

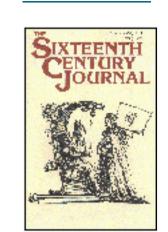
Search JSTOR All Content • Q

Log in Register

About Support

The Sixteenth C... / Vol. 18, No. 1,... / Jewish Conversi...

**Advanced Search** 



JOURNAL ARTICLE

Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure
Blood Laws and Reformation: A
Revisionist View of Racial and
Religious Antisemitism

Browse V Tools V

Jerome Friedman

The Sixteenth Century Journal

Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 3-30

Published by: Sixteenth Century Journal
DOI: 10.2307/2540627
https://www.jstor.org/stable/2540627
Page Count: 28

**Topics:** <u>Jewish peoples</u>, <u>Judaism</u>, <u>Christian history</u>, <u>Jewish history</u>, <u>Antisemitism</u>, <u>Jewish law</u>, <u>Heredity</u>, <u>Jewish culture</u>, <u>Catholicism</u>

Give feedback

Read Online (Free)

Download (\$10.00)

Save

Subscribe (\$19.50)

Cite this Item





Select an access plan that fits your needs

Get started

Article

Thumbnails

References

Viewing page [3] of pages 3-30

## PREVIEW

The Sixteenth Century Journal Volume XVIII, No. 1, Spring 1987

> Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and Reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and Religious Antisemitism

> > Jerome Friedman Kent State University

The sixteenth century witnessed the transition of medieval religious anti-Judaism into a racial antisemitism laying the foundation for modern hatred of Jews. This change resulted from the institution of the "pure blood laws" by the Spanish courts of Inquisition to determine who was and who was not Jewish. Such racial definitions were necessary because hundreds of thousands of Jews voluntarily converted to Christianity, indeed, even attempted to make religious contributions to their new religion, as the efforts of St. Theresa, Alphonso and Juan de Valdes, Luis Vives, Luis de Leon, and the Jesuits Salmeron and Laynez and Juan Alonso de Polanco, among many many others, must demonstrate. Indeed, even Protestant learning of Hebrew was predicated upon the efforts of Jewish converts such as Matthew Adrian, Cornelius Adelkind, and others. It was precisely this wholesale swallowing of former Jews and much Jewish linguistic and exegetical expertise that brought about Christian revulsion against "Jewish contamination" and the use of a biological standard for determining religious identification. This process was complicated by the active complicity of New Christian authorities, wishing to distance themselves from their former co-religionists, in the development of racial categories. While generations of historians have sought to explain Luther's antisemitism resulting from a frustration with Jewish unwillingness to convert to Christianity, all the evidence points in the other direction. Luther and others developed a more defined sense of antisemitism precisely because they believed they saw "Jewish"-i.e. New Christian, -influence, everywhere about them.

A VARIETY OF FACTORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED to the recent interest in the development of European antisemitism. First, the Holocaust is now sufficiently distant for scholars of all backgrounds to appreciate the dimensions of the horror involved and search for the deep historical roots of so gruesome a nightmare. Second, because Luther's anti-Jewish writings allegedly contributed to the Holocaust in some fashion, many Jewish and Christian historians used the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth in

## Abstract

The sixteenth century witnessed the transition of medieval religious anti-Judaism into a racial antisemitism laying the foundation for modern hatred of Jews. This change resulted from the institution of the "pure blood laws" by the Spanish courts of Inquisition to determine who was and who was not Jewish. Such racial definitions were necessary because hundreds of thousands of Jews voluntarily converted to Christianity, indeed, even attempted to make religious contributions to their new religion, as the efforts of St. Theresa, Alphonso and Juan de Valdes, Luis Vives, Luis de Leon, and the Jesuits Salmeron and Laynez and Juan Alonso de Polanco, among many many others, must demonstrate. Indeed, even Protestant learning of Hebrew was predicated upon the efforts of Jewish converts such as Matthew Adrian, Cornelius Adelkind, and others. It was precisely this wholesale swallowing of former Jews and much Jewish linguistic and exegetical expertise that brought about Christian revulsion against "Jewish contamination" and the use of a biological standard for determining religious identification. This process was complicated by the active complicity of New Christian authorities, wishing to distance themselves from their former co-religionists, in the development of racial categories. While generations of historians have sought to explain Luther's antisemitism resulting from a frustration with Jewish unwillingness to convert to Christianity, all the evidence points in the other direction. Luther and others developed a more defined sense of antisemitism precisely because they believed they saw "Jewish"-i.e. New Christian, -influence, everywhere about them.

The Sixteenth Century Journal © 1987 Sixteenth Century Journal

Request Permissions

## **Explore JSTOR**

By SubjectGet AccessBy TitleSupportBy PublisherLibguidesAdvanced SearchResearchData for ResearchBasics

About JSTOR

Mission and History

What's in JSTOR

Get JSTOR

News

**Events** 

JSTOR Labs

istory

JSTOR Daily

Careers

Contact Us

For Publishers

For Librarians

**y** Ff

JSTOR is part of <u>ITHAKA</u>, a not-for-profit organization helping the academic community use digital technologies to preserve the scholarly record and to advance research and teaching in sustainable ways.

©2000-2020 ITHAKA. All Rights Reserved. JSTOR®, the JSTOR logo, JPASS®, Artstor®, and ITHAKA® are registered trademarks of ITHAKA.



Terms & Conditions of Use Privacy Policy Cookie Policy Accessibility