
 Disputation, religious, 47–48, 50–51, 121
 Dominicans, 7, 48, 50, 60, 132, 178
 Donin, Nicholas, 27, 45
 Draconites, Johannes, 61, 163–64
- Eck, Johannes, 48
 Edzard, Esdras, 59, 81–83
 Egmont, Percival, 133
 Eisenmenger, Johann Andreas, 58, 69, 84, 201, 212–21, 254 n. 15
 Emden, Jacob, 230; Eybeschuetz controversy, 86, 216
 Emilio, Paul, 167
 English Jews, conversion, 9, 76, 82, 88–89, 92. *See also* Yom Tov of London
 Enlightenment, 154, 218, 223, 226, 229, 231
 Espina, Alonso d', 49–50, 254 n. 15
 Ethnography, of Jews, 178–79, 182, 201
 Eulenspiegel, Till, 70
 Eybeschuetz, R. Jonathan, 86, 98, 215
- Fagius, Paul, 174
 Fastnachtspiele (Shrovetide plays), Jews in, 34, 70
 Felix, John (Seelig Bunzlau), 93, 103, 115, 119, 136–37
 Folz, Hans, 70–71, 157
 Franck, Joachim Christian, 91
 Frank, Jacob, 86–87
 Frankfurt (am Main), 49, 63, 70, 82, 84, 128, 149, 153, 250 n. 28
 Frederici, Carl Ludwig (Elias Magnus), 229–30
 Frederick II, Emperor, 158
 Freiburg am Breisgau, 147–49
 Frey, Joseph Samuel, 65, 86, 91–92, 97, 99, 103–04, 110, 118–120, 125–26, 134, 136, 190

- Fried, Lotharius Franz (Joseph Marcus), 58, 84, 122, 150, 160
- Friedenheim, Caspar Joseph, 118, 133–34, 166
- Friedenreich, Christian, 122
- Friedländer, David, 226
- Fürth, 105, 113, 125, 150, 206–07, 211
- Gengenbach, Pamphilius, 71
- Gershom, R., ruling on apostates, 29; son of, 14
- Gerson, Christian, 64, 68, 74–75, 79, 90, 100, 109, 123, 127, 132, 138, 149, 217
- Glikl (Glückel of) Hameln, 30, 76, 112, 152–53
- Gottfried, Johann Adam (Nathan of Altona), 93, 99, 101–05, 113, 118–19, 125, 131–32
- Gottfried, Johann Christoph, 68, 98, 123
- Gottlieb, Christian (Jehiel Hirschlein of Buchau), 117
- Gratius, Ortuin, 178
- Grimmelshausen, Hans, 71
- Guggenheim, Joseph, 102, 104–05, 117, 27–28, 151, 168
- Gunzenhausen, Solomon Moses of, 127
- Hahn, Yuzpa, of Nordlingen, 175
- Halicz, Paul, 167
- Halle, 59, 74, 85–86, 123, 133, 227
- Hamburg, 59, 81–82, 125, 153, 158, 207
- Hannover, disputation at, 51
- Harzuge, Johann, 167
- Hasid, Judah, 84–85
- Hasidim, of Ashkenaz, 17
- Heine, Heinrich, 234
- Heller, Yom Tov Lipman, 122
- Hermann, medieval convert, 90, 99, 111
- Hertz, Abraham, 114
- Hess, Ernst Ferdinand, 99, 151–52, 203, 209, 213
- Hirsch, Paul Wilhelm, 43, 79, 91, 119
- Holländer, Johann, 107, 109
- Hosmann, Sigismund, 79
- Iberian converts, comparison
- Identity, transformation of, 122–23 language and, 157–63
- Immanuel, Ludwig Hartmann (Raphael Josef), 118
- Inquisition, Spanish, 173; definition of Judaism, 7
- Isaac, Johannes, 36, 60–61, 75, 123, 129, 132, 163–64
- Isaac, Stephan, 36, 60–62, 114, 128, 132, 137, 151, 164
- Islam, attitudes toward conversion, 4,5
- Isserlein, Israel, 26
- Italian Jews, conversion to Christianity, 7,8, 243 n. 15
- Jacobs, Abraham, 102, 104, 125, 128, 153
- Jesuit order, 61–62, 216
- Jewish ceremonial (*jüdisches Ceremoniel*), literature of, 173–77; 191–98; 201–02, 205–17, 221
- Jews, defend vs. convert charges, 202–03
- John, Theodore (Yom Tov of Prague), 83, 125
- Josef, Raphael, 167
- Josel of Rosheim [*Sefer ha-miknah*], 13, 22–23, 50–51, 64, 243 n. 8
- Joseph, Paul (Joseph bar Zadok), 128
- Jugendres, Sebastian, 185, 203, 205–09
- Karaites, 62; 248 n. 68
- Kemper, Johann (Moses b. Aaron of Cracow), 84, 123
- Kidder, Richard, 76, 82
- Kirchner, Paul, 28, 150, 185, 202–203, 205–10
- Kirchhof, Hans, 35, 70
- Koch, Friedrich, 91, 94, 96, 113
- Königsberg, 230
- Lebrecht, J. C. (Abraham b. Moses Levi Hertz), 94
- Leibniz, 158–59
- Lemlein, Asher, 74–75

- Lent, Johannes a, 75, 79–81
 Le Roi, J. F. A. de, 120
 Levi, Borach, 139
 Levita, Elijah, 12, 74, 244 n. 4
 London Society, Conversion of Jews, 87, 118
 Luther, Martin, 48, 56, 59, 61, 68, 89, 167, 172, 182
- Maier, Christophorus Paulus (Solomon ben Maier), 82
 Maimonides, 5, 6, 11, 219
 Mainz, 14
 Marcus, Moses, 30, 63, 110, 112, 123, 133, 175
 Margalith (Margolith, Margoliot) family, 122–23
 Margaritha, Antonius, 22, 28, 47, 50–51, 55–56, 63–64, 73, 75, 90, 93, 126, 160, 163, 172, 176, 179–82, 185, 198, 203, 207, 213, 217, 254 n. 23
 Marranos, marranism, 5, 6, 9, 11, 17, 25
 Martyrdom, Jewish, 2, 11, 15–19, 23, 44
 Maximilian I, Habsburg Emperor, 48
 Mayr family, 149
 Mecklenburg-Schwerin, 229–30
 Medici, Paulo, 83, 116
 Megerlin, M. David, 86
 Meir of Rothenberg, R., 14, 20–21, 28–29, 31, 175–76, 248 n. 78
 Melammed, Jacob, 84, 125
 Mendel, Christoff, 112, 128
 Mendel of Buda, 112, 128
 Mendelssohn, Moses, 230; in Lavater affair, 129
 Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Abraham, 111
 Meshummad (apostate), 12, 24, 26–28
 Mesirah, mosser (betrayal, traitor), as prelude to conversion, 22–23
 Messianism, Jewish, 68–69; as threat to Christians, 70–71, 85, 180; failed movements, 73–74, 84, 86
 Michael of Prague, 62
 Mission to the Jews, 50, 52; Spanish style in German lands, 48–50
- Mobility, socio-economic, converts', 124, 126–29, 133
 Moellin, Jacob, 176, 193
 Mordechai of Eisenstadt, 80–81
 Morosini, Giulio, 83
 Moscherosch, Johann, 157
 Moses Aaron of Cracow (Johannes Christianus Jacobus), 109–110
 Müller, Johannes, 52, 153, 158
 Münster, Sebastian, 74, 162–63, 184, 201
 Mürner, Thomas, 201
- Nigri, Peter. *See* Schwarz
 Nizzahon, 170
 Nuremberg, 44, 49, 62, 82, 102, 105, 111, 124, 127–28, 162, 184, 206
- Osiander, Andreas, 162, 199
 Otto, Julius Conrad, 123
- Paul, conversion model, 90, 116–18, 167
 Paul of Prague, 94, 122
 Pellikan, Konrad, 50
 Penitential rites, Jewish; mockery of, 193–95, 207, 218–19
 Perlhefter, Bella, 189, 204–05
 Perlhefter (Eybeschuetz), Ber, 80–81, 204–05
 Pfefferkorn, Johannes, 22, 27–28, 36, 47, 55–56, 63, 74, 90, 122, 126, 172–73, 178–79, 181, 185; controversy over Jewish books, 52–53, 178, 200
 Pfefferkorn, Meir, 122
 Pfeiffer, August, 123
 Phillipus, Franciscus Lotharius (Wolf Levi of Lublin), 85
 Pico della Mirandola, 52–53, 161–62
 Pietist movement, 59, 85, 185
 Polemic, Christian-Jewish, 47, 50–51; role of early-modern converts, 182
 Pope, Jewish boy who became, 15, 143
 Portugal, forced conversion of Jewish children, 145
 Prague, 63, 91, 103, 113–14, 120, 122, 145–46, 168, 189, 215–16

- Printing, and publicity of converts, 54
- Protestantism: attracting Jewish converts, 54–59; criticism of Catholic ritual, 174
- Purim, as anti-Christian, 13, 207, 226
- “Rabbi of Bacherach,” 234
- Rashi, ruling on apostates, 14–15, 29, 243
n. 8, 246 n. 30
- Red Jews, 70–72
- Regensburg, 8, 16, 21, 48–49, 55, 64, 100, 122, 219; during Crusade, 16
- Reformation, 3, 54, 56
- Reich, Friedrich Wilhelm, 198
- Reineccius, Christian, 93, 116, 161, 203
- Reinhard, 121, 167
- Reubeni, David, 87
- Reuchlin, Johannes, 52–53, 122, 162, 174, 178, 201; controversy over Jewish books, 27–28, 178, 200
- Reutlingen, Judah Mehler, 125
- Reversion to Judaism, 14, 28, 42–43, 8, 116; ceremonies, 29
- Riederer, Johann, 80
- Ritual murder libel, 8, 45, 49, 141, 149, 173, 208–09, 212–14, 216, 220, 232
- Rosenzweig, Franz, 109
- Roth, Matthias, 118
- Rovigo, Abraham, 84, 99
- Sabbatai Zevi, 71, 76, 79–84, 86–87, 92, 216, 249 n. 90
- Sambari, Joseph, 74
- Scaliger, Joseph Justus, 36
- Schickard, William, 201
- Schnaittach, 162, 205
- Schudt, Johann Jacob, 40, 43, 80, 85, 197, 201–02, 218–19, 229
- Schultz, Stephan, 86
- Schwab, Dietrich, 98–99, 209, 213, 220
- Schwarz /Nigri, Peter, 48–49, 162
- Secrecy, perceptions of Jewish, 13, 45
- Sectarianism, Jewish, 62–65
- Seeligman, Christian Gottlieb, 198
- Sefer Hasidim*, 17
- Selig, Gottfried, 91–92, 135, 142, 145, 161, 187, 189, 199, 202, 211–12, 215, 217–19, 222–23, 224, 226–29, 231
- Sepharad, Jews of, 11
- Serpilius, Georg, 43
- Shevet Yehudah, (chronicle), 23
- Shalome ben Shalomoh, 58, 94, 161
- Shammash, Juzpa, of Worms, 21
- Simon of Trent, ritual murder trial, 173
- Sonnenfels, Joseph von, 230
- Spieß, Johann, 109
- Staffelsteiner, Paul (Nathan Aaron), 122
- Stahl, Friedrich Julius, 230
- Steinhardin, Gütgen, 94, 188
- Steyner, Heinrich, 180
- Strasbourg, 49
- Streckfuss, Karl, 229
- Tauffenburg, M. Friedrich Wilhelm
Christoph (Abraham Oppenheim), 125, 133, 139, 140
- Tacitus’ *Germania*, 158
- Tefillin, 264 n. 81
- Thirty-Years’ War, 129
- Tissart, François, 201
- Todesurteil (execution narrative), 42
- Toledot Yeshu, 100, 170, 198
- Treu, Christian, 42
- Tremellius, Immanuel (John), 8, 164
- Ulrich, Christoph Gabriel (Chajim b. David Schirmer), 62
- Ulrich, Johann Caspar, 102, 104, 168, 201, 223, 225
- Varnhagen, Rahel, 111
- Veil, Ludwig Compiègne de, 95, 111
- Ve-la-malshinim, (malediction vs. apostates), 26–28
- Verga, Solomon ibn (*Shevet Yehudah*), 23, 44, 75, 214
- Vienna, 62, 113, 144
- Von Carben, Victor. *See* Carben
- Wagenseil, Johann Christoph, 60, 80, 203–04, 209, 219

- Waldkirch, 149
- Wallich, Christoph, 126, 160, 200, 202
- Wallich, Court Jew, 121
- Wandering Jew, legend, 120, 222–23
- Wasserburg, 55
- Weidner, Paul, 123
- Weille, Friedrich Ragstadt von, 84
- Wenceslaus, Henricus (Samuel Metzel), 150
- William of Fly, 143
- Wolfenbüttel, 216
- Women, Jewish: Conversion, 25, manipulation of conversion, 30–31, 184–85; resistance to conversion, 26; Christian mission directed to, 183; in depictions of Judaism, 182–91, 209–10
- Worms, 16, 49, 63; minhag book of, 21
- Wülfer, 214
- Würfel, Andreas, 44, 82, 111, 184
- Xeres, John, 95, 116
- Yahya, Gedaliah ibn (*Shalshet ha-kabbalah*), 44, 74, 75
- Yiddish, 159–161; in mission to Jews, 49, 166–69, 185
- Yom Tov of London, tempted by conversion, 19–20
- Zadok of Horodna, 84
- Zarfo, Christian, 204
- Zasius, Ulrich, 49, 148–49, 153–54
- Zeitmann, Gottfried Thomas, 39
- Zoref, Adam Josef, 118