

WHEN BRETHREN WALK TOGETHER: IMMANUEL TREMELLIUS (C. 1510–1580),  
JEWISH–CHRISTIAN CONVERSION, CHRISTIAN HEBRAISM, AND REFORMED  
CHRISTIANITY

By

JOSHUA ANDREW JOHNSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of JOSHUA ANDREW JOHNSON find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Jesse Spohnholz, Ph.D., Chair

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Steven Kale, Ph.D.

---

Susan Peabody, Ph.D.

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Abstract

by Joshua Andrew Johnson, M.A.  
Washington State University  
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Chair: Jesse Spohnholz

This thesis examines the Italian-born Jewish convert to Christianity Immanuel Tremellius (c. 1510–1580), his views on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, and his various contexts. The thesis successively examines Tremellius's various identities as a Jewish–Christian convert, a Hebraist scholar, and a Reformed Christian to account for his philosemitic views. The thesis argues that Tremellius's experience growing up Jewish in Ercolean Ferrara, his spiritualist circle and influence in Italian Catholicism, and his Reformed faith influenced Tremellius to become one of the first philo-semitic Jewish converts to Christianity, one who advocated for Jewish–Christian understanding and who continued to identify as Jewish after conversion and who advocated others to do so as well.

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## **Dedication**

Dedicated to my mother and my father,  
To all my grandparents, and great-grandparents,  
To all the ancestors,  
And to all the oppressed peoples of the earth.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The sixteenth century was a time of upheaval. In fact, one can safely consider it a time of transition from the medieval world to what we call the modern world. Many of the certainties of the Middle Ages were crumbling, exemplified in three areas. First, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, there was one holy Roman apostolic Church, which had some dissidents and deterrents, labelled heretics. By the end, there were many of competing confessions, each labelling each other heretics. With each new group popping up founded by another man who believed he could interpret God better than anyone else, how could anyone find truth? This crumbling of religious certainty led to a rise in inquisitions, in order to stamp out what the Roman Church found unable to control. In addition to witches and heretics, the Roman Catholic Church targeted Jews. Second, the millennia-old Jewish population in Europe itself was disintegrating and fragmenting—England and France had expelled its Jews two centuries prior, and Spain and Portugal did so in the 1490s. Struggling to retain their identity, many Jews were forced to convert in Spain and were tried for having Jewish heritage. Naples, the Papal States, Lithuania, and German kingdoms kicked out their Jews during this time. In exile again, Jews relocated to the Netherlands, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, and northern Africa. Nevertheless, these Jewish enclaves put down roots which lasted until the mid-twentieth century, when the next catastrophe of Jewish history took place. The third change was the rise of humanist scholarship, ignited by the Italian Renaissance, led to a shattering of religious certainty and increased dissemination of knowledge. An increase in literacy, new vernacular Bible translations, and books printed on the moveable printing press faster than monks could copy manuscripts led

to citizens being able to read and interpret the Bible and other texts for themselves. Discoveries showed that relics, pious legends, and even biblical texts had little to no historical basis. Some gave up on religion; others decided to read the biblical texts for themselves—in Hebrew. The Hebraist enterprise, it is called, required Christians to learn Hebrew from Jews, but once they did so, they developed their own systems without regard to Jews.<sup>1</sup> Christians used Jews to learn Hebrew, then abandoned them; in some cases, knowing Hebrew did not make Christians less prejudiced. Love of Hebrew did not often translate to love of Jews. With these three trends—the collapse of Catholicism, the collapse of public Judaism, and the collapse of authoritative dogma, giving way to individual scholarship—the early modern period represents one of shifting religious persuasions. An individual during this time had to make more conscious religious choices, and these choices had a stronger resonance than, say, one hundred years prior. Because of its situation as a time of transition—when established religious identities and ideologies were crumbling more than ever before, and as the world advanced technologically—the early modern European setting provides a good entry point into Jewish-Christian relations, as boundaries were malleable and old certainties falling. In order to understand relations between Jews and Christians in early modern Europe, the present study adopts a transcultural/trans-religious perspective by looking at the writings of a particular individual who inhabited both sides of the Jewish-Christian divide.<sup>2</sup> Protestants have held up Giovanni Emmanuel Tremellius (c. 1510–1580), a Ferrara-born Italian Jew who converted to Reformed Christianity and became

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<sup>1</sup> Debra Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 119, 143.

<sup>2</sup> By those terms, I mean someone who inhabits both cultures or both religions, although the terminology could also refer to comparative religion and cross-cultural analysis.

an influential Hebraist scholar, as a paragon of Christian devotion—the lost Jew who met his true messiah and lived out his days safely in the arms of the church. Instead, I propose to explore his religious hybridity—he was not a Jew who *became* a Christian, he was a Jew *and* a Christian. This thesis pursues three aspects of Tremellius’s identity—a Jewish convert, a Hebraist scholar, and a Reformed writer—in order to explain Tremellius’s philo-semitism and irenicism.

Emmanuel Tremellius was born around 1510 in Ferrara. He learned Hebrew and Jewish studies from a broad-minded teacher, Avraham ben Mordecai Farissol, who studied both the New Testament and Jewish law. In 1530, after moving to the University of Padua, Tremellius came under the influence of Alessandro Farnese (Pope Paul III, 1553-1549), and Reginald Pole, the last Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury (1556-1558), by whom he was baptized into the Catholic faith by 1540. He befriended passersby Reformed theologians such as John Calvin, Martin Bucer, Theodore Beza, and Peter Martyr Vermigli, with whom he left Italy and came to Strasbourg in 1542. In 1548, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury (1533-1555), invited him to teach at Cambridge. Tremellius taught Hebrew at Cambridge until 1553, during which time he translated and published John Calvin’s French Genevan Catechism into Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. He returned to the continent in 1554 and held a post at Heidelberg from 1562 until 1577, when the Lutheran prince removed Calvinists. A religious exile, Tremellius died in Sedan in 1580, having become intimately involved with the great ecclesiastics and theologians of his day. Protestants gladly used his Bible translated directly from the Hebrew and Syriac texts well into the eighteenth century. He also wrote Hebrew grammars and biblical commentaries.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The only scholarly book-length treatment of Tremellius is Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism: The Life and Writings of Immanuel Tremellius (c. 1510–1580)* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007). The nineteenth-century biographies are Wilhelm Becker, *Immanuel Tremellius: Ein Proselytenleben im Zeitalter der Reformation*

The thesis successively examines Tremellius's contexts to find the best explanation for his philo-semitism. First, in order to examine his Jewish identity, I situate Tremellius as a Renaissance-era Italian Jew and look at the views from other Jewish converts to Christianity about Judaism, which were often highly antagonistic to their old faith. Tremellius, however, maintained respect for his Jewish heritage all his life, distinguishing him from other converts. Second, I situate Tremellius as a Renaissance-era humanist and Hebraist. This movement contributed to the revival of classical languages, explaining Tremellius's extensive polyglot writings. Third, I situate him as a Reformed Christian and the respect that Reformed Christians had, above all other Protestant denominations, with the Israelites of the Bible. In this capacity, I examine how Reformed theologians discussed Jews and Judaism in their writings. Fourth, I focus on how Tremellius portrays Jews and Judaism in his writings and correspondence with Reformed leaders. His writings include a 1554 Reformed Catechism that he translated from Calvin's French into Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and a nineteenth-century reprint of this linguistically hybrid Catechism which, although not in Yiddish, employed Yiddish characters to encode standard German words. As a hybrid individual who produced hybrid writings, Tremellius illuminates the ways individuals constructed, reified, and chose religious boundaries in early modern Europe.

## **Historiography**

In the early twentieth century, American Jewish historians were hesitant to write particularly Jewish history to escape prejudice. In order to deflect attention away from their

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(Leipzig: Hinrich, 1890), and Friedrich Butters, *Emanuel Tremellius, erster Rector des Zweibrücker Gymnasiums. Eine Lebensskizze zur Feier des dreihundertjährigen Jubiläums dieser Studienanstalt* (Zweibrücken, 1859).

identity, these historians wrote about anything other than the history of Jews. Moreover, the Jewish history that had been written from medieval times until well into professionalization advanced what may be called the lachrymose conception of Jewish history, which, as David Nirenberg described it, saw “the history of Judaism since the fall of Judaism as a vale of tears, a progression of tragedies.”<sup>4</sup> A similar school, the Jerusalem school of Jewish history, pioneered by Yitzhak Baer (1888 – 1980), emphasized a post-Holocaust, secularized version of the lachrymose school. Nirenberg stated that, even though its “messianism [was] more muted,” the Jerusalem school shared with its predecessors “a teleological vision in which each incident of persecution foreshadows greater persecutions to come.”<sup>5</sup> These vale of tears schools dominated Jewish historiography through the mid-twentieth century.

In 1952, the renowned historian Salo Wittmayer Baron (1895 – 1989) began producing his eighteen-volume *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, which sought to create a whole picture of Jewish life and integrate Jewish history into the wider history in which Jews inhabited.<sup>6</sup> Baron opposed the lachrymose school and wanted to emphasize Jewish integration into the broader society. Since then, the historiography about interactions between Jews and Christians roughly divides into that which reifies boundaries and that which challenges boundaries. That is, some scholarship, reflecting a certain lived reality, takes it for granted that Jews and Christians were naturally antagonistic towards each other; that there was and is an impenetrable divide between the two religions. On the other hand, some scholarship sees such

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<sup>4</sup> David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecutions of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 9. Salo Wittmayer Baron coined *lachrymose conception of Jewish history*.

<sup>5</sup> Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 18 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952–1983).

antagonism as not natural, but constructed; and that the relationship between the two religions is much more fluid and, at times, friendly.

Until recently, most scholars have treated the boundaries between Judaism and Christianity as rigid and permanent. In 1959, Cecil Roth argued that Jewish involvement in learning, as “the custodians of higher education,” created an intellectual flowering at an earlier stage than the Renaissance. Roth argued that due to discrimination during the Renaissance, Jews became less involved in advancing the artistic and intellectual revival.<sup>7</sup> Contrarily, historian Moses Avigdor Shulvass argued that Jews in Italy experienced a cultural flowering *during* the Renaissance, bringing “hitherto unimaginable opportunities” and creating “a harmonious blend of Judaism and Renaissance culture in life and thought patterns.”<sup>8</sup> Whereas Roth had argued that Jewish intellectualism preceded the Renaissance and dissolved during it, Shulvass argued that Jewish knowledge flourished during the rebirth. These studies reflected the still-relevant debate emphasizing antagonism or integration between Jewish culture and the larger society.

Historians continued to emphasize the antagonism between Judaism and Christianity into the 1980s. Heiko Oberman, for instance, argued that pre-Enlightenment Protestant theologians continued the anti-Judaistic schema of the Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> Ronnie Hsia argued that the less sacramental nature of the Lutheran confession tended to secularize accusations of ritual murder against Jews on the elite side, whereas popular culture continued to hold to magical and ritual

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<sup>7</sup> Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance* (New York: Harper, 1959), viii-ix.

<sup>8</sup> Moses A. Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. Elvin I. Kose (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), ix, x.

<sup>9</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Age of Renaissance and Reformation*, trans. James I. Porter (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), xi, 139. Oberman labels it the roots of anti-Semitism, even though he acknowledges that the racial theory was not adopted until the nineteenth century. Here, I use anti-*Judaistic* to refer to opposition to the religion, not just the people.

accusations against Jews through the sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup> While popular culture continued to propagate anti-Jewish accusations, the rational elite culture did not. Brian Pullan argued that the Venetian Inquisition's prescriptive protocol mandated that people crossed the Jewish-Christian boundary in a specific way; those who were "inconstant and indecisive," for example, "fell afoul of the Inquisition."<sup>11</sup> Like earlier scholars, Oberman, Hsia, and Pullan focused on antagonism between Jews and Christians.

In the late twentieth century, some historians began emphasizing the integration of Jews into Christian society, though this work still presumed a relatively stable division between the two religions. Jonathan Israel argued that the political and spiritual upheaval in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Enlightenment skepticism, liberalism, and the rise of mercantilism, brought Jews from a state of "virtual elimination" to a state of reintegration while remaining "a tightly cohesive group."<sup>12</sup> John Edwards, however, did not want to write a history of Jews and Christians that focused on "their separate, internal histories," but rather one that emphasized the "relationships between adherents of the two faiths."<sup>13</sup> Some scholars, like Robert Moore, linked the rise of persecuting mentalities with secular processes, i.e., "established

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<sup>10</sup> R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988) 3, 228-229.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550-1670* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1983), 315.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998), 1, 3. Israel's 1985 book was one of the first to see early modern Jewry as distinct from medieval Jewry. Contrarily, John Edwards argued that the Jewish community experienced social and religious continuity between medieval and early modern times.

<sup>13</sup> John Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700* (London: Routledge, 1988), ix.



governmental, judicial and social institutions.”<sup>14</sup> Others traced the origins of discourses about the other, whether antagonistic or not.<sup>15</sup> All these authors treated the lines dividing Christianity from Judaism as self-evident and stable.

Scholarship on Renaissance Hebraism had not challenged the assumptions of earlier scholars, but it has shed light on the fact that the sixteenth century resituated the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. In 1992, Heiko A. Oberman showed that even though Christian Hebraists might have had high regard for Hebrew studies, that regard did not always translate to high regard for Jews. The sixteenth-century Hebraist Conrad Pellican who spent his money on a beautiful edition of the Talmud criticized his comrade Wolfgang Capito for respecting Jews. Oberman concluded that while Christian Hebraism may have advanced “the understanding of biblical Judaism,” it failed to reshape “the deep-seated Christian disaffection with postbiblical Jews.”<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Abraham Melamed considered the revival of interest in Hebrew among Christians “a hesitant step in the right direction,” even though he acknowledged that “the process was slow and ambiguous.” Melamed stated that Oberman’s thesis was an overstatement: “Christian Hebraism did, undeniably, create a meaningful and favorable interest in things Jewish, and a framework for cultural dialogue between Jewish and Christian scholars

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<sup>14</sup> R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 5. Nirenberg listed Carlo Ginzburg as an example of this trend.

<sup>16</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, “Discovery of Hebrew and Discrimination against the Jews: The *Veritas Hebraica* as Double-Edged Sword in Renaissance and Reformation,” in *Germania Illustrata: Essays on Early Modern Germany Presented to Gerald Strauss*, ed. Andrew C. Fix and Susan Karant-Nunn (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992), 19–34, esp. 33 and 34.

possibly unprecedented in extent and intensity.”<sup>17</sup> Where one scholar saw only anti-Semitic denigration, another scholar highlighted the positive fact that at least Hebraists studied Jewish works. Abraham Melamed, then, represents the new school which challenges the boundaries of a fixed antagonism.

One of the first scholars to challenge the entrenched boundaries was David B. Ruderman in 1981. In his biography of Emmanuel Tremellius’s teacher, Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol, Ruderman showed the great importance which Farissol placed on studying the New Testament. Farissol’s impulse apparently influenced Tremellius—Tremellius’s biographer Kenneth Austin suggested that his teacher’s open-minded approach gave Tremellius the sparks to convert to Christianity.<sup>18</sup> David B. Ruderman further challenged the field by remarking that Renaissance historians had “neglected the Jewish factor in Renaissance society because of their inability to utilize the more inaccessible yet extensive Hebrew sources.” He stated that the need to integrate Renaissance and Jewish historiography was more obvious during a period of “heightened interactions between Christian and Jewish cultures.”<sup>19</sup> While Ruderman saw the two cultures as interacting in history, he noted that historians isolated them in historiography. Debra Kaplan and Magda Teter would repeat this same point in 2009.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Abraham Melamed, “The Revival of Christian Hebraism in Early Modern Europe,” in *Philosemitism in History*, ed. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 66, 65.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 13-14.

<sup>19</sup> David B. Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew: The Life and Thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1981), xiii.

<sup>20</sup> Debra Kaplan and Magda Teter, “Out of the (Historiographic) Ghetto: European Jews and Reformation Narratives,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 40, no. 2 (2009): 365–94 write: “Resembling the decades-old resistance of historians to integrate women’s history fully into a general historical narrative, historians have tended to treat Jews as a separate field of ‘Jewish history,’ rarely integrating them into the fabric of their historical studies.” They urge historians to fully integrate Jews into general narratives.

The philosopher Richard H. Popkin, known for his study of skepticism, contributed to the 1994 collection *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews*, discussing the phenomenon of “Christian Jews and Jewish Christians in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.” In his good-hearted and long-winded introductory paragraph, Popkin gives the reader a long list of sorts to which the title does not refer: Jews who have Christmas trees nor Christians who eat gefilte fish, Jews for Jesus, “the occasional Christian convert to Judaism,” nor Jewish converts to Christianity, nor *conversos*.<sup>21</sup> Rather, he highlighted a social phenomenon in the seventeenth century, whereby “members of each religious community were drawn close together because of their common conviction that the end of days, the culmination of Providential history, was about to take place.”<sup>22</sup> The conviction that the Messiah was coming (or returning) in 1655-56 allowed Jews and Christians to drop the Jesus debate and work together to usher in the kingdom of God and the rebuilding of the Temple at Zion.<sup>23</sup> Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel became the foremost interfaith leader of the time, working with Christians to readmit Jews into England and arguing that since Spaniards had identified Jewish Indians in the New World, the end was near, based on the logic that Jews must be scattered in the four corners of the earth before Messiah came.<sup>24</sup> Popkin concluded by normalizing the non-binary nature of the two religions: “The various kinds of Jewish Christianity and Christian Judaism surveyed indicate ways [that] attempts at fusing the two traditions played

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<sup>21</sup> Richard H. Popkin, “Christian Jews and Jewish Christians in the 17th Century,” in *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Richard H. Popkin and Gordon M. Weiner (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 57.

<sup>22</sup> Popkin, “Christian Jews,” 57.

<sup>23</sup> Popkin, “Christian Jews,” 58.

<sup>24</sup> Popkin, “Christian Jews,” 59-61.

a dynamic and vital role in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These fusions were not just oddities, or curiosities.”<sup>25</sup> Popkin thereby highlighted religious fluidity.

In 1996, David Nirenberg challenged boundaries by arguing that outbreaks of violence against Jews were particular and not the result of a “steady march of European intolerance” against Jews.<sup>26</sup> Nirenberg contrasted his view with those who saw the entire history of the Jews in Spain as a golden age, such as Norman Roth, and those who advanced the older lachrymose perspective.<sup>27</sup> In his more recent work, Nirenberg argued that Christianity used visible media to reframe the concept of “Judaism” in opposition to the ideas of Christianity by equating Judaism with blindness and madness, and equating Christianity with illumination.<sup>28</sup> Engaging in discourse analysis, Nirenberg also argued that non-Jewish cultures from ancient Egypt to the Third Reich have associated the categories *Jew* and *Judaism* with anything with which they wish to disassociate themselves.<sup>29</sup> Although Nirenberg does not see an innate antagonism, he does recognize the non-benign ways that the Christian majority represented the Jewish Other.

The historian Kenneth Stow has done much to show that boundaries between Jews and Christians were less stable than previously thought. In one article, he argued that Roman Jewish converts to Catholicism maintained deep ties to their non-Christian relatives, despite antipathy

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<sup>25</sup> Popkin, “Christian Jews,” 69-70.

<sup>26</sup> Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 8, 9.

<sup>28</sup> David Nirenberg, *Aesthetic Theology and Its Enemies: Judaism in Christian Painting, Poetry, and Politics* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015), 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 10.

towards them from both sides.<sup>30</sup> In one book, Stow argued that as long as Jews had “a firmly defined legal and constitutional status,” that of an “alienated minority,” the Jews flourished and vibrantly shaped basic medieval social and ideological structures.<sup>31</sup> In another book, Stow argued that “subtle cultural differences” and “low-key friction,” combined to both “generate and sustain a Roman Jewish microculture, and thus to ensure Jewish cultural continuity.”<sup>32</sup> Jews acculturated to Roman society and were indistinguishable from it, but had their own cultural rituals. On this theme, Stow wrote that it was impossible to distinguish a Roman Jew from a non-Jewish Roman because they spoke the same language. He argued that Jews, learning to write Hebrew from a young age, were most likely functional bilingual and diglossic—that is, they could *speak* Italian and incorporate Hebrew, and they could most definitely *write* in Hebrew and possibly Italian. The languages combined in a way that they interspersed Hebrew with Italian thought patterns.<sup>33</sup> Linguistically, they were fully Italian, but they were also something other than Italian.

Moreover, Robert Bonfil argued that rather than anti-Semitism or alienation hindering assimilation, Italian Jews simply wanted to maintain their own identity in the presence of others.<sup>34</sup> Taking difference and opposition as a simple fact, Bonfil wanted to create a history

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<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Stow, “A Tale of Uncertainties: Converts in the Roman Ghetto,” in *Shlomo Simonsohn Jubilee Volume*, ed. D. Capri et al. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1993), 257-281.

<sup>31</sup> Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 4, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Stow, *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 3, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Stow, “Writing in Hebrew, Thinking in Italian,” (paper presented at Renaissance Society of America Conference, Cambridge, April 7-9, 2005), in *Jewish Life in Early Modern Rome: Challenge, Conversion, and Private Life* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 1-14.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Anthony Oldcorn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 285.

from the inside, that of an “encounter between a minority determined to perpetuate its own Otherness and a majority equally bent on its assimilation.”<sup>35</sup> Jews did not have the legal status of an alienated minority; rather, they wanted to maintain their difference.

Once again, Popkin challenged religious boundaries with his 2004 edited collection *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe*. Popkin’s research focused on Christian-to-Jewish conversions. Contrary to the traditional grain, Richard H. Popkin argued in his article “Can One be a True Christian and a Faithful Follower of the Law of Moses? The Answer of John Dury” that according to the Scottish Calvinist minister John Dury, yes, one can be a true Christian and a follower of the Torah of Moses. Discussing John Dury’s friendship with Amsterdam Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, his proposal for a Hebraist college, and discussions of Christian converts to Judaism, Popkin stated that Dury

found sufficient support for the view that Jews could keep up their practices while becoming Christians and that this must have been common in early Christian times. **The reverse situation must have been common.** Peter and Paul had discussed whether one had to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. It was Paul’s opinion that the answer was no, and Peter’s, that the answer was yes. One, therefore, presumes that some of the converts to Christianity in ancient times first became converts to Judaism. Paul himself proclaimed that he had always kept up his Jewish practices, so a true and believing Christian could also be a true follower of the Law of Moses.<sup>36</sup>

In appealing to the first-century Jesus-movement, Dury and Popkin argued that the difference of opinion among the apostles centered over conversion to Judaism. According to them, it was normative for Jews to stay Jewish when they became Christians and for gentiles to adopt

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<sup>35</sup> Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, xi, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Richard H. Popkin, “Can One be a True Christian and a Faithful Follower of the Law of Moses? The Answer of John Dury,” in *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Martin Mulsow and Richard H. Popkin (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 45.

Judaism when they became Christians. Popkin thus argued that one can be a Christian and be a follower of the Torah laws at the same time. Popkin challenged rigid religious categories.

Daniel Boyarin masterfully upturned the status quo about the relationship between Jews and Christians. Based on studies of Jewish and Christian antiquity, postcolonial theory, and cognitive linguistics, Boyarin argued that, in the first four centuries of the Common Era, heresy-writers on both sides wrote the boundaries between what would become rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity.<sup>37</sup> “Judaism,” Boyarin stated, “is not the ‘mother’ of Christianity; they are twins, joined at the hip.”<sup>38</sup> Religious leaders constructed the two religions simultaneously; and so the built-in relationship between Judaism and Christianity is one based on mutual exclusion, but it is not natural and need not be. According to a common understanding, a Jew is someone who does not believe in Jesus; a Christian someone who does not follow the Torah. Few may realize the constructed, not natural, relationship of the two religions, which, Boyarin argued, hardened during the first four hundred years of their development and has been assumed ever since.

Agreeing with Boyarin’s revisionism, the anthropologist Yirmeyahu Yovel provided an anthropological basis for how someone maintained dual or nonexclusive identities. Yovel’s work focused on Marranos, Iberian Jewish converts who maintained secret Jewish practices at home but appeared Catholic in public. Yovel suggested that humans are not inherently *integral* or *authentic*, but rather have split identities. These split identities, “far from being a marginal anomaly,” are rather “a genuine and necessary form of human existence, which deserves

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<sup>37</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1-30.

<sup>38</sup> Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 5.

recognition as a basic form of freedom, indeed a human right.”<sup>39</sup> When Orthodox Judaism made its way to a remnant Marrano community in late twentieth-century Belmonte, Portugal, Yovel noted that Marranos clung to their crypto-Jewish duality and resisted formal conversion to Orthodox Judaism.<sup>40</sup> While Boyarin challenged the supposed innate distinctions between Judaism and Christianity, Yovel argued that dual identity was a valid human experience.

Further challenging the idea of innate antagonism, Jonathan Elukin argued in 2009 that medieval Jewry did not solely experience violence. Rather, acts of violence and expulsion occurred, but day-to-day interactions between Jews and Christians were “indications of much greater fluidity in medieval Christian mentalities about Jews as well as Jewish reactions to Christians.”<sup>41</sup> Elukin wrote that scholars tend to view pre-modern Europe as a ““persecuting society””—referencing R. I. Moore—“in which continuous repression of Jews was a fundamental part of medieval culture.”<sup>42</sup> However, “violence against Jews,” Elukin argued, “was contingent on local conditions and not the result of unchanging hatred or an irrational structure of medieval society.”<sup>43</sup> Expulsions represented “the unfolding of uncertain, contingent, and separate events that did not necessarily reflect the sentiment of most Christians.”<sup>44</sup> Instead, “the variety and dynamism of medieval Christianity created a society in which the Jews were not

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<sup>39</sup> Yirmeyahu Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos; Split Identity and Emerging Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), xii.

<sup>40</sup> Yovel, 386-387.

<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 10.

<sup>42</sup> Elukin, *Living*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Elukin, *Living*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Elukin, *Living*, 7.



alien interlopers facing a uniformly antagonistic Christian world.”<sup>45</sup> Elukin built on what historians had hinted at before and took to its logical extent. There was no innate antagonism between Jews and Christians. Rather, exigencies of the day resulted in outbreaks of a violence and was not the result of a steady march of intolerance.

In 2009, Debra Kaplan and Magda Teter co-wrote an incisive article that argued that rather than reflecting a historical reality of ghettos, historians put Jews into historiographical ghettos by not integrating them into general Reformation narratives. Kaplan and Teter showed that interactions between Jews and Christians in Strasbourg and Poland were more intimate than previously thought, with Jews informing legislation, sharing rooms, utensils, and even clothing with Christians without hindrance. Their article highlights that the ways historians write about interrelationships may not always be valid. Their books make similar points. Magda Teter’s book argued that the Polish Catholic Church’s desire for “social and religious control, discipline, and influence” manifested in hostility towards Jews, but not in an essentialist or anti-Semitic way; rather, in the broader context of anxiety to keep social order, the Church belied the difficulties it had with inculcating order.<sup>46</sup> Debra Kaplan’s 2011 book showed that despite expulsion outside of the city walls of Strasbourg from 1390 to 1791, Rhinish Jews maintained relationships with those inside through trade and education.<sup>47</sup> Kaplan and Teter’s rethinking of the field informs the non-dichotomous nature of interactions between Christians and Jews. Since David Ruderman made the call in 1981 that Jewish history was isolated from Renaissance history, and Kaplan and Teter

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<sup>45</sup> Elukin, *Living*, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Magda Teter, *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 5.

<sup>47</sup> Debra Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion*, 69.

repeated it in 2009, historians have not corrected their dualistic, antagonist thinking in this regard.

## **Methodology and Sources**

My thesis explores Tremellius's ideas about the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in the context of contemporary authors whose interests and experiences overlapped with his. This task entails comparing six sixteenth-century contemporary writings with the writings of Tremellius to see to what extent Tremellius differed from other Jewish converts, Hebraists, and Reformed thinkers. I analyze the discourse about Jews, Judaism, and the Hebrew Bible in writings from Tremellius's contemporaries. I look for how these converts, Hebraists, and Calvinists describe (1) living Jews, (2) the relationship between Jews and Christians, and (3) the relationship between Old and New Testaments.

Secondarily, I read Tremellius's sources through the lens of religious hybridity, as understood in the writings of Richard Popkin, Yirmeyahu Yovel, and Daniel Boyarin, mentioned above. That is, as Tremellius was someone who was religiously hybrid, I read his sources and analyze his actions in light of that hybrid Jewish–Christian identity.

## **Chapter Outline**

My thesis has four chapters, reflecting Tremellius's hybrid identity as a Jew, a Hebraist, and a Reformed Christian. The first two chapters reflect those who reified boundaries—Chapter 2 encompasses Jews looking back on Judaism from the perspective of Christianity, while Chapter 3 encompasses those Christians looking at Judaism for the first time. The second two chapters centrally study the writings of Reformed Protestant theologians – including Tremellius – those who were imagining a new relationship between Judaism and Christianity. The thesis successively examines the three contexts of Tremellius's life to see whether they influenced his

philo-semitic views. The chapters 2 and 3 argue that Jewish conversion to Christianity and Christian Hebraism did not necessarily lead to philo-semitism. Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that the best explanation for his philo-semitism was Tremellius's pluralistic upbringing in Ferrara, and his spiritualist Catholic circles in Italy, and his synthesis of Reformed views of the Mosaic Law.

Chapter 2 focuses on how Jewish converts to Catholicism represented the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. I study five writings of three Jewish converts to Catholicism: Victor von Carben (1422-1515), Johannes Pfefferkorn (1496-1523), and Anthonius Margaritha (1490-1542).<sup>48</sup> Von Carben, after converting from Judaism, became a Catholic priest. I look at his book called *Judenbüchlein* (*Little Jewish Book*, Cologne, 1508) which describes Jewish customs to aide in their conversion. The magistrates chose Carben, along with Johannes Reuchlin (see chapter 3), Johannes Pfefferkorn, and Jacob van Hochstraaten, to examine Jewish books to find blasphemies, because Pfefferkorn, also a Catholic priest, called for the burning of Jewish books.<sup>49</sup> I examine Pfefferkorn's pamphlets for their representations of Judaism. These include *Der Judenspiegel* (*The Jewish Mirror*, Cologne, 1507); *Die Judenbeicht* (*The Jewish Confession*, Cologne, 1508); and *Der Handtspiegel* (*The Magnifying Glass*, Mayence, 1511).<sup>50</sup> In these works, Pfefferkorn laid attacks against Jewish books and called for the burning of the Talmud, to which the Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin responded. The common theme that unites

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<sup>48</sup> On Carben, see Edward Cohen, "Jheronimus Bosch and Victor van Carben; the Controversy between Church and Synagogue in Some of Bosch's Paintings," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 18, no. 1 (1984): 1-11.

<sup>49</sup> For the Pfefferkorn affair, see Avner Shamir, *Christian Conceptions of Jewish Books: The Pfefferkorn Affair* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2011). See also Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, eds., *Revealing the Secrets of the Jews: Johannes Pfefferkorn and Christian Writings About Jewish Life and Literature in Early Modern Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

<sup>50</sup> See also Jonathan Adams and Johannes Pfefferkorn, *Lessons in Contempt: Poul Ræff's Translation and Publication in 1516 of Johannes Pfefferkorn's the Confession of the Jews* (Copenhagen: Universitets-Jubilæets Danske Samfund, 2013), which includes an English translation of Pfefferkorn's *Judenbeicht*.

these Jewish converts is their harsh attacks on their former faith. In that way, they reified boundaries by advancing Christian anti-Judaism.

Chapter 3 focuses on how Christian readers of Hebrew (Hebraists) understood the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. I look at five writings of three Catholic Hebraists—Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), and Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536). Of Reuchlin's works, I examine his reply to Pfefferkorn's *Handtspiegel*, the *Augenspiegel* (*The Eyeglasses*, Tübingen, 1511), his defense of Jewish books, and his *De Arte Kabbalistica* (*On the Art of the Kabbalah*, Hagenau, 1517), which sought to incorporate the Kabbalistic tradition into Christian scholarship.<sup>51</sup> The chapter examines Pico's *900 Theses* (1486) and its preceding *Oration*, which explains why the Jewish wisdom tradition is the oldest on earth, and his views of Judaism.<sup>52</sup> Finally, I examine Erasmus's correspondence for his use of the language *Jews* and Judaism to see to what extent Erasmus used Jews as a rhetorical tool to criticize that which in Christianity he considered monkish and ritualistic.

Chapter 4 focuses on how leading Reformed Christian theologians, all strongly influenced by Renaissance Hebraism, represented Judaism. I analyze four writings of the Reformed leader John Calvin (1509-1564) in order to understand how a primary exponent of

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<sup>51</sup> Johannes Reuchlin, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books in Sixteenth-Century Germany: Johannes Reuchlin's Augenspiegel*, ed. Bryn O'Callaghan (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Johann Reuchlin, *Recommendation Whether to Confiscate, Destroy, and Burn All Jewish Books: A Classic Treatise against Anti-Semitism*, trans. Peter Wortsman (New York: Paulist Press, 2000); Johannes Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, trans. M. Goodman and S. Goodman (New York, 1983). For the secondary literature on Reuchlin, see David Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Erika Rummel, *The Case against Johann Reuchlin: Religious and Social Controversy in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *900 Theses*, in *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486): The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems*, trans. S. A. Farmer (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998), 183–553.

Reformed faith saw its relationship to Jews, Judaism, and the Israelites of the Bible.<sup>53</sup> I examine Calvin's commentaries on Romans (1540) and Psalms (1557), the final edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), and his *Ad quaestiones et obiecta Judaei cuiusdam responsio* (*Refutation of the Questions and Charges of a Certain Jew*, first published posthumously in 1575), which replied to Hebraist Sebastian Münster's quotations of the *Sefer Nizzahon* as the anonymous Jewish author who wrote it.<sup>54</sup> In addition, I use secondary literature to place these ideas in the context of other Reformed theologians who were part of Tremellius's circle, notably Martin Bucer (1491–1551, an acquaintance), Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562, Tremellius's mentor), and Theodore Beza (1519–1605, Tremellius's correspondent).<sup>55</sup> The Reformed faith forged a new way in this regard because it respected the Old Testament more than other Christian traditions. Accordingly, the Reformed movement had a greater association with biblical Jews and Israelites than other traditions; they saw their own communities in terms of the biblical Hebraic covenants. However, the question is: did this Reformed impulse translate to respect for or appreciation of actual, living Jews?

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<sup>53</sup> On Calvin, see G. Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth-century Debates over the Messianic Psalms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Stephen Burnett, "Calvin's Jewish Interlocutor: Christian Hebraism and Anti-Jewish Polemics during the Reformation," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 55, no. 1 (1993): 113–123; Mary Potter Engel, "Calvin and the Jews: A Textual Puzzle," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin. Supplementary Issue* 1 (1990), 106–123; Mary Sweetland Laver, "Calvin, Jews, and Intra-Christian Polemics" (PhD diss., Temple University, 1988); and Salo Wittmayer Baron, "John Calvin and the Jews," in *Ancient and Medieval Jewish History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 338–352.

<sup>54</sup> Jean Calvin, *Ad quaestiones et obiecta Judaei cuiusdam responsio*, in *Joannis Calvini Opera*, 9: 658–674. Rabbi Susan Frank translated it in Mary Sweetland Laver, "Calvin, Jews, and Intra-Christian Polemics," appendix 2. The work to which Calvin responded is published as David Berger, ed. and trans, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus* (Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1996).

<sup>55</sup> On Bucer, see G. Sujin Pak, "Luther, Bucer, and Calvin on Psalms 8 and 16: Confessional Formation and the Question of Jewish Exegesis," *Dutch Review of Church History / Nederlands Archief Voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 85, no. 1 (November 2005): 169–186; Steven Rowan, "Luther, Bucer and Eck on the Jews," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 1 (1985): 79–90; and Hastings Eells, "Bucer's Plan for the Jews," *Church History* 6, no. 2 (1937): 127–35.

Chapter 5 focuses on how Tremellius, a Jew, a Jewish convert to Reformed Christianity, and a Hebraist, represented the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Chapter 5 looks at his upbringing, two narratives of his conversion, his use of the *Sefer Nizzahon*, his catechismal writings, and his correspondence to see how he represented the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Since the historian Kenneth Austin has carefully studied his Latin theological writings, this chapter does not centrally examine those but supplements Austin's analysis by examining the catechismal source which Austin did not read. This chapter has three main focuses: his upbringing and conversion, Tremellius's catechismal works, and his desire to appear orthodox expressed through his correspondence and biblical annotations.

The first focus of chapter 5 is his upbringing in Ferrara and the two conversion narratives about Tremellius. The first conversion narrative is a passage in a book about English ecclesiastics, in the chapter mentioning English Catholic cardinal and Archbishop of Canterbury Reginald Pole, describing Tremellius's conversion by means of Pole and the Italian poet Marcantonio Flaminio.<sup>56</sup> The second conversion narrative is in a staged humanist dialogue, purported to be written by Tremellius, between Tremellius and another Hebrew professor, his opponent Gilbert G  n  brard. In this dialogue, G  n  brard uses the stock insult "Marrano" against Tremellius, and Tremellius retells his conversion.<sup>57</sup> This *Specularius* was published in 1581, one year after Tremellius's death. These narratives reveal how outsiders saw Tremellius's

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<sup>56</sup> Matthew Parker, *De Antiquitate Britannicae Ecclesiae & Privilegiis Ecclesiae Cantuariensis, cum Archiepiscopis eiusdem* 70 (London, 1572), s.v. "Reginaldus Pole," 519.

<sup>57</sup> Immanuel Tremellius, *Specularius, Dialogus pernecessarius, quo se Immanuel Tremellius purgat ab illis criminationibus, quas Gilbertus Genebrardus Theologus Parisiensis divinarum & Hebraicarum literarum Professor Regius, ipsi in Chronographia, seu universae historiae speculo intulerat* (Neapoli Nemetum: 1581), 10-11.

conversion, and how Tremellius, or someone representing Tremellius, wanted his conversion to be remembered.

Second, this chapter looks at Tremellius's translation of John Calvin's French Genevan Catechism. The two versions of the Catechism are the 1554 edition, סֵפֶר הַיְנוּךְ בְּהִירֵי יָהּ, *Sefer Hinukh Behire Yah*, "The Book of the Education of the Chosen People of Yah," which contains a three-column translation into Hebrew, Latin, and Greek of Calvin's Genevan Catechism. The second is Tremellius's Judeo-German (which is German language with Yiddish characters) translation of the Catechism, רעליגיאַנס-אונטערריכט אין געשפרעכען פֿיר דאָז אויזערוועהלטע פֿאלק גאטטעס, *Religions-Unterricht in Gesprächen für das Auserwählte Volk Gottes*, "Religious-instruction in Conversation for the Chosen People of God," which the London Society for the Propagation of Christianity amongst the Jews published in 1818 and 1820 to use as a "missionary weapon" for a Jewish audience.<sup>58</sup> More importantly than simply analyzing Tremellius's catechismal translation, this chapter looks at the prefaces to his translation. These prefaces include Tremellius's "Letter to the Descendants of Jacob," in which he speaks to an imagined Jewish audience and lays out his reasons for undertaking the task. Tremellius represents a new way because, according to the scholar Jerome Friedman, Tremellius created the "only one missionary treatise from the entire sixteenth-century [that] was open, friendly, and sincere in its desire to convert Jews to Christianity." Furthermore, Tremellius's work was "the only such Christian-authored work absolutely avoiding any and all anti-Semitic denigration."<sup>59</sup> Tremellius represented Jews and

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<sup>58</sup> That is the phrase William T. Gidney, the Assistant Secretary of the Society, uses to describe the work in his *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, from 1809 to 1908* (London: London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, 1908), 9.

<sup>59</sup> Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983), 250.

Judaism differently than other Jewish converts. The question for this chapter is, to what extent was Tremellius different from or similar to other Jewish converts, Hebraists, and Calvinists, and for what purpose did he create his Catechism? The final section of chapter 4 examines Tremellius's desire to appear orthodox with Reformed leaders through his correspondence with Beza to see how he discusses Judaism, Jewish texts, and the Hebrew Bible.<sup>60</sup> It examines his biblical annotations to see how he overcompensated, so to speak, to secure his orthodoxy.

The epilogue examines Tremellius's legacy as understood by others. It explores Tremellius's relationship to philo-semitism, embodied in the figures of Jean Bodin (1529-1596) and Franciscus Junius (1545-1602, Tremellius's protégé), and discusses a nineteenth-century revival of Tremellius's catechism for Christian missionary purposes. One of the questions the epilogue answers is: to what extent did the nineteenth-century republication match Tremellius's original intention for his book? What was Tremellius's understanding of the Catechism in 1554? Why did a London Jewish mission society republish a three-centuries-old translation as a missionary tool? The epilogue contrasts these two "Tremellian moments," so to speak: the 1554 moment, and the 1818/1820 moment, to understand how this book, and its purpose, was understood in each context and how others used Tremellius.

## **Conclusion**

Studying Tremellius's writings in the context of his contemporaries reveals his philo-semitic views. Scholars have usually linked him with Jewish mission in terms of his catechism

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<sup>60</sup> Tremellius to John Calvin, [28 Feb.?] 1551, in *Joannis Calvini Opera*, ed. Wilhelm Buam, Edward Cunitz, Edward Reuss (Brunswick: Corpus Reformationem, 1863-1900), 14:53-54; Tremellius to Calvin, 14 June 1554, in *Joannis Calvini Opera*, 15:163; Tremellius to Calvin, 8 September 1554, in *Joannis Calvini Opera*, 15:228-229; Tremellius to Matthew Parker, 16 September 1568, in *Correspondence of Matthew Parker...*, ed. J. Bruce and T. T. Perowne (Cambridge, 1853), 332-333; Tremellius to Theodore Beza, 1579, in *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, ed. Hippolyte Aubert, Alain Dufour, Béatrice Nicollier, and Reinhard Bodenmann (Geneva: Libraire Droz, 1998), 20:194-199.



and his Bible translation.<sup>61</sup> But none have viewed him from the perspective of having a dual religious identity. As a religious migrant, this study examines an intellectual and spatial boundary-crosser, who was involved in Peter Burke's "deprovincialization of knowledge," whereby the experience of exile and movement innovates knowledge.<sup>62</sup> Tremellius's attitude towards life and others, which Austin characterized as "avoidance of controversy,"<sup>63</sup> might be better described simply as an open, friendly, and irenic perspective. From his extant writings, he never polemicized others, whether Jews, Catholics, or Lutherans. Nor did he assuage concerns about his Christian orthodoxy by disparaging Judaism or creating counter-arguments to Jewish texts. As a Jew, an Italian, and a Calvinist, he faced three forms of prejudice living in northern Europe. Nevertheless, he lived a life of peace and made friends in high places. Whatever his tactic, apparently it helped him manage life during a time when magistrates burned people for not displaying orthodox views. Studying how Tremellius navigated the sixteenth century against the backdrop of his fellow Jewish converts, Hebrew scholars, and Reformed writers shows us how sixteenth-century people made religious choices and how they lived at peace with those with whom they disagreed in early modern Europe. Exploring Tremellius in the context of religious translocation reveals the link between knowledge, one's confession, and one's location.

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<sup>61</sup> E.g., Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 75-79; Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500-1750* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2001), 164; and Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony*, 250-251.

<sup>62</sup> Peter Burke, *Exiles and Expatriates in the History of Knowledge, 1500-2000*, Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 16.

<sup>63</sup> Kenneth Austin, "Immanuel Tremellius and the Avoidance of Controversy," in *Moderate Voices in the Reformation*, ed. Luc Racaut and Alec Ryrie, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 70-89.

## Note on Transliterations

I follow the following transliteration for Hebrew:

<b>Hebrew</b>	א	ב	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח
<b>Transliteration</b>	<i>ʾ</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>ḥ</i>
<b>Hebrew</b>	ט	י	כך	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע
<b>Transliteration</b>	<i>t</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>kh</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>ʿ</i>
<b>Hebrew</b>	פ	פ	ץ צ	ק	ר	שׁ	שׂ	ת	ת
<b>Transliteration</b>	<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>s, ts</i> <sup>64</sup>	<i>q</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>š, sh</i>	<i>ś</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>t</i>

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<sup>64</sup> Exception: I transliterate *tsadhe* as *z* in *Nizzāḥon* because that is the way it is customarily spelled.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DUAL SOULS: CONVERSION BETWEEN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

#### Conversion

In 1507, a Jewish convert to Christianity urged his readers to burn Jewish books, arguing that doing so would “be performing an act of love in relieving [Jews] of their errors” and their “pack of lies and fairy tales.” Such rhetoric was typical for late medieval Christians, but it is more surprising coming from the mouth of a Jew, writing regarding his brethren. This man’s conversion to Christianity shows how completely he identified with his newfound faith and sought to disparage his former Judaism. Jewish converts to Christianity in the sixteenth century repudiated Judaism in order for society to accept them as Christians.

Throughout the late medieval and early modern era, most European states expelled their Jewish populations. England began the wave of expulsions in 1290. France followed in 1306 and 1394. The most famous expulsion was that of King Ferdinand and Isabella, the Alhambra Decree in 1492, which gave all Jews and Muslims in the now-united Spanish kingdom the choice to receive baptism or exile. Spain instituted the policy in order to prevent Jews from influencing baptized Jewish *conversos*, who lived together in ghettos.<sup>65</sup> Portugal followed in 1497. Various German-speaking polities expelled their Jews in the sixteenth century, as did many Italian states. Nevertheless, by the late sixteenth century, the only places in Europe and the Mediterranean open to Jews were certain Italian states, certain German-speaking cities, the Netherlands, Poland, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. These places became major sites of European Jewish

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<sup>65</sup> Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 313.

population, especially after 1492. After the expulsions, substantial Jewish populations resided in eleven Italian cities: Rome, Ancona, Venice, Mantua, Ferrara, Verona, Padua, Casale Monferrato, Florence, Modena, and Parma.<sup>66</sup> (See Table 1). These expulsions were the result of Christian anti-Judaism, which separated Jews from Christians to keep Christians safe. Christians worried that Jews brought heresy, literal poison, and general discord into society.

Jews in early modern society effectively had two options: face likely (or already) expulsion or convert to Christianity, which, until 1517 or so, was the Catholic faith. Expulsion forced Jews to find new places to live, either in the Netherlands or Poland, or, in many cases, right outside the gate of the city, a phenomenon Debra Kaplan explored with Jews expelled from the Free, Imperial City (*Frei- und Reichstädt*) Strasbourg and residing in the Bishopric of Strasbourg and nearby polities.<sup>67</sup> The Free, Imperial City of Cologne expelled its Jews in 1424; they subsequently lived in the nearby hamlets Deutz and Brühl (in the Duchy of Berg and the Archbishopric of Cologne, respectively), but even those locales received expulsions, Deutz albeit temporally. Moving to another locale did not give Jews any security. The second option, conversion, was also tenuous, but at least converts did not face expulsion. In Spain and Portugal, many Jews converted to Catholicism and continued to practice Judaism in the privacy of their homes.<sup>68</sup> However, other converts embraced Christianity wholly. Nevertheless, society did not view them as sincere. Christian society distrusted Jewish converts and watched them especially closely for any signs of *Judaizing*, or practicing Judaism in secret. In order to allay or assuage

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<sup>66</sup> Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 315.

<sup>67</sup> See Debra Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg*, Stanford Series in Jewish History and Culture (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> See, e.g., Renee Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

suspicion, converts had no option but to destroy their former faith as vocally as possible. To show any sign of recognition or sympathy towards Judaism would immediately endanger one's social status in Christian society. Writing anti-Jewish treatises became a cottage industry of sixteenth-century Jewish converts, so much so that the absence of one was unc customary.

Jewish converts to Christianity faced opposition from two fronts. Firstly, the Jewish community itself did not want to lose any members to Christianity. According to Jewish law, a Jew remained a Jew no matter what; this legal principle entangled Jewish converts to the obligations of Jewish law post-conversion, especially the laws of divorce. Second, once they converted, their Jewish identity stuck with them and they had a hard time shaking it off. Christians hesitated to consider Jewish converts as fully Christian and sought to test their devotion. By converting to the dominant religion, Jewish converts to Christianity conformed to religious boundaries and demonstrated the solidification of religious divisions. In order to show their devotion to Christianity, Jewish converts completely severed any and all ties and wrote tracts dismissing Judaism. The fact that Emanuel Tremellius, the subject of my thesis, did not, reveals the depth of his continued Jewish identity. I argue that two specific converts to Christianity—Victor von Carben and Johannes Pfefferkorn, the subjects of this chapter—regarded Judaism with disdain after conversion and wrote anti-Jewish treatises in order to distance themselves from their former faith, while another did not.

### **Jewish Legal Views about Jews Converting out of Judaism—First Challenge**

The first challenge that Jewish converts faced was the opprobrium of their own communities. Jewish law did not recognize conversion out of Judaism. Communal leaders, such as Josel of Rosheim (1480–1554, *Befelshaber* or Commander of all German Jewry, and *shtadlan*, liaison, with whom Protestant Reformers debated), stressed that Jews could not inform against

the Jewish community and considered converting from Judaism to Christianity completely anathema.<sup>69</sup> Rabbis saw such converts as apostates, but sadly Jews nonetheless. The Jewish community centered itself around discussions about the Torah and Jewish law. The work called the Talmud compiled these discussions (see Table 3). The rulings in the Talmud put “a fence around Torah,” to use the phrase of a famous rabbinic work,<sup>70</sup> and ensured that each individual Jew observed his or her faith correctly. Rabbis drew the principle that once one is a Jew, they are always a Jew, from two passages in the Talmud. First, the Mishnah, tractate *Sanhedrin*, chapter 10, states that all Jews have a right to the World to Come.<sup>71</sup> Second, *Sanhedrin* 44a stated, “**even when the Jewish people have sinned, they are still called ‘Israel,’**”<sup>72</sup> or more colloquially: “Although he has sinned, he remains a Jew.” Jewish law regarded Jews “heretics” (*minim*) whose beliefs no longer followed the Torah and “apostates” (*meshummad*) whose actions no longer followed Judaism.<sup>73</sup> Rabbis interpreted the passage that since all Israel will inherit the World to Come (*olam ha-ba*), nothing can prevent them from it. According to Jewish law, they were still Jews and nothing, no sin, no conversion, could take that status away. The application of Jewish

<sup>69</sup> Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion*, 166. In his *Sefer ha-miknah*, Josel recorded Jewish history, describing how Jewish converts wreaked havoc on the community. Josel called Luther *lo tahor*, “impure,” who “sought to destroy and kill all of the Jews from youth to elder,” revealing his opinion about Luther.

<sup>70</sup> *Pirke Avot*, “Sayings of the Fathers,” 1:1. The sages commanded three things: “be deliberate in judgement, make many disciples, and make a fence around Torah.”

<sup>71</sup> Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 10:1. *Sefaria.org*. שְׁנֵאֵמַר (ישעיה ס) וְעַמּוּד בְּלֹם צְדִיקִים. “All Israel has a share in the World to Come, as it says, (Isaiah 60:21), ‘Thy people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.’”

<sup>72</sup> *Sanhedrin* 44a, English from The William Davidson digital edition of the Koren Noé Talmud, with commentary by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, from *Sefaria.org*. The bold letters are Steinsaltz's elucidations of the terse Talmud text. (יהושע ז, יא) חטא ישראל אמר רבי אבא בר זבדא אע"פ שחטא ישראל הוא אמר ר' אבא היינו דאמרי אינשי אסא (יהושע ז, יא) חטא ישראל אמר רבי אבא בר זבדא אע"פ שחטא ישראל הוא אמר ר' אבא היינו דאמרי אינשי אסא דקאי ביני חילפי אסא שמיה ואסא קרו ליה

<sup>73</sup> Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew*, 41.

law had profound implications for Jewish converts, who still had to deal with the implications of continued Jewish legal identity even after their conversion from Judaism.

This situation most applied when a convert had to divorce his Jewish wife. Since the exclusivist claims of Christianity increased the consequences of leaving the Jewish community, later rabbis, the *geonim* of the period 650–1100 CE (see Table 2), drew a line between inheritance and status. Regarding inheritance, the *geonim* believed that apostasy broke the law of inheritance. In matters of divorce and levirate marriage, however, the *geonim* regarded the *meshummad* as fully Jewish. So, if a Jewish man converted to Christianity and left his wife, the Jewess could not legally remarry until the Jew divorced her with a *get*; this principle indicated his real Jewish status in the realm of marriage.<sup>74</sup> If a man died without producing children, the tradition of levirate marriage, or *yibum* in biblical law, obligated the man's brother to marry his sister-in-law in order to continue the family line of his brother. Jewish law, however, demanded the release from this obligation in a ceremony known as *chalitzah*. If the brother had converted and refused to release his sister-in-law from *yibum*, she would remain a widow forever and not be allowed to remarry.<sup>75</sup> The French Rabbi Jacob Tam reported that converts wrote at least twenty *gittin* (writs of divorce) in Paris and in German lands. Potentially, this number is fraction of the real number of converts. In cases where the convert did not divorce his wife, the families still had to deal with the convert for the divorce,<sup>76</sup> which certainly induced strong emotions.

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<sup>74</sup> Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 25.

<sup>75</sup> Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 26, cited the example of a man in Regensburg who did not want his daughter to marry a Jew whose brother had converted, lest she be left to the will of the apostate levir. Rabbi Neustadt permitted several prenuptial conditions to protect them from the so-called apostate levir.

<sup>76</sup> Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 25. See also Kenneth Stow, “*Neofiti* and Their Families: Or, Perhaps, the Good of the State,” in *Jewish Life in Early Modern Rome: Challenge, Conversion, and Private Life*, Variorum Collected Studies (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 105–13; Kenneth Stow, “A Tale of Uncertainties: Converts in the Roman

In summary, any Jew who converted to Christianity was still a Jew from a Jewish legal perspective. If he left a wife behind, his Jewish status required him to divorce her in the traditional Jewish manner (with a *get*) before *she* could legally marry another. Until he divorced her, he left his wife in a state of perpetual limbo. As hard as they tried, the convert never escaped the spectre of their pasts. They were still Jews from the perspective of Jewish law, from self-identity, and from the anti-Judaism of others—the perceived stain of Jewishness often prevented society from allowing them to live as autonomous citizens.

### **Christian Anxiety about Jewish Converts—Second Challenge**

The second challenge that Jewish converts faced was the reaction of Christian society. Christian society felt anxiety about Jews and Jewish converts. Authorities worked to keep Jews and Christians separate so that Jews would not influence Christians to blaspheme. Judaism and, more so, Judaization (Christians becoming or acting like Jews) was the greatest threat to Christendom. Christendom saw Judaism as its nefarious opposite. For that reason, Christian authorities cordoned off Jews in ghettos and expelled their populations from Europe. When Jews joined the Church, parishioners and preachers had a hard time shedding their anti-Jewish notions regarding this individual; they watched him with suspicion to see if he continued to do “Jewish” actions. They wondered whether he was sincere. Some believed that no amount of baptism could remove the taint of Jewish birth.

In Spain, the Church punished converts whom they suspected of practicing Judaism. Canon (Church) law, which recognized *infidels* and *heretics*, did not see Jews in themselves as inherently problematic, but only their interactions with Christians, which could lead to apostasy.

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Ghetto,” in *Jewish Life in Early Modern Rome: Challenge, Conversion, and Private Life*, Variorum Collected Studies (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 257–81.



*Infidels* (analogous to the Hebrew category of *goy*) were simply not Christians—people who had not experienced baptism and therefore lay outside of the Church and its authority; Jews were infidels. *Heretics* (analogous to Hebrew *meshummadim*) were those who had willfully rejected the Church’s teaching; Jewish converts who practiced Judaism were heretics. Infidels were outside the Church’s jurisdiction; heretics faced ecclesiastical censure for their sins. The Church in Spain established the Inquisition in 1481 to root out the Judaizing heresy; the Holy Office tried heretics and handed them over to the civil authorities for punishment. The Holy Office could only punish baptized Jews because the Church understood baptism as entry into its membership and saw it as an “irreversible sacrament.”<sup>77</sup> Returning to Judaism was a violation of that sacrament, and as subjects of the Church, the Church could punish them for its violation. However, the Holy Office of the Church could not punish never-baptized Jews. In that sense, Jews who had not been baptized were safer from the Inquisition than Jews who had. However, Jews were not necessarily safe from the civil authorities, who could still exile them at will.

Besides the forced conversion in Iberia, voluntary Jewish conversion to Christianity was rare. In Rome, for example, only ten Jews converted to Christianity per year, and that was even after the Church had established a *domus catechumenorum* (“house of catechism”) in 1543.<sup>78</sup> We will focus on two famous examples of voluntary converts: Victor von Carben and Johann Pfefferkorn. Since the Church was continually worried about Jewish converts returning to Judaism, Jewish converts had to ensure their commitment by writing anti-Jewish literature. The following section argues that Carben and Pfefferkorn effectively bolstered the boundaries

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<sup>77</sup> Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 312.

<sup>78</sup> Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 315–16.

between Judaism and Christianity and sought with all their might to distance themselves from their past by repeating anti-Jewish tropes. Whereas the Church most feared its parishioners returning to Judaic beliefs and practices becoming Jewish, the Jewish community most feared leaving Judaism behind; one can see the dilemma in which converts found themselves.

### **Cologne Jewry and Its Influence on Carben and Pfefferkorn**

Both Victor von Carben and Johannes Pfefferkorn moved to Cologne, where they spent their days writing anti-Jewish tracts. Whether they inherited a sense of anti-Judaism before or after coming to Cologne is uncertain; in Cologne, where they were active, a sense of anti-Judaism had already existed for two centuries, which had resulted in two expulsions of the Jews. Remarkably, before the fourteenth century, Cologne's political and religious leaders maintained a positive relationship with its Jews. In fact, Cologne had the oldest medieval Jewish community, dating back to the time of Constantine. In the twelfth century, the city council nominated a certain Jew as the Jews' Bishop (*episcopus Judaeorum*) to represent them.<sup>79</sup> In 1266, the Archbishop Engelbert of Valkenberg inscribed the rights of the Jews on a stone memorial.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, the city recognized Jews as fellow citizens in protection charters—a summons for a Cologne Jew to archbishopric's court in Poppelsdorf was refused on the right that they, like all other citizens of the city, can refuse a summons to an outside tribunal.<sup>81</sup> In 1340, Cologne had 750 Jews. However, all this changed due to a rumor.

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<sup>79</sup> Matthias Schmandt, "Cologne, Jewish Centre on the Lower Rhine," in *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries): Proceedings of the International Symposium Held at Speyer, 20-25 October 2002*, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, vol. 4 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 368.

<sup>80</sup> Schmandt, "Cologne, Jewish Centre on the Lower Rhine," 370.

<sup>81</sup> Schmandt, "Cologne, Jewish Centre on the Lower Rhine," 371–72.

In 1348, Christians blamed the Black Plague on Jews poisoning wells. These accusations spread throughout the cities of the Swiss and the Holy Roman Empire, including Strasbourg, Berne, and Basel, leading to further expulsions and massacres.<sup>82</sup> The Cologne city council asked Strasbourg what to do, saying it did not believe the accusations and wanted to protect the Jews. On 12 January 1349, Cologne issued a warning against mistreating the Jews because of unverified rumors about them. The Archbishop of Cologne, Walram of Jülich, died on 14 August 1349; his successor ascended on 18 December 1349.<sup>83</sup> The absence of the archbishop protection's and the community's concern over Jews poisoning wells and lending money exploded on the night of St. Bartholomew, 23-24 August 1349. A mob stormed the Jewish quarter and began plundering and killing. In order to save themselves, many Jews gathered in the synagogue and set it on fire. The historian Adolf Kober described it as an act of tragic yet heroic martyrdom: the Jews died "like the heroes of Masada. Whoever did not commit suicide was murdered by the mob."<sup>84</sup> The fire burned through the Portalgasse, the Kleine Budengasse, Unter Goldschmied, and Jerusalemgasschen. After the fire, citizens took the property of the former Jewish district. The city recorded the sales in the German volume *Scabinorum Judaeorum*.<sup>85</sup> This event represented the first expulsion from the Free, Imperial City Cologne.

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<sup>82</sup> Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion*, 27. The citizens of Strasbourg, on Saint Valentine's Day, a Shabbat, burned about two thousand Jews in their cemetery on a wooden scaffold, according to the city chronicler Jacob Twinger von Koenigshofen (1346–1420). They banished the city leaders that opposed them and expelled the remaining Jews.

<sup>83</sup> Adolf Kober, *Cologne*, trans. Solomon Grayzel, Jewish Communities Series (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1940), 115.

<sup>84</sup> Kober, *Cologne*, 116.

<sup>85</sup> Kober, *Cologne*, 116, 117.

However, the conflagration was not the end of the Jewish community in Cologne. Scholar Matthias Schmandt showed that Simeon Munschau escaped from Cologne. Schmandt hypothesized that Simeon returned to his hometown of Monschau in the Eifel region and took asylum in the castle of the lord of Monschau-Valkenberg. Schmandt argued that Simeon financed Monschau's building projects. In any case, Simeon's son Isaac returned to Cologne in 1372 after living in nearby Brühl.<sup>86</sup> Resettlement commenced on 30 June 1372. The Archbishop, Frederick von Sarwerden, gave Simon of Siegburg informal approval for resettlement on 8 October 1371, but officially readmitted Jews within the walls of Cologne on 1 October 1372. Two days later, the Church gave the Jews a Privilege for ten years, requiring 70 marks for protection to settle and permitting money-lending, a Privilege renewed in 1384 and 1414. The city council gave them a Privilege on 29 November 1372. During this second community, from 1372 to 1424, Cologne Jewry acquired a total of 150-200 people and 31 households. Jews had to pay the city between 50 and 500 gulden for settlement and between four and two hundred gulden in annual protection money.<sup>87</sup> However, this brief settlement did not last long. On 1 October 1424, all Jews had to leave Cologne.<sup>88</sup> The second settlement ended, and the second expulsion commenced until 1798, when the French Republic took Cologne.

During the half-century before Carben's and Pfefferkorn's arrival in Cologne, there were no Jews in the city. However, as Kober showed, they still lived in the surrounding Archbishopric of Cologne, in Andernach, Ahrweiler, Bonn, Berg, Lechenich, Lynns, Neuss (until 1462),

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<sup>86</sup> Schmandt, "Cologne, Jewish Centre on the Lower Rhine," 375.

<sup>87</sup> For the content of the Privileges, see Kober, *Cologne*, 118–23.

<sup>88</sup> Schmandt, "Cologne, Jewish Centre on the Lower Rhine," 377.

Uerdingen, and Rheinbach.<sup>89</sup> After 1424, Jews dared not stay in Cologne for any length of time; Jews obtained permission to enter for short trips only during the daytime. The Council's *Eidbuch*, or Book of Obligations, ruled that not even a Burgomaster could grant a Jew permission to stay without the City Council's approval. The visiting Jew had to have a red-cloaked messenger with him at all times. Jewish physicians often came from Deutz and Muelheim to check on their Christian patients. The Jews of Deutz had their own *Judenfahrer* to ferry them across the Rhine, who received a fixed annual wage.<sup>90</sup> Similar to the situation in Strasbourg, in which Jews continued to come to the city by day for religious education, selling wares, and medicine,<sup>91</sup> the Jews around Cologne also entered the city for select reasons. Nevertheless, the anti-Jewish sentiment of Cologne's citizens influenced Carben and Pfeffekorn as they wrote their books in Cologne.

### **Victor von Carben (1442 – 1515)**

Victor von Carben internalized a sense of anti-Judaism after converting to Catholicism. Victor von Carben moved to Cologne in the 1480s. He claimed to have been a rabbi and converted to Christianity at age 49, leaving his wife and children behind. In 1480, he took part in a disputation with Jews before the archbishop of Cologne at Poppelsdorf, near Bonn. In 1485, he became a member of the theology faculty at the University of Cologne. Like most converts, Victor showed his newfound Christian devotion by repudiating his old religion. The act of a convert producing an anti-Jewish tract was run-of-the-mill, standard, and an apparent litmus test

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<sup>89</sup> Kober, *Cologne*, 142.

<sup>90</sup> Kober, *Cologne*, 156.

<sup>91</sup> See Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion*.

for their integration into Christian society. However, one wonders how effective they were at proving their Christian loyalty, because at the end of the day, they were still Jews, from the perspective of Jewish law and their Christian neighbors (but not canon law). But still they tried. Carben claimed that his account of Jewish blasphemies had influenced his benefactor, Hermann IV von Hessen, Archbishop of Cologne (1480–1508), to expel the Jews from Deutz, across the river from Cologne, and Brühl, a nearby town. Scholar Maria Diemling stated the expulsion did “not seem to have happened quite on the scale Victor indicated”; Deutz temporarily expelled its Jews, but Brühl forced them to leave permanently. They tore down the synagogue in Brühl’s market square; Hermann von Hessen built in its place a church and, in Victor’s words, a ‘magnificent’ monastery.<sup>92</sup> Apparently, Carben succeeded in passing off his true Christian status. He became a priest at an old age. He donated ten statues to the Cathedral in Cologne, featuring himself, Anna, Mary, Jesus, Gabriel, Catherine, Barbara, and other figures.<sup>93</sup> Von Carben was no longer a *Jew*, but *formerly a Jew*. It took him all his life to attain that precious status.

In his writings, Victor von Carben enacted his distance from Judaism in two ways: through his writings about women and his ethnographic writings on Jewish people. Due to his own experience with women and a conversion appeal to the Virgin Mary, as well as the influence of Dominican gender ideologies, Victor von Carben portrayed Jewish women as seductive and sensual, while he adored Mary as a model of spirituality. Relatedly, as a former

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<sup>92</sup> Maria Diemling, “Patronage, Representation, and Conversion: Victor von Carben (1423-1515) and His Social Networks,” in *Revealing the Secrets of the Jews: Johannes Pfefferkorn and Christian Writings about Jewish Life and Literature in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 165, referencing Victor von Carben, *Hierinne wirt gelesen*, 1508, fol. F1r–v. Hermann built the church in Brühl in 1491–1493.

<sup>93</sup> Diemling, “Patronage, Representation, and Conversion,” 166–68.

rabbi, he expressed Jewish traditions by creating the genre of Jewish ethnography for Christian audiences, that is, writing about the customs and lifestyle of the Jews.<sup>94</sup>

Carben's writings depended on patronage. In 1508, Hermann and Philipp, Carben's benefactors, died. He had to secure other financial security. At the end of 1508, he wrote in the Ripurian dialect, *Hierinne wirt gelesen, wie Herr Victor von Carben, Welicher eyn Rabi der Iude gewest ist zu Cristlichem glawbn komen* ("Herein can be read how Sir Victor of Carben, who was formerly a rabbi of the Jews, came to the Christian faith"). The book has three parts: the first narrated Carben's conversion and the customs of the Jews; the second part is a dialogue between a rabbi and a priest (both versions of Victor), and the third, a dialogue about Mary and the Trinity. The local scholar Ortwin Gratius translated it immediately into Latin and the printer Heinrich von Neuß in February 1509 published it under the title *Opus aureum ac novum*.<sup>95</sup> Gratius's *Opus aureum* divided Carben's work into four parts, keeping books one and two intact, and dividing book three into two parts, one on Mary's virginity and one on the Trinity. In 1510, the last part appeared separately as a treatise about Mary. The first part of the *Opus aureum* appeared in April 1511 in Paris as *De vita et moribvs iudeorvm*. An orthographically and typographically updated German version was *Judenbüchlein* (*Little Jewish Book*; Strasbourg, 1519, 1550). While part one (= *De vita*) detailed the life and customs of the Jews, the other three sections were haphazard to such a degree that some scholars insisted it was not the work of

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<sup>94</sup> For the seminal study on the topic, see R. Po-chia Hsia, "Christian Ethnographies of Jews in Early Modern Germany," in *The Expulsion of the Jews: 1492 and After*, ed. Raymond B. Waddington and A. H. Williamson (New York, 1994), 223–35.

<sup>95</sup> *Opus aurem ac novum a doctis viris diu expectatum...in quo omnes Judaeorum errores manifestantur* (Cologne: Neuss, 1509). Diemling, "Patronage," 172.

Carben at all, but the work of his patron Ortuinus Gratius.<sup>96</sup> According to Salo Wittmayer Baron, Victor's *Opus aureum* (Cologne, 1509), "revealed, as long been suspected, that the inspiration for his, as well as Pfefferkorn's, writings came from the Cologne Dominicans and their lay allies."<sup>97</sup> Scholars had a hard time crediting Carben with the books whose name it bears.

Carben himself had a harrowing conversion, but one that left him a lifelong adorer of the Virgin Mary. Scholar Maria Diemling described this conversion and the social networks he maintained with Christian patrons and supporters, alongside "the complex web of expectations and obligations a convert from Judaism had to negotiate."<sup>98</sup> He was born a Jew, lived as a rabbi for many years, and spent days and nights studying; he had a wife and three children.<sup>99</sup> Carben stated that he had loved Judaism more than life itself; if someone had told him he was going to convert, "I would have been his eternal enemy." Carben recounted how a Christian told him, "You should become a Christian before you die." Carben was so upset that he did not eat or drink for a day.<sup>100</sup> Scholar Maria Diemling believed that Carben suffered from psychosomatic

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<sup>96</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig, 1891), 9: 69, 70, Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 178, and Diemling, "Patronage," 172, all suggested that Gratius wrote the book. The Universal Short Title Catalogue lists Gratius as the secondary author. Carlebach pointed to "the numerous errors of fact which any practicing Jew would be unlikely to commit," citing chapter 9, which has Jews waiting nine hours between consuming meat and dairy foods. German Jews waited three hours, Dutch Jews waited one hour, while most others wait six hours.

<sup>97</sup> Baron, *Social and Religious*, XIII: 185.

<sup>98</sup> Diemling, "Patronage, Representation, and Conversion," 158.

<sup>99</sup> Victor von Carben, *Hierinne Wirt Gelesen, Wie Herr Victor von Carben, Welicher Eyn Rabi Der Jude Gewest Ist Zu Cristlichem Glawbn Komen* (Cologne, 1508), fol. A2v, quoted in Diemling, 158-159, "ein Jud geborn lange iar Rabi in der Judischeit geweist. auch tag vnd nacht muglichs vleyß in Embsiger lere vnd studierung den selben meinen vngegrunten glawben zu/ beschirmen." I do not have access to the 1508 edition, so I have to rely on Diemling's transcriptions.

<sup>100</sup> Carben, *Hierinne Wirt Gelesen*, fol. A3r, "an ich sag warlich das ich den Judischen glawben so hart vnd sere geliebt vnd fur den festenn glawben gehalten [...] das ich eher das leben dan den verlassen het. auch eyng Crist zu mir gesprochen. du solst noch vor deinem todt Cristenn werden. ich were nu alweg veindt gewest. es ist mir auch wol geschehen das mich die Cristen vermanten Cristen zu werden wurd ich dann so hertzlig erzurnert vnd in meinem gemuth also verstort das ich den selbenn tag nit frolich essen noch drincken mocht."



dysfunction, referring to his self-described melancholy, depression, and nagging pains in his stomach, which, he claimed, went away whenever he confessed to a priest.<sup>101</sup> Despite his commitment to Judaism, however, he claimed that God softened his heart to Christianity, writing after the fact that, “if God wills it, such hardness is overturned in an instant.”<sup>102</sup> His relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary began at his conversion—when he found himself in mortal danger, he cried out to her and he believed she rescued him.<sup>103</sup> His conversion to Christianity began with an emotional need which Mary’s heavenly intervention addressed.

Carben’s post-conversion writings betray a distrust of Jewish women, whom he apparently saw as fleshly, in contrast with the spiritual Blessed Virgin Mary. Carben’s 1510 dialogue regarding the Virgin Mary between a priest and a Jewish rabbi, both versions of himself, bore the elaborate title: “A Beautiful and Tidy Tract of the Noble, Pure, and Immaculate (Undefined) Virginité of Mary, the Heavenly Queen Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, a Son of the Living God” (Figure 1).<sup>104</sup> This tract demonstrates his strong identification with Mary, an identification which contrasted with his apparent dislike of Jewish women. At one point in the

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<sup>101</sup> Diemling, “Patronage, Representation, and Conversion,” 160, note 14.

<sup>102</sup> Carben, *Hierinne Wirt Gelesen*, fol. A3v. “Aber wan got will. so ist solch hertichkayt in einem augenblick umgewendet.”

<sup>103</sup> Diemling, “Patronage, Representation, and Conversion,” 160, note 16, notes that his reference to the Virgin Mary only appears in the earlier edition. Diemling claimed that in the 1550 *Juden Büchlein*, Mary’s involvement in Victor’s conversion is “censured” and “reduced to a very general acknowledgement of God’s grace towards sinners.”

<sup>104</sup> *Ein schön und seüßerlich Tractat von der edlen reinen und unbefleckten jungsfrauschafft Marie der hymelischen Künigin mütter unsers herren Jesu Christis / ein sun des Lebendigen gottes / und auch darneben würt gesagt von seiner göttlich en macht. Durch mich Victor von Carben vor seyten ein Jud und Rabi der Jüdischen geschriff / und nun nach Christen licher ordnung ein armer unwürdiger Priester* (Cologne, Johann Landen: 1510; Strasbourg, Matthias Schürer, 1519). One cannot help but notice his use of the indefinite article before “Son of God.”

*Judenbüchlein* he wrote, “Jewish women are more hateful than Jewish men.”<sup>105</sup> He also stated that Jewish wives (*Weiber*) are opposed to Christian ladies (*frawen*). Intriguingly, beginning in Middle High German (1050–1350), *vrouwe* (=Frau) replaced *wîp* (=Weib) as the word meaning “gentlewoman, lady.” According to a historian of German, “*wîp* took on a common, almost vulgar tone that restricted its usage in certain circles.”<sup>106</sup> By using *Weib* when referring to Jews and *frawe* for Christians, Carben equated Jews with uncouthness.

Based on his own experience, Carben claimed that Jewish women inhibit the conversion of Jewish men to Christianity. Carben wrote that “many Jews [would] become Christians, when he is not hindered by his wife, and also why the wives of the Jews stand more steadfastly in the faith than the man.”<sup>107</sup> Carben saw them as obstacles to the truth of Christianity. Before he converted, Carben had a wife and three children. One has to wonder why Carben left them to become a Catholic priest. The virginal Mary was a “safe” alternative to real, “seductive” women like his wife, whom he left behind. Men such as Carben found favor in the shadow of the Virgin’s wings without the threat of female sexuality. Perhaps his flight from Judaism and its women and his desire to become a priest is revealed in the woodcut, where he finds refuge with the virginal Queen of Heaven. As a priest in her service, he no longer had to deal with the threat

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<sup>105</sup> *Judenbüchlein*, fol. Cv, s.v. ch. 16, states, “Und man findt vil der weiber die vil böser dann die mann sein.” “One finds that many [Jewish] wives are much more hateful than [Jewish] men.”

<sup>106</sup> John T. Waterman, *A History of the German Language*, rev. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 93.

<sup>107</sup> Victor von Carben, *Juden Büchlein: Hyerinne würt gelesen wie Herr Victor von Carben welcher ein Rabi der Juden geweßt ist zu Christlichem glaubem kommen*, 1550, fol. Diiiv, title of ch. 19. “Wie manig Jud Christen wurdet / wann er nicht durch sein Weib verhindert wer / darneben meldet auch warum die Weiber der Juden standthafftiger dann die Mann im glauben seindt.”

of real women. Carben found comfort in the bosom of the Virginal Jewess Mary, but not with the fleshly Jewess whom he married.

Carben's passage about Lilith reveals his distrust of Jewish women from experience, yet his respect for Jewish tradition from his rabbinics. The title of Chapter 7 of the *Judenbüchlein* reveals his melding of biblical and legendary material: "How God procured a wife for Adam and how the same mingled with the animals and the devil Lilith."<sup>108</sup> Like Adam's mingling with the animals and the demoness, this chapter blends Jewish and Christian mythology. The Hebrew Bible (Genesis 2 and 3) never specifies that the serpent who tempted Adam and Eve was anything more than a physical serpent—it was only later, Christian tradition that identified the serpent with the devil. According to Jewish tradition, Lilith was Adam's first wife. The Hebrew Bible mentions Lilith at Isaiah 34:14 as a creature inhabiting the ruins of Babylon but does not associate her with Adam or Genesis.<sup>109</sup> The ninth-century narrative cycle *Pseudo-Ben Sira* or the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* told the story of how God gave Adam Lilith, but she wanted to be dominant (or equal) in intercourse because she, like Adam, came from the earth. Adam found her insubordinate and condemned her. Lilith ran off and united with the "great demon" and became the mother of demons. Ever after, in the form of a night-demon, she tries to frighten, seduce, or steal the male children of pious people. God then brought Adam Eve to compensate for this

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<sup>108</sup> *Judenbüchlein*, fol. Biiv, s.v. title of ch. 7, "Wie Gott Adam einen Mann und ein Weib in einen stuck beschaffen / unnd wie sich der selb mit den Thieren / und dem Teüffel Lilis vermuscht hab."

<sup>109</sup> וּפְגָשׁוּ צִיִּים אֶת־אֲדָמִים וְשָׂעִיר עַל־רֵעֵהוּ יִקְרָא אֶדְ-שָׁם הַרְגִיעָה לִילִית וּמָצְאָה לָהּ מְנוּחַ: "And the wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow. Lilith also shall rest there and find for herself a place of rest." KJV 1611 translates *lilit* as "screech owl;" other renderings include "night monster" (ASV, 1901; JPS 1917, Good News Translation, 1992; NASB, 1995), "night creature" (New International Version, 1978; New King James Version, 1982; New Living Translation, 1996, Today's New International Version), while Jerusalem Bible, 1966, New American Bible, 1970, New Revised Standard Version, 1989, and The Message Bible, Eugene Peterson, 1993, translate it as "Lilith," and *New Jewish Publication Society Version*, 1985, "the lilith."

loss.<sup>110</sup> Carben recounted how God created the heavens and the earth, and the animals. At the end of the paragraph, he writes, “Furthermore, the Talmud writes that...Adam mingled himself with the creatures, and that he also did so with the devil named Lilith.”<sup>111</sup> What is most interesting about this anecdote is that Carben did not use it as a means to dismiss the Jews, which would have been easy. He did *not* relate this story as something that Jews foolishly believe in. He treated it directly, as fact. The fact that Carben used rabbinic narratives as if they were scriptural truth indicates that, in some ways, he did not shed his Jewish learning. The former rabbi did not dismiss the story as Jewish fable; he reported it as biblical fact.<sup>112</sup>

Carben’s work presented an eclectic ethnography and polemic about the Jews, providing information to a Christian audience about Jewish observance and their failure to receive Christianity. Chapter 16 discusses how the Jews curse Christian couples *and* how they observe Shabbat.<sup>113</sup> Chapter 18 has the tenuously linked topics of “the blessing that Jews speak before and after meals; also how husband and wife divorce each other and take another spouse.”<sup>114</sup> Other topics are more coherent, such as how the Jews pray to God to send them the messiah and

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<sup>110</sup> Joseph Dan, “Lilith,” ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 421.

<sup>111</sup> *Judenbüchlein*, fol. Biir. “Also würdig und verständig achten sye den Raben. iii. Reg. xvii. ferner schreibt der Talmut / das nit genug geweßt sey / das sich Adam mit den Creaturen vermischt / sunder hab solichs auch gethan mit dem Teüfel genant Lilis.” Note that Carben used the Ashkenazic pronunciation of *Lilith*, with the voiceless alveolar sibilant [s].

<sup>112</sup> Carben could easily have referenced Titus 1:14: μή προσέχοντες Ἰουδαίκοις μύθοις καὶ ἐντολαῖς ἀνθρώπων ἀποστρεφόμενων τὴν ἀλήθειαν. “Heed not Jewish fables [*mythos*] and the commandments of men who twist the truth.”

<sup>113</sup> Carben, *Judenbüchlein*, fol. Ciiir. “Wie die Juden Weib und Mann die Christen verflüchen / würt darneben ein exempel angeseygt / das die Juden den Christen vil meß: dann die Mann hesszig seind / und wie die im Sabathen halten.” “How the Jews hex the Christian husband and wife.”

<sup>114</sup> Carben, *Judenbüchlein*, fol. Diiv–Diiir. “Von dem Benedicite das die Juden vor und nach ihrem essen sprechen / auch wiesye Mann und Weib einander verlassen / und andere zu der Ehe nemen.”

how they believe that the messiah will build a new temple on Jerusalem.<sup>115</sup> Scholar Elisheva Carlebach described Carben's information as "cursory," and beginning and ending "so abruptly in mid-chapter that it is difficult to discern a coherent authorial hand behind it." She attributed the "interweaving of genres and topics from one paragraph to the next" to "the transitional nature of von Carben's *oeuvre*." Carlebach highlighted Carben's ambiguous treatment of Jews: "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."<sup>116</sup> I agree that Carben's stance towards Judaism was ambiguous, neither dismissing nor embracing it. As a former rabbi, Carben held a certain fondness for rabbinic tradition, yet he was now a priest in Mary's service.

Carben's exploration of Jewish life cycle rituals and the calendar represented an innovation from typical anti-Judaism by describing Jewish ritual. This innovation marked the beginnings of Jewish ethnographic literature.<sup>117</sup> Carben explained the Jewish feast of Yom Kippur in chapter 15 and the day of mourning over the destruction of the Temple, Tisha B'Av, in chapter 12. He explained how the Jews pray for the coming of the Messiah, who will come riding on a donkey and will rebuild the Temple (chapters 13 and 14). Carben liked to focus on some of the lurid details which attracted Christian readers. He described the "unnatural howling"

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<sup>115</sup> *Judenbüchlein*, fol. Ciir, title of ch. 13. "Wie die Juden Gott bitten ihnen den Messias zu senden / und wie sye glauben das der auff dem Esel reiten soll / darauff Abraham Moyses und ander Propheten geritten seind." Fol. Ciir, title of ch. 14. "Wie die Juden glauben das in Messias zu Jherusalem einen newen Tempel bawensoll / welichs Tempels halb sie die Juden sehr wider einander seind / etlich sprechen das der selb letst Köstlicher sey dann der erst / die anderen sagen neyn / der erst sey Köstlicher geweßt / auch wie die frawen gar sehr ver acht seind."

<sup>116</sup> Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 179.

<sup>117</sup> Carlebach repeatedly employs *ethnographic* in quote marks, as if it is not really ethnographic.

that the Jews made during the Tisha B'Av fast,<sup>118</sup> comparing them to animals. In that chapter, Carben explained how the Jews pray for revenge upon the Christians for the Temple's destruction.<sup>119</sup> And, of course, he did provide stock anti-Jewish tropes that the Church was superior to the Jews in God's eyes; Carben explained that Emperor Titus carried the Jews off after the Temple's destruction because they had angered God.<sup>120</sup> This compendium of encyclopedic and ethnographic knowledge about Jews provided the basis for further Christian knowledge about Jews and Judaism, an immensely popular genre during the next century.

Not all of Carben's material was objectively ethnographic; some was polemical. He stated that every day the Jews curse the Christians: "Regarding those who come over from theirs to the Christian faith (which they hold as the worst religion in all the world), whom they hate to such an extent, they therefore speak malediction and cursing in their Hebrew prayers, twice daily, morning and night at six o'clock: *Lammeschommodim all thehi thykfo*, which in German is, 'destroyed and annihilated.'"<sup>121</sup> This accusation that Jews curse Christian converts in prayers goes back to the Church fathers Jerome and Epiphanius. The accusation refers to the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy, the *Amidah* ("the standing prayer"), which Jews recite thrice each

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<sup>118</sup> *Judenbüchlein*, fol. B7v, s.v. ch. 12. "mit grossem unnatürlich Heülen."

<sup>119</sup> *Judenbüchlein*, fol. B7r, s.v. ch. 12. "Von einem Fest das die Juden halten / in welchem sie Gott über Titum / welcher die heilig Statt Jerusalem zerstört hat / klagen / bitten darneben Rach über die Christen." "About a Festival that the Jews observe, in which they mourn to God about Titus, who destroyed the holy city Jerusalem, they beg for revenge on the Christians."

<sup>120</sup> *Judenbüchlein*, fol. B9v, s.v. ch. 12. "Darnach über lang wer an Tytum getragen wie das Judisch Volck iren Gott erzürnet het."

<sup>121</sup> Carben, *Judenbüchlein*, fol. C7r. "die von irem zu dem Christilichen glauben (den sie für den ärgsten glauben der gantze welt halten) getretten seind / den sie auß dermassen sehr hassen / haben deßhalb ein maledeyung oder verflüchung die sie all tage zweimal / morgens unnd abendts zu sechs Uhre sprechen / in Hebraischen also lauten / *Lammeschommodim all thehithykfo* / ist zu teütsch zu den verdilgten und verwüsten." I transliterate the phrase *Ve-la-meshummadim al tehi tiqvah* as, "may the apostates have no hope." In modern prayerbooks, the first word reads, *ve-la-malshinim*, "slanderers."

weekday. The Amidah consists of nineteen blessings (originally, “eighteen benedictions,” or *Shemoneh Esreh*), the last of which was added, *birkat ha-minim*, “blessing of the heretics.”

While it is true that Jews in the past prayed against apostates and Nazarenes,<sup>122</sup> nowadays the text of the *birkat ha-minim* prays only against the *malshanim*, the “slanderers.” In the early modern period, the *birkat ha-minim* prayed against the apostates: “may the apostates have no hope.”

Carben did not berate the Jews at every turn or repeat anti-Semitic imagery such as the *Judensau*, blood libel, or ritual murder myths.<sup>123</sup> In situations where he could have dismissed the Jews’ reliance upon the Kabbalah or Talmud, he did not do so. His stance was one of an ethnographer reporting on his former community to his new faith, highlighting differences yet not entirely dismissing his former faith. In chapter 11, Carben matter-of-factly reports how the Talmud states that Jesus performed his miracles by means of the divine Name.<sup>124</sup> Scholars find this idea in Jewish, anti-Christian works of the late Middle Ages, such as the *Toledoth Jeschu* and the *Sefer Nizzahon*, which I will explain more in chapter 2 of this thesis. The later convert Pfefferkorn, whom I will discuss in the next section, sought the burning of these two works. The fact that Carben borrowed an idea from Jewish, anti-Christian apologia and did not dismiss the idea as rabbinic fantasy shows that Carben maintained an overall positive view toward rabbinic and Jewish sources. Similarly, as I discuss in the earlier paragraphs, Carben could have

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<sup>122</sup> Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1985), 55, cites a Palestinian text of the Eighteen Benedictions from the Cairo Genizah, which mentions *meshummadim* (apostates), *notzrim*, and *minim*, which, he argued, were Gentile and Jewish Christians, respectively.

<sup>123</sup> See R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

<sup>124</sup> *Judenbüchlein*, chapter 11. “Wie der Talmut sagt das Christus seine Mirackel in Krafft des grossen Namens Thetragramathon gethan / welichen er auß dem Tempel gestoln hat.” “How the Talmud says that Christ performed his miracles by the power of the great name Tetragrammaton, which he stole from the Temple.”

dismissed the Jewish myth of the demoness Lilith as Jewish fantasy, but reported it as almost historical fact, not denigrating its Jewish origins in Kabbalah. These sources would have been very tempting and desirable for a former convert to dismiss as Jewish fable.



*Figure 1. The title woodcut of Carben's 1510 Ein schön und seüßerlich Tractate, which shows the poor Jew coming to the Blessed Virgin Mary and her son Christ. Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.*

### **Johann Pfefferkorn (1496 – 1523)**

While Carben was an educated rabbi, Yosef Pfefferkorn grew up as a butcher from Moravia.<sup>125</sup> His uncle was a famous rabbi, Meir Pfefferkorn, who taught him to read in Hebrew and German. Yosef Pfefferkorn, along with his wife, Anna, and his son, Laurentius, converted to

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<sup>125</sup> Erika Rummel, *The Case against Johann Reuchlin: Religious and Social Controversy in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 3, states that the Report on the Confiscation of Frankfurt, 1509, which she includes, pp. 128-131, says he was a butcher, but Rummel states that Pfefferkorn denied it yet did not specify his profession.



Christianity at age 36, around 1504, taking the name Johann.<sup>126</sup> After settling in Cologne, he almost immediately started writing tracts against the Jews.<sup>127</sup> He became an assistant to the Dominican prior in Cologne, Jacob van Hoogstraten, under whose auspices he began writing these tracts, while the Dominicans prepared Latin translations: *Der Judenspiegel (Speculum Adhortationis Judaicæ ad Christum)*, Nuremberg, 1507; *Die Judenbeicht (Libellus de Judaica Confessione sive Sabbate Afflictionis cum Figuris)*, Cologne, 1508; *Das Osterbuch (Narratio de Ratione Pascha Celebrandi Inter Judæos Recepta)*, Cologne and Augsburg, 1509; *Der Judenfeind (Hostis Judæorum)*, Cologne and Augsburg, 1509; *Zu Lob und Ehren dem Kaiser Maximilian (In Laudem et Honorem Illustrissimi Imperatoris Maximiliani)*, Cologne, 1510.<sup>128</sup> Although Carben and Pfefferkorn knew each other and were writing at the same time, Pfefferkorn's tracts were much more virulent against the Jews. In order to prove his non-Jewish identity, Pfefferkorn called for the burning of Jewish books in his first tract. He did so in order to show that he completely broke with his Jewish past and had completely adopted a new, anti-Jewish persona. In this section, I argue that Pfefferkorn continued Carben's ethnographic approach combined a form of objectivity with an agenda to burn Jewish books and expulsion Jews; to justify this agenda, Pfefferkorn portrayed the Jews as dangerous to Christian society and to himself because they blasphemed, lent money, harmed animals, and threatened him.

Some scholars, such as Salo Wittmayer Baron, believed that Pfefferkorn was a pawn in the hand of the Dominicans, apparently unwilling to believe that a Jewish convert could be so

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<sup>126</sup> Rummel, *The Case against Johann Reuchlin*, 3, 4.

<sup>127</sup> Salo Wittmayer Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, XIII: 185.

<sup>128</sup> Universal Short Title Catalogue, hosted by the University of St. Andrews, 2019, s.v., "Pfefferkorn," <http://ustc.ac.uk>.

dreadful. As David Price pointed out, Pfefferkorn credited the Franciscans with the idea of burning Jewish books.<sup>129</sup> In 1516, Pfefferkorn wrote his semi-biographical *Streydt Peuchlin*, in which he blamed his Franciscan sponsors. He wrote that

the honorable and reverend priestly Fathers and Lords of the Observant Franciscan Order incited me to do it. During confession, they taught and instructed me that I could accomplish nothing better on earth that would be more pleasing to God and would be more beneficial to me in eternal life than that I should pave the way and work tirelessly so that the Jews' false and blasphemous books will be taken away to such an extent (as indicated previously) and destroyed.<sup>130</sup>

Pfefferkorn did not maniacally imagine this plan one day; the Franciscans had been brewing it and they gave the plan to Pfefferkorn, who took the idea with relish. He wrote that he “exposed their evil, their perfidy, and their blasphemy of God, which before my time no one had done so clearly and so understandably.”<sup>131</sup> Whether Pfefferkorn had become the anti-Jew through the Franciscan's hands, he enjoyed the role immensely. In another work, Pfefferkorn made the intriguing comment that the Jews did not show him the rites of ritual murder during Passover because they suspected he might convert. He stated he was a bad Jew and a good Christian, and they found him out, so they did not let him see anything.<sup>132</sup> It is possible that Pfefferkorn

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<sup>129</sup> David Price, “Johannes Pfefferkorn and Imperial Politics,” in *Revealing the Secrets of the Jews: Johannes Pfefferkorn and Christian Writings about Jewish Life and Literature in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 27.

<sup>130</sup> *Streydt puechlyn*, (Cologne: Neuss, 1516), fol. E2r–v: “die erwerdige andechtigen geistlichen Vetter vnd Herren. Obseruanten des ordens sant Francisci. haben mich darzû gereytzt. vnd in der beicht gelert vnd vnderwysen. ich moecht vff erden nichts bessers schaffen. das Gott beheglicher wer vnd myr dienstbarlicher zû dem ewigen leben gesein mocht Das ich vff die bane moecht brengen. vnd in fleißlicher arbayt seyn. das men den jûden yre falschen laster puecher in solcher masse (wie oben angezeigt) nemen vnd abthet.”

<sup>131</sup> *Streydt puechlyn*, fol. E3r: “so han ich yr boeßheit. vntrew. vnd gots laster an den tagh ghebracht. das vor meynen zeitten keyner so clair vnd so verstendich gedan hat.”

<sup>132</sup> *Beschyrmung Johannes Pfefferkorn* (Cologne: Neuss, 1516), fol. A4v. “Das sie aber das Blut der Kynder gebrûchen. da weiß ich nyt gruntlich dar von. dan von dem maill[?] an. das menschlich Vernunft in myr gewyrrckt hait. so byn ich boeß jûdisch und gût cristlich gewesen. das haben die jûden an myr gemerkt. unnd ein

intended to convert for a while, and the Jews realized that; if that were the case, he played a traitor figure.

Pfefferkorn wanted to burn all the Hebrew books of the Jews, with the exception of the Hebrew Bible, which, as the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, Christians would not burn. Pfefferkorn urged the burning of the Talmud, the Kabbalah, the Mishnah, the Midrash, and other extrabiblical rabbinic commentary (see Table 4). Pfefferkorn's reasoning was strange: he demanded that Christians stop persecuting Jews but should burn their books instead, revealing the early modern belief that burning books is not persecution, and the related distinction between bodily harm and intellectual harm. Scholars called this instance of the confiscation and examination of Jewish literature in the Holy Roman Empire from 1509 – 1510, “the Pfefferkorn Affair.” This event precipitated a conflict with a Christian Hebraist, Johann Reuchlin, on whom the next chapter focuses. The scholar Avner Shamir separates the Pfefferkorn Affair from the Reuchlin Affair, which consisted of the confiscation campaign, the resulting investigation, and the back-and-forth debate between Pfefferkorn and Reuchlin in a series of printed books,<sup>133</sup> usually with the title *Spiegel*, “mirror,” a word used in Latin books to signify its learned and encyclopedic content. Pfefferkorn stated that Jewish book-burning was necessary to keep Christians safe from Jews and convert them:

On the face of it, it will be objected, that my proposal is as imprudent as it is immoral, since I seem to be recommending that the authorities take illegal and unjust [*contra ius et fas*] actions against the Jews' possessions. And yet I firmly maintain: this is not a matter of stealing anything from anybody; on the contrary, the Jews stand to gain something thereby. But first allow me this question: Why are the Jews so pitilessly persecuted by

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schw für myr gehat und mich nyt alle dyngse sehen lassen. darumb so weyß ich nichts dar von zü sagen Aber das weyß ich wall[?] wen die jüden yr oster abent mal essen.”

<sup>133</sup> Avner Shamir, *Christian Conceptions of Jewish Books: The Pfefferkorn Affair* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2009), 10.

you Christians? As everybody knows, they have to pay high taxes for public protection and for the guarantee of law. They are burdened like mules when by rights they ought to be as free as birds in a forest. The argument whereby you seek to justify your greed, namely, that this is a way of forcing their conversion, is not very convincing. You want it to seem as if whatever the Jews are compelled to suffer is for their own good. Why shouldn't you this once make an exception and do something that, though it brings you no gain, at least opens for them the way to eternal salvation?<sup>134</sup>

Pfefferkorn evidently cared about the physical wellbeing of his countrymen, arguing against the unjust taxation and injunctions put upon them, but cared not a whit about their religion and heritage. Pfefferkorn thought that taking away their Jewish learning would actually save them. Remove Jewish learning to save Jewish souls. Perhaps, Pfefferkorn's hatred of Jewish learning reflected his own background as a lower-class butcher, denied access to education. Pfefferkorn had rejected the Jewish legal teachings on the permanence of Jewish identity.

Pfefferkorn believed that burning Jewish books was an act of love and service to them. He wrote: "Therefore, confiscate and burn all the books of the Talmud together with its pack of lies and fairy tales. You will be performing an act of love in relieving them of their errors and thereby steering them onto the right road. Once they have gotten this literature out of their minds, they will turn all the more swiftly and readily to the Holy Scriptures."<sup>135</sup> Pfefferkorn believed that once Jews no longer read the Talmud, its lies would fall from their minds. He would have known that the Talmud contained rabbinic ruminations on Scripture, so the fact that he wanted to destroy the Talmud shows how completely he rejected Judaism. Pfefferkorn wanted the Emperor to require Jews to attend Christian sermons (a practice that took place elsewhere in medieval Europe). He believed this injunction was a form of returning thanks to Jews—"without the Jews

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<sup>134</sup> *Speculum adhortationes Judaice*, fol. C 4v-D 1r, quoted in Oberman, *Roots*, 33.

<sup>135</sup> *Speculum*, fol. C 4v, quoted in Oberman, *Roots*, 55, n48.

the Christians would be worshipping false idols to this very day.”<sup>136</sup> However, in Pfefferkorn’s logic, he wanted Jews to be treated as humans yet be compelled to convert to Christianity by burning their books and by attending sermons, even though he argued that forcing Jews to pay taxes was not humane. He wanted an end to Jewish suffering, but he did not consider that burning Jewish books might induce Jewish suffering. For Pfefferkorn, the solution was simple—burn Jewish books, and their mental shackles would fall to the ground. Pfefferkorn was entirely convinced that this solution would work absolutely and without fault. Without their books, the Jews would return to civility and reason and would, of course, only read the Bible. Pfefferkorn believed his vision for burning Jewish books was in the best interest of the Jewish people and would acculturate them to Christian society.

Pfefferkorn’s account of Jewish ritual contained in his second book *Die Judenbeicht* (*The Jewish Confession*, Cologne, 1508)<sup>137</sup> was remarkably accurate and thorough, even though he sought to emphasize for his Christian readers Jewish strangeness and their animosity to Christians. When Pfefferkorn described their synagogue service, he emphasized their strange actions. For example, although acknowledging the solemnity of the service, Pfefferkorn stated that “when they read the prophet Isaiah ‘Holy, holy, holy is God,’ they jump up very energetically.”<sup>138</sup> His discussion of Rosh Hashanah highlighted the oddness of Jewish practice to Christian ears: the cantor blows the shofar and “everyone faithfully believes that his sins are

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<sup>136</sup> *Speculum*, fol. C 4r, quoted in Oberman, *Roots*, 55.

<sup>137</sup> Johann Pfefferkorn, *Ich heyß eyn buchliin der Juden beicht. In allen orten vint man mich leicht vill neue meren synt myr wall bekant. Ich will mich spreiden in alle landt. Wer mich lyst den wuschen ich heyl. Doch das ich den Juden nit werde zu deyl.* (Cologne: Johann Landen, 1508).

<sup>138</sup> Johann Pfefferkorn, “The Confession of the Jews,” in *The Case against Johann Reuchlin: Religious and Social Controversy in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, by Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 72.

taken away through the sound of the horn.” Pfefferkorn added: “If the sound does not sound right, and is rather harsh, they are grieved and say: ‘Alas, the coming year will be bad and bring persecution from the Christians.’”<sup>139</sup> Pfefferkorn described the ceremony of *tashlikh*, which involves casting breadcrumbs over water, as bizarre and inappropriate. “They turn to face downstream and, gathering their clothes up in front, they shake them out and call out from the bottom of their hearts to the fish: ‘We are casting our sins to you. Receive them.’” Not acknowledging the metaphorical meaning of the act, he narrated that “they are convinced that the fish will take it upon themselves to eat their foul sins.” Pfefferkorn portrayed them as irrational: “they have adopted this strange method without any basis,” reason, Old Testament precept, or authority. “Rather,” he added, “it has been instituted and arranged in the Talmud and by their other false rabbis, whom they obey and in whom they believe more firmly than in Holy Scripture.”<sup>140</sup> Pfefferkorn treated his Jewish subject as foreign and ‘other’ from the perspective of his readers in order to offer their bizarre customs as a reason to not extend toleration to them.

Narrating the Yom Kippur service, Pfefferkorn condemned Jews for breaking a commandment that he deemed outdated—for having compassion on their animals on a day of rest. “But if a steer or a cow or another useful animal falls into a cellar or ditch, the whole congregation would soon come running its aid, without a thought about breaking off the celebration.”<sup>141</sup> One should recognize the parallel to Jesus’s critique of the Pharisees’s refusal to heal a man on the Sabbath: “Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will

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<sup>139</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 73.

<sup>140</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 74. *Tashlikh* actually comes from Micah 7:19, יְשׁוּבָה יְהוָה מִנוּ יִכְבֹּשׂ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלֵךְ, בְּמִצְלוֹתָ יְהוָה כָּל-חַטֹּאתֵינוּ: “He will take us back in love; / He will cover up our iniquities, / You will hurl all our sins / Into the depths of the sea” (*Jewish Publication Society Version*).

<sup>141</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 75.

not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?” (Luke 14:5) The difference is that, while Jesus critiqued the Pharisee’s hypocrisy for choosing to secure their work animals on the Sabbath but not another human, Pfefferkorn condemned Sabbath observance itself. Pfefferkorn’s condemned Jews for failing to observe a law which he saw as misguided. Pfefferkorn wanted Christians to see the Jews as strange for helping their livestock out of a ditch.

While *The Jewish Confession* was informative, it was also clearly inflammatory. Another scholar, Yaakov Deutsch, has argued otherwise. Deutsch presented his own reader response to *The Jewish Confession* as entirely wonderful:

Reading through Pfefferkorn’s booklet, the tone of the description is very neutral. Pfefferkorn reports the different aspects of these two holidays, but avoids almost all critical or negative comments regarding the Jews and their ceremonies, except when outlining the anti-Christian prayers. When he remarks against the Jewish ceremonies, his remarks are very mild.<sup>142</sup>

Deutsch found Pfefferkorn “very mild.” I agree that one could see this book as less inflammatory and milder than his other books, but I am not sure if “mild” is the best way to describe his tone. His tone might better be described as expository and condescending. While Pfefferkorn’s descriptions of Jewish ceremony are straightforward with some disparaging commentary, he did include antagonistic material. After mentioning the prayer in which Jews thank God for not having made them women, Christians, or slaves, Pfefferkorn stated:

Oh, how blind and ignorant is this poor and wretched people! It is obvious that in the whole world there is nothing more wretched and distressing than they. They have been driven and dispersed over the whole wide world, abandoned by God to perpetual misery, from which they may never be delivered except through the Christian faith!<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Yaakov Deutsch, “Von Der Iuden Ceremonien: Representations of Jews in Sixteenth-Century Germany,” in *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Dean Philip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 339.

<sup>143</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 72.

Pfefferkorn clearly considered Christianity superior to Judaism and that God had cursed them. Furthermore, *The Jewish Confession* included an expression of Pfefferkorn's nefarious plan to burn Jewish books: "Thus my loyal advice, according to my modest understanding, is to take from them the books containing these execrations and not leave them in their possession, even if their malicious prayer and desire can do us no harm, as the Prophet Isaiah says in the first chapter: 'They shall not be heard.'" He continued, "It would, moreover, benefit the Jews not to have these books any more. Thus, their evil customs would gradually fall into oblivion."<sup>144</sup> So much for mild.

Pfefferkorn depicted the Jews as dangerous to Christian society because they blasphemed, lent money, killed animals, and threatened to kill him. Pfefferkorn's next book, *The Enemy of the Jews* (*Der Juden Feind*, Cologne, 1509) based itself around these three arguments.<sup>145</sup> "In the first part I will tell of various insults and shameless words the Jews utter every day against God, Mary his most worthy mother, and the whole heavenly host; and I will offer proof in their Hebrew language."<sup>146</sup> In the second part, Pfefferkorn narrated "the harm and damage the Jews cause to the country and the people through usury." Pfefferkorn concluded his booklet "by telling how they are plotting to murder and destroy me (as I clearly report and have

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<sup>144</sup> Pfefferkorn, "Confession," 73, 74.

<sup>145</sup> Johann Pfefferkorn, *Ich bin ain buchlinn der Juden veindt ist mein namen. Ir schalckhait sag ich unnd wil mich des nit schamenn. Die lang zeyt verborgen gewest ist als ich thun bedeütenn das wil ich yetz offenbarn allen Cristen leüten dann ich bin mit yren Hebraischen schriffen wol v<sup>o</sup>wart. Und dem verkerten geschlecht die warhait nit gespart* (Augsburg: Erhard Öglin, 1509).

<sup>146</sup> Johann Pfefferkorn, "The Enemy of the Jews," in *The Case against Johann Reuchlin: Religious and Social Controversy in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, by Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 53.



been loyally warned of).”<sup>147</sup> Pfefferkorn believed that the Jews were trying to kill him ever since he converted to Christianity and because he wrote against them.

In both *The Jewish Confession* and *The Jewish Enemy*, Pfefferkorn advanced the idea that Jews were dangerous to Christian society. In *The Jewish Confession*, Pfefferkorn stated that Jews wanted to take over the world. For their adversity to Christians, Pfefferkorn recommended expulsion. Pfefferkorn stated that, after prayer, the Jews “deliberate how they may obtain power and domination over the world, how they may obtain secular goods, and avenge themselves on us Christians – they have no other thought.”<sup>148</sup> Pfefferkorn thus perpetuated the myth of Jewish world domination. Christian superiority to Judaism gave him the validation to remove Jewish books: “My loyal advice, according to my modest understanding, is to take from them the books containing these execrations and not leave them in their possession, even if their malicious prayer and desire can do us no harm, as the Prophet Isaiah says in the first chapter: ‘They shall not be heard.’”<sup>149</sup>

Pfefferkorn believed that the solution to the Jews’ refusal to believe Christianity was expulsion. He explained that the true meaning of their rituals is Christianity, but they refused to understand it. In the *Aleinu* prayer, “the name ‘king’ is said three times, denoting the Holy Trinity, which they do not understand in their hardened malice and recalcitrance.”<sup>150</sup> The solution to the problem is to take their books so they no longer have Jewish knowledge: “Furthermore it would be a useful, right, and godly action to take from them the Talmud and other false

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<sup>147</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Enemy,” 54.

<sup>148</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 72.

<sup>149</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 73.

<sup>150</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 76.

rabbinical books, together with their prayer books that contain bad precepts and customs, and to completely destroy them.”<sup>151</sup> Pfefferkorn told his audience what to do. “You should not let them go scot free and go empty-handed yourselves. Drive them out of your lands or forbid them to charge interest. Let them work as we Christians must work and force them to hear the word of God, whether they are willing to or not.”<sup>152</sup> Pfefferkorn used the example of prior expulsions to argue that more expulsions are a good idea. “Were there not once Jews in many towns, cities, and lands, for example, in France, Spain, Denmark, and until recently in Nürnberg, Ulm, Nördlingen, etc.? And have they not been driven out? I am asking: what harm or ill will result from their expulsion? If the authorities have done well and acted in fairness, you should imitate them for the salvation of your soul.”<sup>153</sup> In order to demonstrate his Christian orthodoxy, Pfefferkorn had to employ the most anti-Jewish arguments possible, besides calling for their outright death.

On the other hand, Pfefferkorn argued that the Jews were dangerous because they cursed Christians and blasphemed Jesus. He based these arguments on faulty understandings of Hebrew and German, languages which he spoke natively. Pfefferkorn’s first accusation that the Jews call Mary and Jesus shameful names was based on Hebrew errors. Pfefferkorn states that the Jews call Jesus “Jescheynozere,” נוֹצְרִיָּשִׁי, even though the Hebrew is reversed and without a space, likely a printer’s error. One can imagine how much difficulty the printer had placing the Hebrew words in the blank spaces left interspersed within the German text. Pfefferkorn translated the

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<sup>151</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 77.

<sup>152</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 78.

<sup>153</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Confession,” 79. Nürnberg, Ulm, and Nördlingen expelled their Jews in 1498, 1499, and 1507, respectively.

phrase as “ain verführer des volcks,” a seducer of the people.<sup>154</sup> The Hebrew phrase he intended simply means, “Jesus of Nazareth,” or “Jesus the Nazarene.” In contradiction to himself, Pfefferkorn used the same phrase in praise of Jesus in the caption to a woodcut depicting the crucifixion. On the title page, he wrote “Jesus nazarene rex iudeor” with the Hebrew translation and transliteration below. The Hebrew reads יֵהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי נֶזְרֵת מֶלֶךְ הַיְּהוּדִים, or in the German transliteration he provided, “Yehoschua nazeros umelech haiehudim.”<sup>155</sup> Paradoxically, Pfefferkorn used Jesus’s Hebrew name on one page and then interpreted that same name as “seducer” two pages later in order to discredit Jews.

Pfefferkorn’s argument that Jews curse Christians in greetings is based on faulty language. Pfefferkorn explained that, “if a Christian comes to a Jew, he receives him and says: Seind wilkum, meaning ‘Devil, be welcome,’ for seth means devil.”<sup>156</sup> Pfefferkorn did not get the German or the Hebrew right, for *Seind wilkum* in German means “Be welcome,” not “devil, be welcome.” In Hebrew, an archaic word “שֵׁד” (pronounced “shade”) does mean “spirit, demon, or devil,” but no German- or Hebrew-speaker could legitimately confuse the phonemes *shade* and *seind*. Pfefferkorn stated that the Jews call the apostles or young Christians Taschmidem, תַּשְׁמִידִים, exterminators.<sup>157</sup> However, in Hebrew, *disciples* is Talmidim, תַּלְמִידִים, the difference of one letter, so it is possible that he falsified the evidence or made a mistake.

To Pfefferkorn, Jews were dangerous because they blasphemed Christian concepts. They call Mary, mother of God, by three disrespectful dishonorable and shameful names. The first is

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<sup>154</sup> Pfefferkorn, *Ich bin ain buchlinn der Juden veindt ist mein namen*, fol. 126r.

<sup>155</sup> Pfefferkorn, *Ich bin ain buchlinn der Juden veindt ist mein namen*, fol. 124r.

<sup>156</sup> Pfefferkorn, *Ich bin ain buchlinn der Juden veindt ist mein namen*, fol. 128r.

<sup>157</sup> Pfefferkorn, *Ich bin ain buchlinn der Juden veindt ist mein namen*, fol. 126v.

*Thlúa*, תְּלוּיָה, a female hangman. The other is *Sono*, זוֹנוֹה, a notorious sinner. The third is *Thmea*, תְּמֵאָה, an unclean lady.<sup>158</sup> The Hebrew words do indeed mean “hanged,” “whore,” and “unclean,” but one does not know whether Jews said these things or not. The Jews call the Christian priests, *Gallehim*, גַּלְיָהִים, or shaved ones, referring to the tonsure. They call the chalices, *Clavim*, כְּלָבִים, so many dogs. The churches they call *Moschoff* or *bes-kisse*, בֵּסֶה בֶּתְמָשׁוּב [sic.], which the printer rendered as a single (backwards) word and which Pfefferkorn translated as “shit house,” but I translate, literally, as “house of sitting.” They call Latin, *Laschanthome*, טַןמָה לְשׁוֹן, an unclean tongue.<sup>159</sup> In Pfefferkorn’s understanding, Jews have a secret code of blasphemy for every Christian concept. The pious Christian would do well to stay away from Jews.

Pfefferkorn believed that Jews endangered Christians by leading them astray and teaching them heresy: “the Jews cause many Christians, learned and unlearned, to doubt their faith.” Jews were bearers of heresy, plain and simple, and they steal Christian babies by having Christian men sleep with their women. “Thus there is much heresy where Jews live; also one finds that Christians commit unchaste acts with Jews and have children by them. These children remain Jews, which is no doubt a great, notable, and shameful evil.”<sup>160</sup> These babies were lost from Christianity to the dark horrors of Judaism.

In the second half of the *Jewish Enemy*, Pfefferkorn argued that Jews were dangerous to his own safety. Pfefferkorn indicated that he believed that the Jews sought to kill him, which he repeated either for rhetorical purposes or sincerely believed. He repeatedly mentioned informants

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<sup>158</sup> Pfefferkorn, *Ich bin ain buchlinn der Juden veindt ist mein namen*, fol. 126r.

<sup>159</sup> Pfefferkorn, *Ich bin ain buchlinn der Juden veindt ist mein namen*, fol. 126v.

<sup>160</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Enemy,” 60.

who secretly conveyed this information to him. Pfefferkorn described them as savage beasts, ready to destroy him at moment's notice: "they hate me especially and other men who were once Jews, more than they hate other Christians; and I know well, if I fell among Jews, they would devour me as the wolf devours sheep."<sup>161</sup> Thankfully, Pfefferkorn had allies who kept him informed: "I was warned secretly by a good friend, who informed me in writing that Jews from several countries have made a pact to kill and murder me."<sup>162</sup> Pfefferkorn thought Jews were so dangerous that he not only worried about his neighbors, but suspected an international conspiracy to kill him. Pfefferkorn knew he broke Jewish law by converting to Christianity; in a strange irony, he believed that the Jews were planning to exact retributive justice on him for converting. Apparently, he felt guilty. Pfefferkorn employed the murder threat to request his listeners' audience: "Therefore I beg all Christian believers to listen kindly to my words. The Jews talk of me in this manner only for this reason: to cover up their deed if I am sooner or later killed and murdered secretly by the allies of the Jews."<sup>163</sup> In order to assuage his own guilt about converting, Pfefferkorn projected an international Jewish conspiracy for his assassination, which conveyed to Christian readers that Jews were dangerous.

Not only were Jews a danger to Pfefferkorn, they were a danger to other Christians through usury. Pfefferkorn argued that Jews were dangerous because they steal money and turn Christians into paupers and humiliate them by taking more and more loans. "For I know for sure: anyone who falls in with the Jews and does business with them will never flourish."<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Pfefferkorn, "Enemy," 60.

<sup>162</sup> Pfefferkorn, "Enemy," 60.

<sup>163</sup> Pfefferkorn, "Enemy," 61.

<sup>164</sup> Pfefferkorn, "Enemy," 57.

Pfefferkorn narrated how a Christian might pawn an item to a Jewish financier in order to be loaned money. Pfefferkorn painted a spurious picture of Jewish financing: the Jew turns the item back and forth in his hands and at last exclaims, “A ring, of all things!” The Jew would lend one gold Gulden for a ring, even though the Christian needs more but expects he will return soon for the pawn. Daily, then, the Christian becomes poorer, while the Jew becomes richer. By the end of the year, Pfefferkorn narrates, the Christian has defaulted on the loan and the Jew keeps the pawn. The Jew charged 8 Heller a week on the Gulden, and so the Christian owes 34 Cologne Weisspfennig and 8 Heller.<sup>165</sup> The Christian cannot repay and begs that the interest accrue together; the Jew requires more collateral, and the Christian acquiesces. On the second year, he owes 2 Gulden, 46 Weisspfennig, and 4 Heller. He cannot pay and the Jew requires more collateral. The fear of being humiliated in public for not paying the Jew drives the Christian to continue accruing interest. Then, the Christian runs away into hiding. Pfefferkorn included a chart of the interest the Jew could earn. By the thirtieth year, the Jew would earn 106 tons of gold, 45 million, 810 Gulden, 28 Weisspfennig, and 11 Heller. One wonders how much this critique had to do with Pfefferkorn’s own working-class status as a butcher and dislike of the wealthy.

Jews could also be a danger to one’s health. Pfefferkorn included an extended diatribe against Jewish physicians, whom he considered quacks. He reluctantly admitted that there were some good Jewish doctors: “I admit that there are some among the Jews who know a great deal about medicine who have handed on the proofs of their learning to posterity in books, like Rabbi Moses and Isaac and any others that the Jews may have among them,” but they lack the

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<sup>165</sup> Pfefferkorn, *Ich bin ain buchlinn der Juden veindt ist mein namen*, fol. 129v; Pfefferkorn, “Enemy,” 57.

theoretical foundations of the sciences. The rest of Jewish doctors “have no knowledge of physics, no understanding pertaining to natural science. Without distinguishing between diseases, without inquiring into their causes, without taking notice of the circumstances, they boldly and daringly promise good health, selling medicine and giving out whatever they may first glimpse in a book.”<sup>166</sup> Pfefferkorn’s reference to bibliomancy, the practice of randomly turning to a page to get revelation, may reflect his own distrust of literacy and intellectual matters.

Intriguingly, in light of his profession as a butcher, Pfefferkorn believed that kosher Jews were dangerous to animals. He claimed that Jews were animal butchers, because they conducted sacrifices described in scripture, despite the fact that these had ceased two millennia earlier. He hedged his bets that God would pay little attention to animal sacrifices, stating, “at least according to my understanding. In my opinion their temple is a butcher shop rather than a house of God. I also think that their priests are butchers.”<sup>167</sup> Pfefferkorn’s qualifying language suggests hesitancy on his part whether he can so easily disregard something that God commanded in the past. However, Christianity has triumphed over Judaism, and God no longer cares about such sacrifices. “From the prophecy [of Isaiah and Jeremiah] one may see that God is no longer willing to accept the sacrifices of the rejected Jews, and that the Jews meet only with disdain in God’s eyes and are regarded as sinners.”<sup>168</sup> Jews were a danger to Jesus as the lamb of God, which is why Pfefferkorn no longer associated with Jews: “They have killed the Son of God.

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<sup>166</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Enemy,” 59.

<sup>167</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Enemy,” 61.

<sup>168</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Enemy,” 61.

That is why I will never commit myself to them again.”<sup>169</sup> Pfefferkorn possibly felt guilty about butchering animals for food, so he projected his own guilt onto Jews collectively.

### **The Pfefferkorn Affair<sup>170</sup>**

The Pfefferkorn affair, as it came to be called, involved the Dominican prior Jacob von Hoogstraten, the Christian Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin, and Victor von Carben as consultants. As soon as Pfefferkorn published his tracts, Pfefferkorn proffered a letter from Kunigunde, sister of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (r. 4 February 1508 – 12 January 1519). Letter in hand, Pfefferkorn succeeded in influencing the Holy Roman Emperor, who had already expelled the Jews from his lands of Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola (all in present-day Slovenia), to pass an edict to ban Jewish books. The edict passed on 19 August 1509, with a second edict on 10 November 1509, ordering the destruction of all Hebrew books excepting the Hebrew Bible. Travelling to Frankfurt-am-Main in 1509, Pfefferkorn forced the Jews to surrender their possessions on 10 April 1510 and seized 168 books.<sup>171</sup> As one can see from Table 4, the books that Pfefferkorn most wanted to burn were select Talmudic tractates, prayer books, anti-Christian polemical works (i.e., *Nizzahon* and *Toldoth Jeshu*), and rabbinic exegetical and *halakhic* (legal) materials. However, he did not find any copies of the polemical works and smaller numbers of the other books, with the exception of prayer books, indicating that these communities did not have that many Jewish books.

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<sup>169</sup> Pfefferkorn, “Enemy,” 61.

<sup>170</sup> For the Pfefferkorn affair, see Avner Shamir, *Christian Conceptions of Jewish Books: The Pfefferkorn Affair* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2011). See also Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, eds., *Revealing the Secrets of the Jews: Johannes Pfefferkorn and Christian Writings About Jewish Life and Literature in Early Modern Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

<sup>171</sup> Shamir, *Christian Conceptions of Jewish Books*, 7.



However, the Jews of Cologne received a hearing with the archbishop of Mainz, Uriel von Gemmingen. They demanded an investigation into Pfefferkorn's accusations. Gemmingen headed this commission, inviting scholars from the universities of Cologne, Erfurt, Heidelberg, and Mainz, as well as Victor von Carben, Jacob Hoogstraaten, and Johann Reuchlin, requesting their advisory opinion, or *Gutachten*, regarding Jewish literature, whether to confiscate and burn Jewish books.<sup>172</sup> Hoogstraaten and the University of Cologne found that it contained blasphemous and heretical material; Mainz agreed and recommended censoring the Hebrew Bible according to the Latin Vulgate; Heidelberg recommended another commission; Erfurt recommended the confiscation of the books explicitly blasphemous.<sup>173</sup> As we will discuss more in the following chapter, Reuchlin alone opposed burning all Hebrew books and pointed out that only two explicitly anti-Jesus books should be burnt, i.e., the *Sefer Nizzahon* and *Toldoth Jeschu*, which called Jesus the bastard son of Mary. Based on Reuchlin's testimony, on 23 May 1510 Maximilian reversed the 10 November 1509 edict and returned the books to the Jews on 6 June.

However, undeterred, and spurred on by the Dominicans, Pfefferkorn was not satisfied. In another series of tracts, Pfefferkorn attacked Reuchlin, who responded in kind. In 1511, Pfefferkorn published *Der Handtspiegel* (*The Magnifying Glass*, Mänz). Reuchlin responded with *Der Augenspiegel* (*The Eyeglasses*, 1511). Pfefferkorn fired back with *Der Brandtspiegel* (*Concave Mirror*, Cologne, 1513) and then *Die Sturmglocke* (*The Storm Bell*, Cologne, 1514). By this time, the Dominicans became involved in this controversy more so than they had been. The Dominicans saw themselves as the clerical arm of the church, and the humanists as the

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<sup>172</sup> Shamir, *Christian Conceptions of Jewish Books*, 7.

<sup>173</sup> Shamir, *Christian Conceptions of Jewish Books*, 8.

liberal party. They accused Reuchlin of having written heretical opinions in his *Augenspiegel*. Upon the advice of Archbishop Gemmingen, Pope Leo X (r. 9 March 1513 – 1 Dec 1521) appointed the Prince-Bishop of Speyer, George, Count Palatine by Rhine (1513 – 1529), as special commissioner. In 1514, the latter decided in favor of Reuchlin. The Dominicans appealed to Leo X, so the case came before the Lateran Council, which supported the Speyer decision in 1516. During this time, *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* (*Letters of Obscure Men*, Hagenau, 1516; Basel, 1517) came out, which critiqued the Dominicans. Reuchlin disclaimed any authorship. Pfefferkorn preached a sermon against the Jews and Reuchlin and wrote a reply to the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, *Streitbüchlein Wider Reuchlin und Seine Jünger* (*Dispute Book against Reuchlin and his children*), also translated into Latin as *Defensio Contra Famosas et Criminales Obscurorum Virorum Epistolas* (*Defense against the Famous and Criminal Letters of Obscure Men*, Cologne, 1516). Nevertheless, in 1520, Leo X found Reuchlin guilty of heresy and condemned the *Augenspiegel*. In 1521, after the Pope's decision, Pfefferkorn wrote his final pamphlet against Reuchlin, *Eine Mitleidige Clag Gegen den Ungläubigen Reuchlin* (*A Compassionate Complaint against the Unbelieving Reuchlin*, Cologne, 1521). Pfefferkorn, we see, converted to Christianity and, pulled on by his own fiery personality, became a pawn in the hands of the Dominicans for their ends. Unlike Carben, the church left no kind epithet for Pfefferkorn upon his death. When this firebrand left the earth, the world, and especially Jewry, breathed a sigh of relief.

## Conclusion

Carben and Pfefferkorn began the tradition of what historian Ronnie Hsia in 1994 first called “Christian ethnographies of Jews.” Hsia saw this tradition as the result of “Christian interest in Jewish culture” due to a dialectic of “Christian power” between “religion and

ethnography.”<sup>174</sup> Hsia argued that this Christian gaze towards Jews and Judaism was part of the “parallel construction of Lutheran [Christian, more generally] and Jewish identities. In claiming its identity as the New Israel, the evangelical church had first to deprive the Jews of their claim as the ‘Chosen People.’” The fact that anti-Jewish polemics sold side-by-side with these Jewish ethnographies showed the tension that sixteenth-century German Christian society held between religious conviction and viewing the other.<sup>175</sup> What is noteworthy about Carben, Pfefferkorn, and other Jewish ethnographies was the presence of accurate material in the face of polemics. In their descriptions of Jewish customs and ceremonies (if not linguistics), they are correct. Just as later missionaries provided substantial knowledge about their subjects, so these native-informants of the Jewish convert ethnographic tradition offered knowledge about their literary subjects. What knowledge did this give Christians? It is unclear, but it does seem to lean in the anti-Jewish direction, bolstering Christian faith as superior. By viewing the other, one distances oneself from that other; by viewing them from afar, one separates oneself from them.

Carben and Pfefferkorn began the Jewish-informant trend of Christian ethnography on the Jews. Antonius Margaritha continued this trend in 1530 with *Der gantz Jüdisch Glaub* (*The Complete Jewish Faith*, Augsburg). Luther read Margaritha in 1539 and employed his material in his own, anti-Jewish work. In 1543, Luther wrote *Von den Jüden und iren Lügen* (*On the Jews and Their Lies*, Wittenberg). Luther urged the burning of synagogues, schools, and homes, the destruction of prayer books, the seizure of property and money, forbidding rabbis from preaching, and drafting Jews into labor such as cleaning toilets and streets, or expelling them for

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<sup>174</sup> Hsia, “Christian Ethnographies of Jews,” 224, 226.

<sup>175</sup> Hsia, “Christian Ethnographies of Jews,” 229.

all time.<sup>176</sup> However, not all Christian ethnographic literature on the Jews had such deadly expressions. Jewish ethnography influenced later seventeenth-century Hebraists such as Johann Buxtorff's *Juden Schul* (Basel, 1604), Johann Christoff Wagenseil's *Tela ignea Satanae* (Altdorf, 1681), and Johann Christoph Wolf's *Biblioteca Hebraica* (1715). The first wave of Christian ethnography on Jews was from the pens of Jewish converts to Christianity, but the parallel field of Christian Hebraism, the subject of the next chapter, began during the time of Carben and Pfefferkorn and influenced further Christian thought on Jews and Judaism.

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<sup>176</sup> Not that Luther bears any culpability for this, but the Nazi regime used Luther's book in the Nuremberg rallies. During the Nuremberg war crimes trial, Julius Streicher blamed Luther's book as the seed of his ideas. Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 12: 317, s.v., 116<sup>th</sup> Day, Monday, 29 April 1949, Morning Session, *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/04-29-46.asp>. "STREICHER: Anti-Semitic publications have existed in Germany for centuries. A book I had, written by Dr. Martin Luther, was, for instance, confiscated. Dr. Martin Luther would very probably sit in my place in the defendants' dock today, if this book had been taken into consideration by the Prosecution. In the book *The Jews and Their Lies*, Dr. Martin Luther writes that the Jews are a serpent's brood and one should burn down their synagogues and destroy them..."

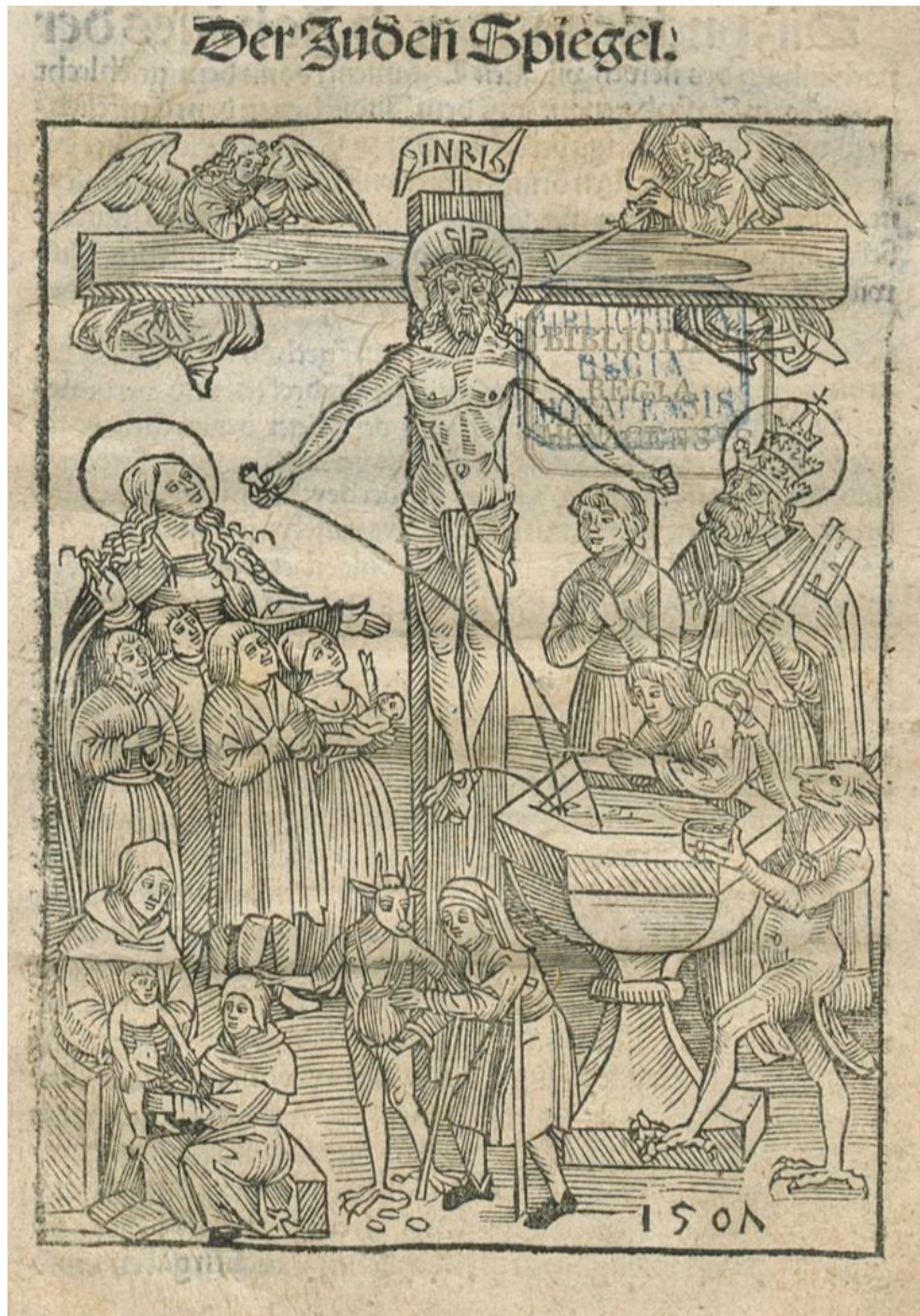


Figure 2. Title page from Pfefferkorn's *Der Judenspiegel* ("The Jews' Mirror," 1507). While Christ mercifully sheds his blood, the demon in the bottom left corner guides the Jews during a circumcision. Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.



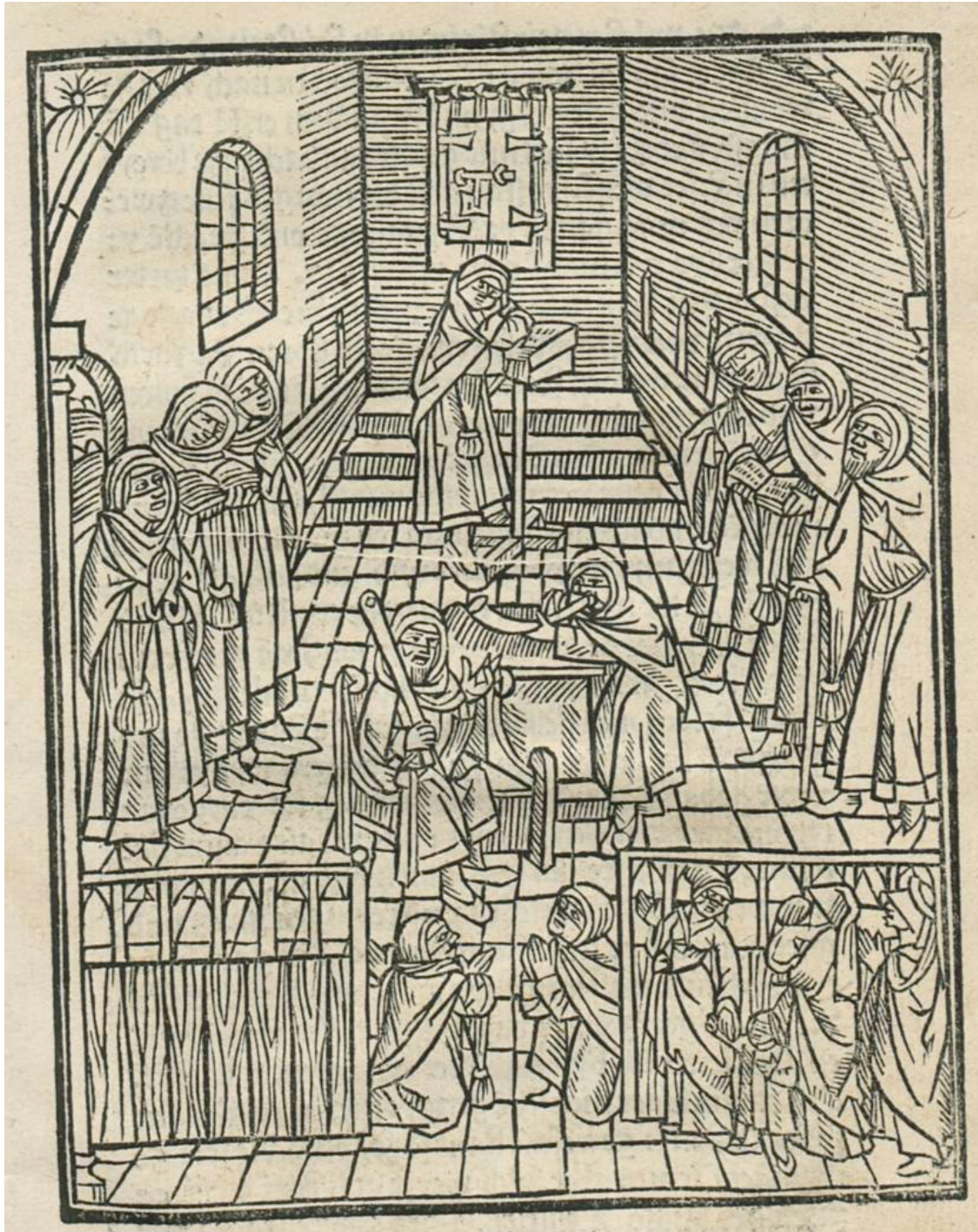


Figure 3. Title woodcut from Pfefferkorn's 1508 *Judenbeicht* ("The Jew's Confession"). It depicts a Yom Kippur service, with one of the Jews blowing the shofar. The depiction accurately rendered the separation of the women from the men in the bottom right corner, which was, and still is, the practice of Orthodox synagogues. Note the locked Torah ark on the back wall of the synagogue. Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### CHRISTIAN HEBRAISTS AND JUDAISM

In 1486, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, a Christian student of the Jewish Kabbalah wrote: “When I had purchased these books” of the Kabbalah, “at no small cost to myself, when I had read them through with the greatest diligence and with unwearied toil, I saw in them (as God is my witness) not so much the Mosaic as the Christian religion.” Renaissance thinker Pico della Mirandola found in the Kabbalah Christian doctrines such as “the mystery of the Trinity,” “the Incarnation of the Word,” and “the divinity of the Messiah.” In them, Pico wrote, “I have read about original sin, its expiation through Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem, the fall of the devils, the orders of the angels, purgatory, and the punishments of hell.” Pico stated that in the parts of the Kabbalah that concern philosophy, “you seem to really hear Pythagoras & Plato, whose principles are so closely related to the Christian faith.” He expanded on this by saying, “Taken together, there is absolutely no controversy between ourselves and the Hebrews on any matter, with regard to which they cannot be refuted and gainsaid out of the cabalistic books, so that there will not be even a corner left in which they may hide themselves.”<sup>177</sup> This quote from Renaissance Christian Hebraist scholar Pico perfectly expresses the dueling sympathies of Christian Hebraists: on the one hand, their interest in finding a unitary system of truth led them to read from the world’s wisdom traditions—Greek, Hebrew, and Egyptian—giving them genuine interest in Jewish sources; on the other hand, that search was in the service of Christianity, so their delving into Jewish writings sought to affirm Christian truths. Facing

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<sup>177</sup> Ioannes Picus Mirandulanus Comes Concordiae, *Oratio de Hominis Dignitate*, trans. Elizabeth Livermore Forbes (Lexington, KY: Anvil Press, 1953), 44–45.

opposition from Christian churches, Christian Hebraists challenged the stigma of studying Jewish sources yet also produced knowledge about Judaism that was not neutral but had the goal of showing Christianity's inherent truth and superiority.

Even though its original authors wrote in Hebrew, the vast majority of the Bible's Western readers since the fifth-century read it in Latin. In 420 CE, at the behest of Pope Damasus, the Hebraist scholar Jerome translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin, producing the translation which tradition termed the Latin Vulgate, meaning "vulgar" or "common," because the average Latin-speaker could comprehend it. Jerome was one of the few post-Nicene fathers who studied with Jews to read the Hebrew texts in their original form. Jerome urged the Church to return to the *Hebraica veritas*, the "Hebrew truth" of the original Hebrew biblical texts, and used Hebraic phrasing in his Latin version. This notion, as historian Ben Kaplan described it, held that Christian truths could be found in the Hebrew texts.<sup>178</sup> While the Roman Church had used Latin as its liturgical language and the Eastern Churches had used, variously, Greek, Old Slavonic, and Syriac for their liturgies, no Christian body used the original language of the Hebrew Bible. On the other hand, Jews continued to nurture Hebrew literacy over the millennium alongside their vernacular tongues, including Arabic, Aramaic, Spanish, Yiddish, Greek, Turkish, Iranian, Marathi, and others. Nevertheless, in some cases, certain Jewish communities no longer understood the liturgical and biblical language Hebrew, prompting, for example, Saadia Gaon (882 – 942) to translate the Bible into Arabic. While Jewry cultivated Hebrew learning, the Church did not. The Catholic Church regarded Hebrew with some degree of esteem throughout the Middle Ages, but it continued to support Latin as the

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<sup>178</sup> Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 119.



lingua prima after Jerome. Due to the Catholic Church's lack of support of Hebrew scholarship, fewer than a dozen Christian individuals could read Hebrew from 500 to 1500.<sup>179</sup>

In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church supported Hebrew learning, but did not foster its use due to a variety of reasons. First, the Church had no need of Hebrew because it had the Latin Vulgate, which it held up as authentic. The Church did not hold to Jerome's dictum of *Hebraica veritas*, but to *Vulgata veritas*, the ironic product of Jerome's translation. Second, the medieval Catholic Church focused on converting pagans, not Jews. The *Judenmission*, or Jewish mission, was the product of sixteenth-century Hebraism, not the cause of it. Third, medieval Christian society had a stigma against all things Judaic due to Christianity's exclusion of Judaism in its self-definition during the early centuries of the Common Era. Learning Hebrew could be a sign of Judaizing, which Christians feared above all else. As G. Lloyd Jones stated, "a solid phalanx of Christian teachers rejected Jewish tradition out of hand and could see no value whatever in it."<sup>180</sup> Medieval Hebraists, such as Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349), defended themselves against charges of Jewish ancestry simply because they studied Hebrew. Even after the renaissance of Hebraism in the sixteenth century, this stigma held true in German-speaking lands; Hebraist Johannes Boschenstein (1472–1540) stated: "We were born of Christian parents, but because we are somewhat acquainted with the Holy Tongue, which is so unusual in our land, we are hated by

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<sup>179</sup> Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983), 13–14. Notable pre-Renaissance Christian Hebrew-readers include Epiphanius, Jerome, Origen, Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636), Aldhelm (c. 639–709), Bede (c. 673–735), Rabanus Maurus (c. 780–856), and Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–1349).

<sup>180</sup> G. Lloyd Jones, "Introduction," in Johann Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, trans. Martin and Sarah Goodman (New York: Abaris Books, 1983), 8.

impudent and ignorant people.”<sup>181</sup> Finally, even if a European Christian overcame the stigma of learning Hebrew, he had to find a Jew who would teach it to him. Jews in Ashkenaz (German-speaking lands) refused outright to teach Christians Hebrew because they knew the Church would accuse them of judaizing Christians. In a letter to a friend, the German humanist Johann Reuchlin stated that Ashkenazi Jews refused to teach Hebrew: “Our Jews refuse to teach Christians their language, either out of hatred or incompetence, appealing to an authority from the Talmud, Rabbi Ammi, who stated it in Tractate Chagigah.”<sup>182</sup> These four factors inhibited learning Hebrew in medieval Christian Europe.

The ideas of Renaissance humanism—such as the idea that the world’s wisdom traditions reflected the same ultimate truth, the so-called ancient theology—led other sixteenth-century humanist scholars, including Pfefferkorn and Erasmus, to read Hebrew and Jewish sources. Even though Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) and Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522) advocated for Jewish sources and their preservation against people who wished to burn them (including the Jewish convert Johannes Pfefferkorn), they still read those sources through the lens of Christian anti-Judaism, an ideology which the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1467–1536) quintessentially embodied. The chapter narrates, firstly, the Renaissance influences for Christian study of Hebrew, namely, the Platonic and Pythagorean revival and Jewish

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<sup>181</sup> Ludwig Geiger, *Das Studium der Hebräische Sprache in Deutschland vom Ende des 15 bis zur mitte des 16 Jahrhunderts* (Breslau, 1870), 49, quoted in Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 16.

<sup>182</sup> Ludwig Geiger, ed., *Johann Reuchlins Briefwechsel*, Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart 126 (Tübingen: Litterarischen Verein in Stuttgart, 1875), 100. “...nostrates Judaei vel invidia, vel imperitia ducti Christiani neminem in eorum lingua erudire velint idque recusant cujusdam Rabi Ami auctoritate, qui im Thalmud נמסכת חגיגה ita dixit.” Without examining the autograph of the letter, it is unclear whether Reuchlin made the mistake or the printer did. It should be נמסכת חגיגה, “Tractate Hagigah.” The relevant statement in the Babylonian Talmud is *Chagigah* 13a: ואמר רבי אמי אין מוסרין דברי תורה לעובד כוכבים שנאמר (תהלים קמז, כ) לא עשה כן לכל גוי ומשפטים בל ידעום “And Rabbi Ami said further: The words of Torah may not be transmitted to a gentile, as it is stated: ‘He has not dealt so with any nation, and as for His ordinances, they have not known them’ (Psalms 147:20).”

involvement in the Renaissance. The chapter then examines select treatises from Pico and Reuchlin and correspondence from Erasmus to understand their views about Jews and Judaism. The chapter analyzes these texts through the framework of David Nirenberg, who argued that entities, political and non-political, used the language of *Jews* and *Judaism* to distance themselves from that which they most fear.<sup>183</sup>

The first foundation for the study of Hebrew was Platonism and Pythagoreanism, which took place during Renaissance humanism and the resulting rebirth of classical studies. Renaissance humanism began, in the first generation with Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374), Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375), and continued in the second generation with Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457), among others. Valla used textual and linguistic analysis to prove that the Donation of Constantine, by which the Catholic Church maintained that Constantine the Great (r. 306–337) had transferred authority over the western half of the Roman Empire to the Church, was actually a forgery of the eighth century. Humanists valued wisdom over eloquence, although their skills with rhetoric often made them eloquent. Humanism cultivated the following endeavors: the study of grammar; the huge growth in epistolary literature (letter writing); the use of dialogue as a literary technique; translations from Greek to Latin; an emphasis on moral philosophy and theology, and an interest in historical interpretation (over natural philosophy, psychology and metaphysics). Petrarch popularized letter-writing and wrote with the public in mind.<sup>184</sup> The tenets of Renaissance humanism led to the foundations of Hebrew study.

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<sup>183</sup> David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 1–13.

<sup>184</sup> Jonathan Arnold, *The Great Humanists: An Introduction* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 4, 5.

The involvement of Greek thinkers in Italy led to the rediscovery of Platonic thought, providing a foundation for Hebrew study. In philosophy, there had been conflict due to Aristotle's particularistic focus and Plato's universalistic emphasis. Aristotle's works were systematic, organized, and teachable; one read through Aristotle's corpus and graduated to study Plato. Plato's dialogues, on the other hand, by their very nature, were unsystematic; medieval Platonists tried to make them so.<sup>185</sup> Due to the threat from the Turks, Greek Orthodox thinkers such as Manuel Chrysoloras, the Byzantine diplomat to Venice, enlisted the West's support of Byzantium. In 1438, the Byzantine philosopher Giorgius Gemistus Pletho (c. 1355 – 1440) lectured on Plato during the Council of Ferrara–Florence of 1438–1439, a council designed to reunify the Latin Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches. One Western observer described the classical wit dispensed at the council as reminiscent of the ancient Platonic Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. Pletho defended Greek Orthodoxy as the closest faith to true Christianity, although he advanced a form of Hellenic monotheism in which he endorsed a cult of the gods patterned after the cult of the saints.<sup>186</sup> Pletho sought to make Platonism appealing to the Venetians over Aristotle. Pletho gave a manuscript copy of Plato's works to Cosimo de' Medici, who, in turn, named Marsilio Ficino as the head of a newly revived informal Platonic Academy due to Pletho's influence.<sup>187</sup> The involvement of Greek thinkers, including Pletho, at the Greek council in Florence of 1438 led to the rebirth of Platonism in Italy, which led to the study of other ancient sources, including Hebrew.

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<sup>185</sup> Christopher S. Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 78.

<sup>186</sup> Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philosophy," 80.

<sup>187</sup> Robert Black, "The Philosopher and Renaissance Culture," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 25.

Marsilio Ficino's rediscovery of Platonic and Neoplatonic thought in fifteenth-century Florence provided the philosophical underpinnings for the study of Hebrew, although he himself did not do so. Marsilio Ficino (1433 – 1499), born in Figlione and educated in Florence, grew up the son of Cosimo de' Medici's personal physician Diotifeci Figline (d. 1478). As a scholar, Ficino translated Plato into Latin (the first complete translation) and the Neoplatonist philosophers Plotinus (203–270), Porphyry of Tyre (c. 233–309), Iamblichus of Chalcis (c. 250–325) and Proclus of Athens (412–485). Ficino became a priest at age forty and ministered at the canonry of San Lorenzo, preaching in the *curé* of Novoli and in the Church of S. Maria dei Angeli in Florence.<sup>188</sup> Ficino believed in the Ancient Theology, or *prisca theologia*, the idea that ancient wisdom traditions reflected the same kernel of truth, which God gradually revealed to humanity; witnesses to the ancient theology included Moses, Hermes Trismegistus (the reputed Egyptian sage and author of the *Hermetic Corpus*), Zoroaster, and other ancient Near Eastern thinkers. Ficino first translated *On the mysteries of the Egyptians* by the Neoplatonist thinker Iamblichus of Chalcis, who, two generations after Plotinus, was the first to adopt the *Hermetic Corpus* into Platonic philosophy.<sup>189</sup> Ficino finished translating the *Corpus Hermeticum* for Cosimo in 1463 and published Plato's complete works in 1484. Ficino based his own understanding on the basis of the antiquity of the Ancient Theology, even though Iamblichus had invented the connection; it took a century later for Isaac Causabon (1559–1614) to prove that the

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<sup>188</sup> For an introduction to Ficino's life and thought, see Arnold, *Great Humanists*, 57–71.

<sup>189</sup> Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philosophy," 85.

*Hermetic Corpus* was not ancient Egyptian, but Greek, late ancient, esoteric texts, from the same time as Porphyry and Iamblichus.<sup>190</sup>

Ficino's Neoplatonism influenced Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who became the first Christian Hebraist of the Italian Renaissance. Ficino believed that in each category of being, there existed a *primum*, or "first," the noblest, strongest, and most fecund member of that category, informing his unitary idea of the *prisca theologia*. Ficino saw the mind and body as intimately bound up together; the purpose of life was to liberate the soul from its material prison. Once liberated and at the end of time, God would resurrect the soul of the saved person and reunite it with a physical body. He believed that the *spiritus* reaches out to one another in the form of love, in which one can lose a part of their *spiritus* if unreciprocated; magic and music, however, brought hearts together.<sup>191</sup> Ficino directed this informal "academy," better described as a discussion group, since Ficino's goal was to read Plato amongst a circle of young students using the Socratic method.<sup>192</sup> In addition to the Medici family and Ficino, the informally gathered Florentine Academy included Angelo Poliziano, Cristoforo Landino, Demetrios Chalchondylas, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. This return to supposedly ancient Near Eastern sources provided a foundation for the study of Hebrew, which Pico extended.

The second foundation of Hebrew study was the Jewish contribution to the Renaissance. It is no accident that the inspiration to study arcane Semitic texts arose in Italy, where the Jewish population was, remarkably, intellectually free compared to Spanish- and German-speaking

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<sup>190</sup> Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philosophy," 92.

<sup>191</sup> Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philosophy," 88–90.

<sup>192</sup> Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philosophy," 83; Black, "The Philosopher and Renaissance Culture," 25.

lands. Due to the influence of humanism, Jewish presses operated freely in Italian cities since 1470, and Jews and Christians made friendships at various levels of society. Italian Jewry was more accommodating to teach Hebrew, yet still argued over the appropriateness of teaching gentiles Hebrew,<sup>193</sup> and many Jews disregarded the rabbinic injunctions to teach Hebrew to gentile.<sup>194</sup> Together, the forces of Italian humanism and Italian Jewry created Hebraism.

Pico's Jewish teachers, Flavius Mithridates and Elijah del Medigo, were widely influential in the Renaissance, teaching Kabbalah and advancing Aristotelian peripatetic philosophy. They introduced him to Kabbalah, the Jewish Neoplatonic philosophy that held that God emanates into the universe through a series of ten interlinking *sefirot* ("enumerations"), through which humanity can apprehend and unite with the divine. Flavius Mithridates translated Kabbalistic tracts into Latin at Pico's behest.<sup>195</sup> Elijah del Medigo of Candia in Crete (c. 1458 – 1493) was the most prolific of a group of translators who rendered ancient medical wisdom from Hebrew, rather than Arabic sources, and an original thinker in his own right.<sup>196</sup> Medigo came to Venice, which ruled Crete, to study medicine like his family of German descent. Due to his Jewish upbringing, he knew Hebrew and Greek—two languages that many of his peers had not learned. In 1480, in Venice his composition of a philosophical treatise *Questio de efficientia mundi* (printed in 1488 and reprinted thereafter) induced the University of Padua to request that

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<sup>193</sup> Jones, "Introduction," 8. Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 153ff.; Moses A. Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. Elvin I. Kose (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 148ff.

<sup>194</sup> Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony*, 20-21.

<sup>195</sup> Price, *Johannes Reuchlin*, 81.

<sup>196</sup> Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance*, 74.

he adjudicate a dispute; as a result, he moved to Padua. In 1482, he returned to Venice.<sup>197</sup> He translated Averroës's (1126 – 11 December 1198) compendium of Aristotle's *Meteora*, from Samuel ibn Tibbon's Hebrew text, complete with Averroës's commentaries in 1488, which Cecil Roth considered the first production of a living Jewish writer to be printed.<sup>198</sup> Medigo also translated Averroës's commentaries on Book I of Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* (which the physician Lorenzo Maiolo included in his edited collection, *Epiphyllides in dialecticis*, Venice, 1497) and the first seven books of the *Metaphysics* (1560). In 1560, scholars in Venice produced an eleven-volume edition of Aristotle's works alongside Averroës's commentaries. Jewish writers made up many of the contributors, Elijah del Medigo among them; he produced a commentary on Averroës's "medial" commentary on the *Metaphysics*, based on Kalonymous ben Kalonymous ben Meir ha-Nasi's (1286–after 1328) Hebrew version; and a translation of *De spermate*.<sup>199</sup> Medigo translated Averroës's proem to his larger commentary on Book XII of the *Metaphysics* twice: once for Pico, and once for Cardinal Domenico Grimani.<sup>200</sup> The influence of Jewish philosophers Mithridates and Medigo provided Pico with the basis to revive Hebraic antiquity through a Neoplatonic lens, a lens which valued Kabbalistic thought.

### **Catholic Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463 – 1494)**

Pico was the first Italian humanist to collect Hebrew manuscripts and to spark scholarly and cultural interest in Hebrew. Even though he was born after Johann Reuchlin, I begin my discussion of Christian Hebraists with Pico because he instigated the Christian study of

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<sup>197</sup> Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance*, 112.

<sup>198</sup> Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance*, 74.

<sup>199</sup> Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance*, 74, 80.

<sup>200</sup> Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance*, 74.



Kabbalah, taught Johann Reuchlin (a few years his elder), and urged him to immerse himself in Hebrew studies.<sup>201</sup> Among Pico's teachers were Elijah del Medigo and Johanan Alemanno,<sup>202</sup> plus the translations of Mithridates. In 1492, Pico spent several weeks perusing the Hebrew manuscript collection of a Sicilian-Jewish exile at Ferrara.<sup>203</sup> Pico's Jewish teachers influenced Pico to study Hebrew and Kabbalah, but it also sprung from his own desire to pursue a unitary system of knowledge. This section uses two of Pico's writings—*Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1487) and *900 Theses* (1486)—to argue that Pico held heterodox views that adopted elements from Judaism but ultimately used Jewish texts to prove Christianity and to dispute Judaism.

Pico's involvement in Hebrew came from lifelong friendships with Jewish teachers, Lorenzo de' Medici, and Ficino. Giovanni Pico was born in 1463, the youngest son of Francesco I, the ruling prince of Mirandola and count of Concordia, near Ferrara.<sup>204</sup> He studied canon law at the University of Bologna at the age of 14 for two years (1477 – 1478), but on the death of his mother, he switched to philosophy at Ferrara (1478 – 1479) and then Padua (1480 – 1482).<sup>205</sup> In Padua, he studied Hebrew and Arabic with the aforementioned Aristotelian lecturer Elijah del

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<sup>201</sup> G. Lloyd Jones, "Introduction," 10.

<sup>202</sup> Eric Zimmer, "Jewish and Christian Hebraist Collaboration," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 71, no. 2 (1980): 73.

<sup>203</sup> Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd ed., *Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion, 1200–1650*, vol. XIII: "Inquisition, Renaissance, and Reformation" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 169.

<sup>204</sup> General details from Pico's life are from Arnold, *Great Humanists*, 72–88. Details of his friendship with Medigo are from Roth.

<sup>205</sup> Charles L. Stinger, "Humanism in Florence," in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. Albert Rabil, vol. 1. Humanism in Italy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 196; Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486): The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems: With Text, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. S. A. Farmer, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, Volume 167 (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998), 2.

Medigo, who introduced Pico to Kabbalah. Pico's encounter with Medigo began a lifelong mentorship, friendship, and correspondence between them. In summer 1482, Pico spent the summer in Mirandola, travelling to Pavia in the autumn and corresponding with Lorenzo de' Medici, who would become his patron, and with Ficino, requesting a copy of his *Theologia Platonica*. Pico received his parents' estate in 1483, becoming one of the wealthiest men in Italy. He moved to Florence in November 1484, while Medigo returned to Venice. He met Lorenzo for the first time, who supported Pico until Lorenzo's death in 1492. Pico met Guglielmo Raimondo da Moncada (Flavius Mithridates), who continued his Hebrew education. As Pico's interest in Platonic sources grew, he commissioned Medigo's translations of Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>206</sup> During this time, Pico attended the University of Pavia (1483 – 1484) and the University of Paris (1485 – 1486).<sup>207</sup>

Pico's relationship with Medigo blossomed in Florence. Pico held in his home philosophical discussions with Marsilio Ficino. In one particular discussion, Pico, Ficino, Domenico Benivieni, Elijah del Medigo, and another Jewish peripatetic philosopher named Abraham all conversed with the Sicilian convert Mithridates, the orientalist who had translated the Qur'an for the Duke of Urbino and taught theology at the Sapienza in Rome—a discussion that Ficino fondly recalled in a letter to Benivieni. Pico and del Medigo were so close that the latter even caught an infection from his patron.<sup>208</sup> In Benozzo Gozzoli's (c. 1421 – 1497) fresco *The Procession of the Magi*, Roth believed that one of the bearded figures behind Pico's train,

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<sup>206</sup> Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance*, 113-114.

<sup>207</sup> S. A. Farmer, ed. and trans., *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486): The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems: with Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998), 2.

<sup>208</sup> Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance*, 114.

“wearing the broad-hooded headdress characteristic of Italian Jews of the day,” was none other than Elijah del Medigo.<sup>209</sup> If correct, these two remain immortalized together in perpetuity.

Pico’s life after 1485 was full of commotion and controversy. In the summer of 1485, Pico visited Paris. Medigo left Florence for Bassano, where he composed a commentary on Averroës’s *De substantia orbis*, entitled *Maamar al Etsem Hagalgal*, which incorporated some of their discussions. Medigo then went to Padua, where he resumed lecturing. In 1486, Pico returned from France to Florence and stayed with Ficino. He then left for Rome on 8 May 1486, arriving in Arrezzo two days later, where he seduced Lorenzo’s married cousin, Margherita. Her husband, Giuliano Mariotto de’ Medici, had Pico arrested and imprisoned. After his release, Pico had Medigo meet him at Perugia, where he recovered and had Medigo help prepare nine hundred conclusions that he planned to defend at Rome.<sup>210</sup> Pico wrote an opening *Oration* to introduce the theses.<sup>211</sup> On 7 December 1486, Eucharius Silber (1480–1509) published Pico’s theses as *Conclusiones philosophicae, cabalasticae et theologicae* in Rome.<sup>212</sup> Pico imagined debating the following year “all teachings” and “all sects” before the College of Cardinals with the pope adjudicating as supreme judge. However, Pope Innocent VIII (1484 – 1492) quickly banned this dispute.<sup>213</sup> Innocent condemned thirteen of Pico’s theses.<sup>214</sup> However, Pico defended the theses in

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<sup>209</sup> Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance*, 115.

<sup>210</sup> Roth, *Jews in the Renaissance*, 115.

<sup>211</sup> Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, 2. Pico’s presumed original title was *Oratio ad laudes philosophiae* (*Oration in praise of philosophy*). In 1496, his uncle Gianfrancesco Pico published his own collected works, including his nephew’s oration, in what Farmer called “a corrupt German reprint.”

<sup>212</sup> Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, 3.

<sup>213</sup> Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, x.

<sup>214</sup> John F. D’Amico, “Humanism in Rome,” in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. Albert Rabil, vol. 1. Humanism in Italy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 269.

the un-submissive *Apology* on 31 May 1487 that printed half of the not-yet-published *Oration*. The papal pull (*Et si injuncto nobis*) of 4 August 1487 condemned the whole work. He had to flee to France. Philip II of Savoy arrested Pico in 1488 between Grenoble and Lyon and imprisoned him at Vincennes castle. Lorenzo sent princes who pleaded Pico's case and Charles VIII released him.<sup>215</sup> Pico returned to Florence in April 1488, but it was not until 1493 that Innocent's successor, Alexander VI, lifted Pico's excommunication. Now twenty-five years old, he spent his days "in Florence or in the villa at Fiesole that Lorenzo de' Medici gave to Pico after the latter's return from his humiliating flight to France," where he composed the *Heptaplus*, *Commentary on the Psalms*, *On Being and the One*, *On the True Computation of the Ages*, *Concord of Plato and Aristotle*, and *Disputations against Divinatory Astrology*.<sup>216</sup>

In the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1487), Pico maintained an exultant view of the Jewish wisdom tradition. He produced the *Oration* as an introductory speech for a disputation he planned in order to defend his 900 theses. His oration maintained that humans were like God because they could simultaneously ascend to the heights of spirituality and descend to the depths of brutishness. He quoted from a variety of sources including what he described as "the occult theology of the Hebrews," which transformed the prophet Enoch "into an angel of divinity whom they call 'Mal'akh Adonay Shebaoth,'"<sup>217</sup> which in Hebrew means "the angel of the LORD of hosts/armies." This Hebrew occult theology aligned with his understanding of the spiritual ascension of humanity, even though this book about Enoch did not appear in the Jewish

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<sup>215</sup> Arnold, *Great Humanists*, 77.

<sup>216</sup> Farmer, *Syncretism*, 138.

<sup>217</sup> Pico, *Oratio*, 5.

canonical scriptures but is a part of Second Temple–era Jewish pseudepigraphal apocalyptic literature, namely the Apocalypse of Enoch, also known as 3 Enoch. Pico quoted from the Hebrew Bible, from Psalm 8:5, that man is little lower than the angels, and Psalm 82:6, “ye are all angels and sons of the Most High.”<sup>218</sup> Pico argued that man was versatile—he can be like many of the created beings, while all the other created beings can only be like themselves, the way God created them. He stated: “Are there any who would not admire man, who is, in the sacred writings of Moses and the Christians, not without reason described sometimes by the name of ‘all flesh,’ sometimes by that of ‘every creature,’ inasmuch as he himself molds, fashions, and changes himself into the form of all flesh and into the character of every creature?”<sup>219</sup> Pico had Moses, whom he described as “little removed from the springing abundance of the holy and unspeakable wisdom by whose nectar the angels are made drunk,” address his listeners: “let them first like zealous Levites in the service of dialectic[,] minister to the holy things of philosophy.”<sup>220</sup> Not many Christians urged their listeners to be like the Old Testament priests, but Pico is unique in that regard, showing that he highly valued the ancient Jewish wisdom found in the Bible and in other places.

However, Pico’s impression of current Jews is not as favorable. On the issue of the Trinity, he believed that Christians should prove to Jews the Trinity from the Kabbalah in order to convert them to Christianity. As the quote at the beginning of the chapter shows, Pico believed that Christians should use Jewish texts as a battleground, so that Jews could be “confuted and

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<sup>218</sup> Pico, *Oratio*, 7.

<sup>219</sup> Pico, *Oratio*, 6.

<sup>220</sup> Pico, *Oratio*, 14-15.

convinced out the cabalistic writings, so that no corner is left for them to hide in.”<sup>221</sup> Pico believed that this combat was necessary and possible: “On this point I can cite a witness of the very greatest authority, the most learned Antonius Chronicus; on the occasion of a banquet in his house, at which I was also present, with his own ears he heard the Hebrew, Dactylus, a profound scholar of this lore, come round completely to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.”<sup>222</sup> Thus, he, like other Hebraists, considered Jewish texts as a battleground upon which to base the divinity of Christ. He praised the books of cabalistic wisdom as “the springs of understanding, that is, the ineffable theology of the supersubstantial deity; the fountain of wisdom, that is, the precise metaphysical doctrine concerning intelligible and angelic forms; and the stream of wisdom, that is, the best established philosophy concerning nature.”<sup>223</sup> Thus, the Kabbalah is amazingly rich, but the Jews, its keepers, did not understand it properly. Even though Jewish law, he wrote, required Kabbalah learners to be 40 years of age, Pico explained that he discovered the Jewish religion in the Kabbalistic texts. Even though Kabbalah is a Jewish tradition, he argued, it actually proves Christianity, not Judaism, to be true. In the Kabbalah, he found “the mystery of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Word, the divinity of the Messiah; there one might also read of original sin, of its expiation by the Christ, of the heavenly Jerusalem, of the fall of the demons, of the orders of the angels, of the pains of purgatory and of hell.”<sup>224</sup> Thus, as a Christian reading Jewish literature, Pico naturally found Christian ideas in his reading. In a way, this process constituted a de-judaizing of the text; the Christian reader praised the Jewish font of wisdom

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<sup>221</sup> Pico, *Oratio*, 44-45.

<sup>222</sup> Pico, *Oratio*, 45.

<sup>223</sup> Pico, *Oratio*, 43.

<sup>224</sup> Pico, *Oratio*, 44.

(and relatedly ought to praise Jews for transmitting the text), but then turned around and stated that the current Jews had not been reading it correctly. If they did, they would have become Christians; but since they are not interpreting it correctly, they remained Jews—for the true ideas of the Kabbalah support not Judaism, but Christianity. Pico, therefore, did not care about Jewish writings on their own terms, but only to what extent they supported his theology. Pico appreciated Jews for what they gave him, namely, access to the occult cosmology of the ancients, and not for their own sakes. His appreciation of them was secondary to his appreciation of their wisdom.

### **Pico's Views of Judaism in *900 Theses* (1486)** <sup>225</sup>

In his *900 Theses*, Pico maintained an open attitude to all the world's wisdom traditions. Formally, his ideas maintained syncretism, that is, the mixing together of various religious traditions, because the Platonic idea of a universal truth implicit in the diversity of traditions led him to recognize a unified system in which all theological and metaphysical traditions find their concord pointing to the divine. According to the Renaissance scholar Paul Oskar Kristeller, Pico loved truth whatever its origins: "For Pico, truth consists in a number of true statements, and the various philosophers participate in truth in so far as their writings contain, besides numerous errors, a number of specific statements which must be accepted as true."<sup>226</sup>

Pico claimed to be following the footsteps of the Latin philosophers, however his ideas were heterodox. In the section "Twenty-Two Conclusions according to John Scotus," Pico

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<sup>225</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *900 Theses*, in Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, 183–553.

<sup>226</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, in Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio de hominis dignitate* (Lexington, KY: The Anvil Press, 1953), 49. This edition incorporates the Elizabeth Livermore Forbes translation from *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (University of Chicago Press, 1948), with Eugenio Garin's Latin text (Vallechi Editore, Firenze, 1942).

stated: “in Christ there were two existences” (“in Christo fuerunt duo esse”).<sup>227</sup> The language of *existences*, or “beings,” seems to counter the Orthodox Christian understanding of Christ’s nature—namely, that Christ had a single body, consisting of two natures, divine and human, in a single person. Pico seems to imply that Christ had two beings inside him. Pico wrote: “After the Passion of Christ the ceremonies of the Old Law could be observed without sin.”<sup>228</sup> That is striking—Pico said Christians *can* follow the Torah law. Most Christians maintained the opposite; that following the Mosaic Law repudiated Christ. By saying that Christians can follow the Mosaic Law, he set himself up for the charge of judaizing.

Pico spoke favorably of circumcision in his *900 Conclusions*. Under the heading “Forty-seven Cabalistic conclusions according to the Secret Doctrine of the Hebrew Cabalist Wisemen, whose memory should always be honored,” Pico included two conclusions about the mystical benefice of circumcision. The first stated: “Circumcision was given to free us from the impure powers that circle about.”<sup>229</sup> By stating *us*, Pico implied that circumcision was for everyone. Indeed, his search for the Kabbalah reflected his belief that it held a system of universal import. Historian Chaim Wirszubski argued that Pico studied Hebrew and Chaldean solely for the sake of Kabbalah, and that, therefore, his “study of Hebrew was from the outset subsidiary to his study of Kabbala.”<sup>230</sup> According to Renaissance historian Paul Oscar Kristeller, Pico wished to

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<sup>227</sup> Mirandola, *900 Theses*, in Farmer, *Syncretism*, 437, 4.4.

<sup>228</sup> Mirandola, *900 Theses*, in Farmer, *Syncretism*, 239, 4.14. “Post passionem Christi potuerunt cerimonialia ueteris legis sine peccato obseruari.”

<sup>229</sup> Mirandola, *900 Theses*, in Farmer, *Syncretism*, 359, 28.31. “Data est circumcisio ad liberatrimonem a uirtutibus immundis quae in circuitu ambulant.”

<sup>230</sup> Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico Della Mirandola’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 3, 10.



create a universal philosophical system which emerged from Ficino: “Pico’s role was especially important because he used the Jewish Kabbala for the confirmation of Christian theology and because he added Kabbalism (as well as Aristotelianism) to the universal syncretism envisaged by Marsilio Ficino and thus associated with the currents of Platonism, Hermeticism, and magic studied by Frances Yates, D.P. Walker, and their followers.”<sup>231</sup> Pico’s search for universal truth led him to Kabbalah and, resultantly, to the study of Hebrew.

Pico challenged one and a half millennia of Christian antinomian tradition by endorsing circumcision as a holy deed. In a magical and apotropaic vein, Pico believed that circumcision had therapeutic benefits. Chaim Wirszubski interpreted Pico’s reference to “the powers that circle about” as referring to the wicked of the earth described in the Latin text of Psalm 12, which used the same language. Wirszubski quoted from a Hebrew scholar of the day, Menaḥem Recanati’s *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, to show that Pico drew upon these Jewish sources:

You ought to consider the mystery of uncovering the glans penis, as our Masters, blessed be their memory, said [Mišnah, *Šabbat*, xix.6] “Circumcision without uncovering does not count as circumcision.” Because the foreskin that surrounds the corona is a figure of the powers of impurity, as it is written [Hab. 1:4] “For the wicked surrounds the righteous,” namely the Righteous *sensu stricto*, and it is written [Ps. 12:9] “In circuito impii ambulat.”<sup>232</sup>

According to Wirszubski, Pico used Recanati’s interpretation of circumcision as representing the removal of wickedness from the righteous. Jewish circumcision consisted of two acts: the removal of the foreskin (*milah*) and the removal of the membrane under the foreskin with the

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<sup>231</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, “Introduction,” in *Pico Della Mirandola’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*, by Chaim Wirszubski (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), ix.

<sup>232</sup> Wirszubski, *Pico Della Mirandola’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*, 44, quoting Menaḥem Recanati, *Commentary on the Pentateuch* (Venice, 1545), fol. 47va.

*mohel's* fingernail so that the corona of the glans penis was completely uncovered (*periah*).<sup>233</sup>

Without the “uncovering,” the literal meaning of *periah*, the circumcision was incomplete.

Jewish tradition saw circumcision as partnering with the Creator to perfect man: man was born with excessive skin which needed to be shorn off in order to be a perfect, complete man; being natural was not good, one had to be perfected. In that line of thinking, circumcision had a salutary and even protective property. Both Recanati and Pico remained ambiguous as to whether the threat emerged from humans or from demonic entities. Either way, they believed that circumcision warded off evil. Prudishness and discretion may have led the Catholic Church to not debate what they perceived as Pico's bizarre and superstitious conclusions.

Pico's statements about circumcision reveal his headlong dive into Jewish tradition. In Pico's second thesis regarding circumcision, he stated that “circumcision occurs on the eighth day, because it is superior to the universalized bride.”<sup>234</sup> Wirszubski explained that Pico's thesis meant that, “in the hierarchical configuration of the ten *sefirot* [, or divine emanations, in Kabbalah], the ninth *sefirah*, *Yesod*, the ‘foundation’ of all creative potencies, represented by the phallus, is above the tenth.” The ninth *sefirah*, *Yesod*, represents man's genitive center. In the Tree of Life schema, representing the flow of divine energies from the divine to the earthly, *Yesod* is above the tenth and final *sefirah*. The tenth *sefirah* is *malkuth*, “kingdom.” *Malkuth* has a feminine ending and represents “bride, queen, and the earth,” with which God will eventually unite. To show that Pico had this thought in mind, Wirszubski quoted from Recanati:

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<sup>233</sup> Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Between Judaism and Christianity: The Semicircumcision of Christians According to Bernard Gui, His Sources and R. Eliezer of Metz,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 94, no. 3 (July 2001): 307.

<sup>234</sup> Farmer, *Syncretism*, 359, 28.32. “Ideo circumcisio fit octava die, quia est superior quam sponsa uniuniversalizata,” 358.

Circumcision takes precedence over the sabbath because it is above the *sponsa ornata vel universalizata*, and it is for this reason that circumcision is performed on the eighth day, in order that a sabbath should intervene; for there can be no span of eight days without a sabbath.<sup>235</sup>

Circumcision, represented by *Yesod*, is above *Malkuth*, the universal bride (*sponsa ornata vel universalizata*). Circumcision takes place on the eighth day of a boy's birth, no matter if it is a Sabbath, because it is more important to circumcise, as God commanded, than observe the Sabbath.<sup>236</sup> The principle of saving a life requires that one break one commandment for another. Additionally, Sabbath and circumcision are both signs of the covenant, so they are not contradictory. This material shows to what an extent Pico delved into the Jewish wisdom tradition, an intellectual exploration which potentially challenged the authority of the Church.

Pico sought what we might now term esoteric or occult wisdom. We must note two items. First, this search for ancient wisdom was a search for universal wisdom. Hebraists like Pico were not searching for particularly Jewish wisdom; they sought wisdom in any form, whether Pythagorean, Orphic, Hermetic, Zoroastrian, or Egyptian. They sought to create a universal harmonizing philosophical system related to the so-called Ancient Theology. Kristeller described the goal of this quite well: "Pico, with his study and praise of Kabbala, added another important dimension to the Platonic syncretism founded by Ficino and based on ancient Platonism and also on the so-called Ancient Theology that went under the names of Pythagoras, Orpheus, Zoroaster, and Hermes Trismegistus."<sup>237</sup> Pico's support of Judaism was peripheral, not central. Second,

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<sup>235</sup> Wirszubski, *Pico Della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*, 45, quoting Recanati, fol. 47vb.

<sup>236</sup> Intriguingly, Jesus was witness to this principle in John 7:23, *English Standard Version*, "If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?"

<sup>237</sup> Kristeller, "Introduction," xi.

many Christian Hebraists and Kabbalists believed that the wisdom they uncovered supported Christian belief. As Wirszubski wrote: “The notion that Jewish esoteric texts and doctrine confirmed Christianity was beginning to spread some time before Pico.”<sup>238</sup> Pico’s endeavors began the new subfield of Christian Kabbalah, a subset of Christian Hebraism, which sought to find doctrines such as the Trinity, Incarnation, and Resurrection hidden in Kabbalistic texts. Renaissance historian Kristeller stated that “Pico laid the ground for the Christian interpretation of the Kabbala which became so prominent with Reuchlin, Egidio da Viterbo and other sixteenth-century thinkers.”<sup>239</sup> Historian Matt Goldish wrote that, “even before the Reformation, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and his circle had discovered the Jewish Kabbalah, which they construed to be a repository of ancient wisdom along with Hermetic and Platonic texts.”<sup>240</sup> These Hebraists valued the three sources of ancient mysticism—Jewish, Hermetic, and Platonic—as fonts of wisdom. These men studied texts that the majority of Jews themselves did not study—as rabbis restricted learning Kabbalah to married, male Jews above the age of 40 due to the delicate, revelatory insights contained therein. This fact shows their strong commitment to truth, regardless of its Jewish origin. Although they may not have particularly cared for Jewish knowledge, the fact that they studied it shows that they did not disdain it either. An open curiosity could best describe these men.

### **Catholic Johann Reuchlin (1455 – 1522)<sup>241</sup>**

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<sup>238</sup> Wirszubski, *Pico Della Mirandola’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*, 10.

<sup>239</sup> Kristeller, “Introduction,” xi.

<sup>240</sup> Goldish, “Jewish History,” 130.

<sup>241</sup> Johannes Reuchlin, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books in Sixteenth-Century Germany: Johannes Reuchlin’s Augenspiegel*, ed. Bryn O’Callaghan (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Johann Reuchlin, *Recommendation Whether to Confiscate, Destroy, and Burn All Jewish Books: A Classic Treatise against Anti-Semitism*, trans. Peter Wortsman (New York: Paulist Press, 2000); Johannes Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*,

Reuchlin was the first German Hebraist of the Northern Renaissance. He was one of the first Christians to write a Hebrew dictionary and grammar in 1506. Reuchlin was remarkably polyglot: while Erasmus gave up on Hebrew but knew Greek fluently, and Luther read Hebrew, Latin, and German, Reuchlin read Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and German.<sup>242</sup> Johann Reuchlin held to Christian orthodoxy, yet advocated for the preservation of Jewish religious books. Nevertheless, this sympathy with Jewish sources was intended for the service of Christianity and did not lead to a lessening of anti-Jewish sentiments.

Reuchlin was born in Pforzheim, Baden, to the son of someone who worked for the local Dominican monastery, where Reuchlin learned Latin. He matriculated to the University of Freiburg-im-Breisgau on 19 May 1470, but he returned home after one course. He became a chorister and worked in the court of Charles I, Margrave of Baden. Reuchlin accompanied the Emperor's third son, Frederick, to the University of Paris, where he learned Greek; in Paris, Reuchlin beginning studying Hebrew alongside John Wessel of Gansfort. In 1474, at nineteen years of age, Reuchlin wrote *De verbo mirifico* (*On the Wonder-working Word*), although it was not published for twenty years. In the summer of 1474, Reuchlin attended the University of Basel, where he earned his BA in 1475 and MA in 1478. He chose a career in law and attended the Universities of Orléans and Poitiers, where he continued to study Greek and earned the licentiate in 1481. Reuchlin took the job of interpreter for Count Eberhard of Württemberg, who was travelling to Italy. In Florence, Reuchlin met Ficino in 1482. Reuchlin married and returned

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trans. M. Goodman and S. Goodman (New York, 1983). For the secondary literature on Reuchlin, see David Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Erika Rummel, *The Case against Johann Reuchlin: Religious and Social Controversy in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

<sup>242</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Age of Renaissance and Reformation*, trans. James I. Porter (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 20.

to Italy in 1490, where Pico encouraged him to study Hebrew. Reuchlin travelled to Linz, to Jacob Loans, the private physician to Emperor Frederick III, from whom Reuchlin took Hebrew lessons. He published *De verbo mirifico* on the Cabala in 1494, in which he defended Hebrew as pure, holy, and spotless. In 1496, the Bishop of Worms, Johan von Dalberg, commissioned Reuchlin to go to Heidelberg and translate Greek texts. Philip, Count Palatine of the Rhine, employed Reuchlin to teach his sons and sent him to Rome in 1498. Reuchlin stayed in Italy until 1500, where he employed Obadiah ben Jacob Sforno, the founder of a Talmudic school at Bologna, to continue teaching him Hebrew. He returned to Stuttgart and to his wife and he was appointed a judge of the Swabian League from 1500 to 1512. He died in Stuttgart 1522.<sup>243</sup>

Reuchlin's encounter with Pico stimulated him to study Hebrew more intensively than he had before. They met in 1490 in Florence, where Reuchlin was visiting on a diplomatic mission. He returned to Pforzheim fired up to learn Hebrew. He had studied some elementary Hebrew at the University of Paris in 1473 under John Wessel of Gansfort.<sup>244</sup> As early as 1486, he had learned the Hebrew alphabet and some vocabulary from a Jew named Calman, who also gave him Menaḥem ben Jacob ben Saruq's tenth-century Hebrew dictionary.<sup>245</sup> After meeting Pico, Reuchlin hired the Jewish physician to Emperor Frederick III, Jacob Jahiel Loans, to teach him Hebrew.<sup>246</sup> In his Hebrew grammar, Reuchlin referred to him as his "most humane teacher and

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<sup>243</sup> Arnold, *Great Humanists*, 125–26.

<sup>244</sup> This is according to Reuchlin's nephew Philip Melanchthon. *Corpus Reformatorum*, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider, vol. 11 (Halle: Schwetske & Sons, 1843), "Oratio continens historiam Ioannis Capnionis," col. 1002.

<sup>245</sup> Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. XIII: 182.

<sup>246</sup> Zimmer, "Jewish and Christian Hebraist collaboration," 70. Also see Baron, *Social*, XIII: 406, n. 24.

excellent man” and wrote him a Hebrew letter in 1500.<sup>247</sup> While in Rome from 1498 to 1500, he also employed the commentator Rabbi Obadiah ben Jacob Sforno, who had founded a *midrash Talmud* school in Bologna, for the same purpose.<sup>248</sup> In 1506, he published a Hebrew grammar and dictionary in three parts: *De rudimentis hebraicis*. In 1508, Reuchlin wrote that “not one of the Latins can expound the Old Testament unless he first becomes proficient in the language in which it was written.” In a pun off of 1 Timothy 2:5, he continued: “For the mediator between God and man was language, as we read in the Pentateuch; but not any language, only Hebrew, through which God wished his secrets to be made known to man.”<sup>249</sup> Reuchlin considered himself a philologist, not a theologian, writing, “I do not discuss the meaning.”<sup>250</sup> Reuchlin fittingly became known as an erudite Hebraist.

Johann Reuchlin’s position is paradoxical because he defended the Talmud from the book-burning of the Pfefferkorn affair. Resultantly, one might think he supported both Jews and Judaism. However, his feelings toward Jews were indifferent; his real concern was the preservation of Jewish literature, which he believed Christians could use to advance Christianity. Reuchlin especially loved Kabbalah. His use of Kabbalah did not conform to the Jewish interpretation of Kabbalah. In fact, he ignored the main ideas of Kabbalah (such as God’s emanation in the world) in order to focus on the extremely esoteric numerology. Friedman

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<sup>247</sup> Reuchlin, *De Rudimentis hebraicis Pforzheim*, 1506, p. 3 (reprint 1974): 619: “humanissimus praeceptor meus ille Jacobus Jehiel Loans doctor excellens.” The Hebrew letter is found in Ludwig Geiger, ed. *Briefwechsel* (Tübingen, 1875), no. 72, p. 67.

<sup>248</sup> Zimmer, “Jewish and Christian Hebraist collaboration,” 70.

<sup>249</sup> Jones, 10, quoting *Briefwechsel*, no. 102, p. 105. In this pun of 1 Timothy 2:5, Reuchlin replaced “Christ Jesus” with “language,” perhaps a reference to Jesus as the Word.

<sup>250</sup> He says this on page 123 of *De rudimentis Hebraicis*.

remarks that Reuchlin ignored the “areas dealing with systematic exegesis, emanationist theosophy, theories of creation, and even God’s relationship with the universe or man”; rather, he “was entranced by the technical and numerological methods used in such areas.”<sup>251</sup> “Reuchlin essentially borrowed the techniques and methods but left behind the Jewish framework in which these techniques were developed.”<sup>252</sup> However, he inherited the orthodox Jewish reverence for the Kabbalah, trusting that the second-century Talmudic sage Shimon bar Yoḥai had composed the *Zohar* in a cave while hiding in the mountains (instead of being the thirteenth-century creation of Moses de León, who first published it) and that God had revealed the Kabbalah (which means “tradition”) to Moshe alongside the Torah at Mt. Sinai.<sup>253</sup> These are the beliefs of Orthodox Jews regarding the antiquity of the Oral Torah to this day. Therefore, in some respects, Reuchlin sided with the rabbinic view.

Reuchlin’s Kabbalistic eagerness is most clear in his handling of the divine name. In the *De verbo mirifico* (1494), Reuchlin claimed to find the name of Jesus in the name of God. In Hebrew, the divine Name of God is the tetragrammaton, the four consonants which comprise his name. Jews do not pronounce the consonants, but pronounce the vowels from another word, *adonai*, which means “lord” or “master.” The Hebrew tetragrammaton is YHVH, יהוה. Jesus’s name in Hebrew is *Yeshua*, or *Jeschue* in German letters, ישוע, and is most commonly believed to be a shortened form of Joshua, *Yehoshua*, יהושע. Reuchlin proposed splicing a letter of Jesus’s name into YHVH, resulting in — יהשוה, YHSVH. Reuchlin vocalized this new penta-grammaton

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<sup>251</sup> Friedman, *Most Ancient*, 71

<sup>252</sup> Friedman, *Most Ancient*, 72.

<sup>253</sup> David Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 80.



as Yeschuah in the form of Jesus's Hebrew name.<sup>254</sup> Thereby, Reuchlin claimed that putting the Hebrew letter *shin* (ש) into YHVH proved Jesus's divinity. Historian David Price called this "an orthography that makes no sense etymologically and has no basis in Hebrew usage. Though unsalvageable, this catachresis informed both of Reuchlin's tracts on Christian Kabbalah."<sup>255</sup> A contemporary, the French Catholic humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, who had less Hebrew knowledge than Reuchlin, knew that the etymology was false, writing that "the Jews, however, would take our savior's name Jesus spelled yod,sin,vau,ayin [ישוע]. They would reject the other... yod,he,sin,vau,he [יהוה] as fictitious and too easily worked up by us."<sup>256</sup> Nevertheless, to Reuchlin, the addition of the *shin* represented the incarnation of Jesus and the *esh*, the fire of the Trinity. Reuchlin wrote: "When the Word descended into flesh, then the letters passed into voice."<sup>257</sup> As Jerome Friedman eloquently put it: "much as the Son assumed flesh and made God visible, so too did the Tetragrammaton assume an *s* in the middle and become pronounceable. Just as God became mundane in Jesus, the power of the Tetragrammaton passed from the transmundane to the mundane of the Pentagrammaton."<sup>258</sup> Friedman wondered if Reuchlin

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<sup>254</sup> The name of the Old Testament figure, Joshua, who brought the Israelites into the Promise Land does mean "Y(a)H is salvation." If ישוע (emphasis on first or middle syllable, YAY-shoo-ah, or yay-SHOO-ah) is a contracted form of יהושוע, then Jesus's name has the same meaning. To compound the confusion, a similar sounding Hebrew word ישועה, with emphasis on the final syllable, ye-shoo-AH) also means simply "salvation." Messianic Jews are quick to make the Jesus-salvation connection, while Jewish counter-missionaries are equally quick to stress the difference between the two Hebrew words.

<sup>255</sup> Price, *Reuchlin*, 63.

<sup>256</sup> Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Quincuplex Psalterium: Gallicum, romanum, hebraicum, vetus, conciliatum* (Paris, 1509), fol. 231, quoted in Friedman, *Most Ancient*, 81. Although ישוע is a Hebrew name and occurs in the *Tanakh* (not referring to Jesus), most Jewish rabbinic sources refer to Jesus as ישו, without the *ayin*. Some commentators explain that this is the original, Galilean pronunciation (a silent *ayin*); others argue that the rabbinic version is trying to discredit Jesus by making it an acronym for the curse *Y'mach Sh'mo V'Zichrono* ("may his name and his memory be blotted out").

<sup>257</sup> *De verbo mirifico*, f. G2<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>258</sup> Friedman, *Most Ancient*, 78.

believed that Jesus had power by means of knowing the divine, wonder-working name YHSVH or by means of *being* the divine name, that is, being God. Friedman concluded that *De verbo mirifico* was “unsophisticated, uneducated, and in the final analysis, un-Christian.”<sup>259</sup> Such an analysis shows disregard for Reuchlin’s eagerness for the Kabbalah.

His eagerness caused Reuchlin to make bizarre claims about the Sacred Name in *De verbo mirifico*. Instead of writing “Iesu” for Jesus, Reuchlin created his own *nomina sacra*. The medieval *nomen sacrum* for Jesus in manuscripts is  $\overline{\text{IHS}}$ . However, Reuchlin’s Christogram is  $\overline{\text{ih}}\text{su}$ , pronounced something like Yesuah. Reuchlin had God say to Moses: “I am Tetragrammaton, who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in god Sadai,”<sup>260</sup> a very literal rendering of the Hebrew. Reuchlin’s translation obscures the Hebrew Masoretic Text, which states, “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El [God] Shaddai, but I did not make Myself known to them by My name יהוה.”<sup>261</sup> Furthermore, Reuchlin stated that there is the ineffable name Trigrammaton, the Father Tetragrammaton, and the Son Pentagrammaton, “that is, in nature SDI, in rule ADNI, and in charity IHSVH.”<sup>262</sup> He purported a kind of modalism to God: God is Almighty in nature, Adonai (“lord”) in rulership, and Yeschuah in love. While he is correct that those three words in Hebrew have three, four, and five consonants, respectively, his

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<sup>259</sup> Friedman, *Most Ancient*, 81.

<sup>260</sup> *De verbo mirifico*, 97. “Ego sum Tetragrammus qui apparui Abraham: Ishac & Iacob in deo Sadai.”

<sup>261</sup> Exodus 6:3, *New Jewish Publican Society Translation* 1999. The Hebrew reads: וַאֲנִי אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב בָּאֵל שַׁדַּי וְשֵׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם: וַאֲלֵי־יַעֲקֹב בָּאֵל שַׁדַּי וְשֵׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם.

<sup>262</sup> *De verbo mirifico*, 97. “Per nomen auorum Trigrammaton: & patrum Tetragrammaton: & filiorum Pentagrammaton: id est in natura.SDI.In lege.ADNI.In charitate.IHSVH.”

spelling of the last is his own fabrication with no external Hebrew witnesses to back it up. His ingenious solution concerning words, magic, and Kabbalah shows his naïve zeal for Hebrew.

In *De verbo mirifico*, however, Reuchlin did show appreciation of Jews. Reuchlin wrote: “The Jews have made great contributions to our ability and often with greater justification we should imitate them more than other cultures, since according to the testimony of our forefathers their religions had a closer relation to divinity and worshiped God correctly.” Reuchlin believed that ancient Judaism was closer to God, and the forms and beliefs of contemporary Judaism were, in David Price’s paraphrase, “no longer attuned to the true God.”<sup>263</sup> Reuchlin further wrote that “the language of the Jews is simple, pure, uncorrupted, sacred, concise, and eternal, in which, it is said, God spoke in person with humans and humans with angels, not through an interpreter but face to face...as a friend speaks to a friend.”<sup>264</sup> It should be abundantly clear that Reuchlin loved Hebrew and supported it in every way. By 1510, he had secured a copy of the Talmud; by 1512, he had at least tractate *Sanhedrin*. He was able to incorporate this material into his letters and writings.<sup>265</sup> Salo Wittmayer Baron remarked that “Reuchlin’s familiarity with the Talmudic idiom in his later years was definitely more than elementary when compared with the level of most medieval Christian scholars, other than converts from Judaism,” and “his use of a varied Hebrew vocabulary was not a mere humanist affectation” due his qualitatively better use of Hebrew than other Christian writers.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Price, *Johannes Reuchlin*, 83.

<sup>264</sup> Quoted in Price, *Johannes Reuchlin*, 59, from Reuchlin, *De verbo mirifico*, 162–164. “Simplex autem sermo, purus, incorruptus, sanctus, brevis et constans Hebraeorum est, quo deus cum homine, et homines cum angelis locuti perhibentur coram et non per interpretem, facie ad faciem...sicut solet amicus loqui cum amico.”

<sup>265</sup> Baron, *Social and Religious*, XIII: 183.

<sup>266</sup> Baron, *Social and Religious*, XIII: 407, n. 25.

However, Reuchlin's negative statements about Jews counterbalanced his enthusiasm for the Hebrew language. *De verbo mirifico* included a trialogue (or *sectarum controversia*, "controversy between sects") between Sidon, former Epicurean and spokesman for pagan philosophy; Baruch, a learned Jew; and Capnion (the Greek form of Reuchlin's name), a Christian representing Reuchlin. Before Baruch can repent and be baptized, which is the dénouement according to John Edwards, Baruch must forswear Talmud.<sup>267</sup> Reuchlin permits him, however, to keep Hebrew and Kabbalah, a sign of Reuchlin's fondness for those. Capnion states: "You [Jews] have subverted the Holy Books, therefore you rattle off your prayers in vain, because you speak to Him in self-made prayer, not in the way God wants to be worshipped. At the same time you hate us, us the true worshippers of God. You hate us with never-ending hatred."<sup>268</sup> Reuchlin criticized Jews' traditional prayers and claimed that they hate Christians. Capnion prays the Good Friday prayer about the "perfidious Jews" and adds, "I pray to God that he will illumine and convert them to the right faith, so that they are liberated from captivity by the Devil....Once they acknowledge Jesus to be the true Messiah, everything will turn to their good in this world and in the world to come. Amen."<sup>269</sup> Reuchlin believed that Judaism did not have validity.

In the Pfefferkorn affair (1509-1520), Reuchlin defended Jewish books against its ironically Jewish enemy. The Jewish convert Johann Pfefferkorn had wanted all Hebrew books to be seized and burnt, except the Hebrew Bible, which he permitted. Reuchlin responded to

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<sup>267</sup> John Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe, 1400–1700*, Christianity and Society in the Modern World (London: Routledge, 1988), 53.

<sup>268</sup> Quoted in Edwards, *Jews in Christian Europe*, 53.

<sup>269</sup> Quoted in Edwards, *Jews in Christian Europe*, 53.

Pfefferkorn's *Handtspiegel* (Mainz, 1511) with an *Augenspiegel* (Tübingen, 1511) of his own.<sup>270</sup> Reuchlin's report approved the following Jewish books: the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Scriptures, or *Tanakh*; the *Talmud*; the *Kabbalah*; the *perush* (general commentary on the *Torah*); the *midrash* (essentially, all the sermons of Jewish rabbis on *Torah texts*, referred to collectively); the *sefarim* (which just means books, and refers to any books by learned Jews); and the *aggadah* (which he defines as "poetry, fables, tales, satires, and didactic manuals," which, Reuchlin claimed, "the majority of Jews consider these to be fictitious and false").<sup>271</sup> Reuchlin only considered the *Sefer Nizzahon* (Book of Victory) and the *Toldoth Jeschu haNozri* (The Tale of Jesus of Nazareth) to be blasphemous.<sup>272</sup> Even Jews considered these books apocryphal, he said, and "such books were appropriated and destroyed by the Jews themselves and it has been forbidden to write these kind of books or debate them ever since."<sup>273</sup> Reuchlin approved of all Jewish books except those that explicitly criticized Jesus and Christian belief.

Reuchlin criticized *Sefer Nizzahon* and the *Toldoth Jeschu haNozri* because they countered and mocked Christian orthodoxy. Both books discredited the divinity of Jesus and his miraculous conception. The *Sefer Nizzahon* challenged Jesus' purity of mind, stating that Jesus wanted to have sex with the woman at the well in the Gospel of John 4: "he asked her for

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<sup>270</sup> Doctor Johannsen Reuchlins / der K.M. als Ertzhertzogen zu Osterreich auch Chur/fürsten vnd fürsten gemainen bundtrichters inn / Schwaben warhaftige entschuldigung / gegen und wider ains getauften iuden / genant Pfeferkorn vormals ge / truckt ußgangen unwarhaf / tigs schmachbüchlin/ AUGENSPIEGEL/ (Thomas Anshelm, Tübingen, August–September 1511). The *Augenspiegel* is translated in Bryn O'Callaghan, ed. and trans., *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books in Sixteenth-Century Germany: Johannes Reuchlin's Augenspiegel* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), and earlier in Johann Reuchlin, *Recommendation Whether to Confiscate, Destroy, and Burn All Jewish Books: A Classic Treatise against Anti-Semitism*, trans. Peter Wortsman (New York: Paulist Press, 2000).

<sup>271</sup> Johannes Reuchlin, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books in Sixteenth-Century Germany: Johannes Reuchlin's Augenspiegel*, ed. Bryn O'Callaghan (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 123-125.

<sup>272</sup> Reuchlin, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books*, 125.

<sup>273</sup> Reuchlin, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books*, 125-126.

something shameful, namely, to have relations with her.”<sup>274</sup> The book also inquired why Jesus could not save his mother from death, which is not in the Gospels: “If he was God, why did he kill his mother?”<sup>275</sup>! “We, the children of Israel, testify that the hanged one was a human being born of a mother and father.”<sup>276</sup> While the *Nizzahon* is more the pointed ponderings of an anonymous Jew, the *Toldoth Jeschu* (“the story of Jesus of Nazareth”) is a Jewish satirical anti-gospel. In it, Jesus is essentially the bastard son of a menstruous woman—a double accusation, which breaks Jewish law on two separate counts. While Mary is betrothed to a man named John, a Roman soldier named Joseph, son of Pandera, impregnates Mary.<sup>277</sup> The text also portrays Jesus as a sorcerer who tattooed the divine Names into his flesh (a grave sin in Jewish law) and

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<sup>274</sup> David Berger, trans. and ed., *Nizzahon: The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus, with Introduction* (Philadelphia, 1979), 192, § 185. The anonymous author of the *Nizzahon* reasoned that Jesus would not have asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water unless he intended something suggestive; and that the disciples were “amazed” at him when they returned, suggested they suspected him. Even Martin Luther, the founder of Protestant Christianity, remarked that “pious Christ himself” had committed adultery with the woman at the well, as well as with Mary Magdalene and the adulteress. One wonders if there is a deeper cultural play at work. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden*, vol. 2 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1913), 107, § 1472.

„Christus ist am ersten ein ebrecher worden Joh. 4. bei dem brunn cum muliere, quia illi dicebant: Nemo significat, quid facit cum ea? Item cum Magdalena, item cum adultera. Ioan. 8., die er so leicht dauon lies. Also mus der from Christum auch am ersten ein ebrecher werden, ehe er starb.”

“Christ became the first adulterer, John 4, at the well with the woman, because they said: No one, signifies, what does he do with her? Also, with Magdalen, also with the adulteress, John 8, from which he reads so easily. So the first one to become an adulterer, before he died, was Christ.”

<sup>275</sup> Berger, *Nizzahon* 201, § 200.

<sup>276</sup> Berger, *Nizzahon* 203, § 204.

<sup>277</sup> Hugh J. Schonfield, *According to the Hebrews: A New Translation of the Jewish Life of Jesus (the Toldoth Jeshu), with an inquiry into the nature of its sources and special relationship to the Lost Gospel according to the Hebrew* (London: Duckworth, 1937), 35; *Toldoth Jeschu* 1:5. For the modern edition, see *Toledot Yeschu: The Life Story of Jesus: Two volumes and database*, ed. and trans. Michael Meerson, Peter Schäfer, Yaacov Deutsch, David Grossberg, Avigail Manekin, and Adina Yoffie, vol. 1: Introduction and Translation, vol. 2: Critical Edition. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 159 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), and *Toledot Yeschu* (“The Life Story of Jesus”) *Revisited: A Princeton Conference*, ed. Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson, and Yaacov Deutsch, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 143 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011). This motif also occurs in Talmudic literature.

engaged in a sky-battle with Judas Iscariot, who won by “acting foully and polluting Jesus.”<sup>278</sup>

Reuchlin did not want pious Christians (or anyone) reading these two books.

In the *Augenspiegel*, Reuchlin recommended that only the books that dishonor Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary should be burned. He gave his judgement that, “if a book were to be found on a Jewish person, and that person being aware that such a book has been directly and maliciously written to shame, disgrace and dishonour Our Lord Jesus, His honourable mother, the saints or our Christian laws, then according to Imperial Decree it should be confiscated and burnt, and that same Jew punished for having failed to tear, burn or suppress it himself.”<sup>279</sup> At each point Reuchlin justifies his opinion with civil law and various law codes, such as Justinian’s. Reuchlin was determined to honor Jesus through Jewish texts.

Reuchlin’s 1517 work *De arte cabalistica* reveals his universalistic, Pythagorean desires. In the narrative framework, the narrator, Capnion, narrates a triologue on the Kabbalah between three philosophers: the Jew Simon, the Christian Philolaus, and the Muslim Marranus. Capnion dedicated the book to Pope Leo X, explaining that this resurgence in Pythagorean learning is due to the benevolence of the Medici in Florence. He well described the spirit of the Italian Renaissance and humanism: “Zealously [Lorenzo] brought to his country learned men from every land, men familiar with the ancient authors, whose fluency equaled their scholarship.” Capnion listed the humanists: Demetrius Chalcondyles, Marsilio Ficino, Giorgio Vespuccio, Christoforo Landino, Valla, Angelo Poliziano, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Capnion praised these Renaissance men, through whom “the wisdom of the ancients, by misfortune lost or

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<sup>278</sup> Schonfield, *According to the Hebrews*, 45; Toldoth Jeschu 3:31.

<sup>279</sup> Reuchlin, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books*, 126.

hidden, [was] restored to the light of day.”<sup>280</sup> Capnion revealed the Pythagorean nature of his undertaking, whose work lay untouched except in the Laurentian Academy. “I thought it might give you [Leo] pleasure if I brought to light the beliefs of Pythagoras and his followers, that you might enjoy unknown authors in the Latin.” Capnion explains how Marsilio Ficino had published Plato, Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples had translated Aristotle, and now “I shall complete the pattern and for Germany I, Capnion, shall bring out the reborn Pythagoras.” Reuchlin found Pythagorean thought in Hebrew sources: “His philosophy, however, I have only been able to glean from the Hebrew Kabbalah, since it derives in origin from the teachers of the Kabbalah, and then was lost to our ancestors, disappearing from Southern Italy into the Kabbalistic writings.”<sup>281</sup> Like Pico, Reuchlin’s desires were entirely universalistic in nature. He sought Hebrew learning only because it provided a way to find the ultimate philosophical system.

Reuchlin’s characters reflected his interfaith, harmonizing tendencies. In the tale, two men come to Frankfurt in order to meet the Jew Simon ben Eleazer, a descendant of Shimon ben Yohai, the alleged author of the *Zohar*, thus a master of Kabbalah. Philolaus (“lover of the people”) described himself as an Alan by nationality, a nomadic people group of the Caucasus attested in Roman and Chinese sources, and “by persuasion a Pythagorean.” Marranus (“*marrano*,” the derogatory word for converts in Spain meaning “swine”), a Muslim, hails from Constantinople and describes himself as “both baptized and circumcized, and am equally schooled in the Law of Moses and in Christian teachings.” Marranus states that his name means Cerinthian and Ebion, which were both Jewish–Christian sects of the early centuries Common

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<sup>280</sup> Johann Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, trans. Martin and Sarah Goodman (New York: Abaris Books, 1983), 37.

<sup>281</sup> Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, 39.



Era, which the hegemonic self-styled orthodox church(es) described as heretical.<sup>282</sup> Ebion, whose name means “poor” in Hebrew, kept the Sabbath, circumcision, immersion, and taught that Christ is begotten of the seed of Joseph. According to the fourth-century Jewish–Christian Palestinian patristic writer Epiphanius, “since he is practically midway between all the sects, he is nothing”; and “while professing to be a Jew, he is the opposite of Jews—though he does agree with them in part.”<sup>283</sup> The fact that Reuchlin decided to link Marranus with these Jewish–Christian sects demonstrates that he approved of the mixing of these religions, all the more so having him baptized and circumcised. Marranus is both a Christian, a Jew, and a Muslim in one person; he is a keeper of the Law of Moses and a follower of Christ; he is the ultimate. Perhaps Reuchlin saw Marranus as the ideal religious person, someone who combined identities from various religions to arrive at the absolute truth.

The dialogue in Book I mostly consists of Simon explicating Kabbalah and the Divine Name to Philolaus and Marranus, with their interjecting questions. At one point, Simon explains that the Kabbalists referred to the Messiah by the “unpronounceable” name YHWH, the divine name for God. Therefore, Reuchlin has the Jew stating that they believe the Messiah is divine. At this point, Simon explains that the words “in mercy” appear “in the middle of the Messiah’s proper name, *YHWH*.” He states that this secret letter is *S*, which represents “mercy” and

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<sup>282</sup> According to Epiphanius, Cerinthus had taught “partial adherence to Judaism,” that an angel who made the world gave the Law of Moses, and that Jesus was the natural offspring of Joseph and Mary, to whom Christ, “meaning the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove,” appeared and revealed to him “the unknowable Father”; Jesus suffered and rose again, but Christ left him on high without suffering. Epiphanius, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book I (Sects 1-46)*, ed. James M. Robinson, trans. Frank Williams, Nag Hammadi Studies 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 107, 28.1.2-7.

<sup>283</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 120–21, 30.1.4-3.1.

“clemency,” numerically.<sup>284</sup> Simon explains no further in Book I. In Book II, Philolaus and Marranus take leave of Simon and speak on their own. Interesting for the time (1517) that Reuchlin quotes from the Qur’an, from Surahs 51, 63, and 64, with Marranus refuting the idea of literal virgins in paradise.<sup>285</sup> Marranus states, “the gods are natural; the gods’ gods are supernatural.” The gods’ gods (*dii deorum*) are “never found in our world unless they have been sent here, and so they rejoice in the name of angels on their descents to these lower regions, for they are the messengers of the king of kings.” “The Great and High God dwells deep within every lowest and highest and middle thing to the extent that nothing is a being without God.”<sup>286</sup> He states that these doctrines, including the doctrine of the “household god,” or familiar spirit, come from the so-called Ancient Theology.<sup>287</sup> “All this comes to us from Pythagoras, who himself got it partly from the Egyptians, partly from the Hebrews and Chaldees, partly from the deeply learned Persian Magians.” Hermes Trismegistus, “the famous Egyptian lawgiver and a very perspicacious writer,” wrote it down, as well as Timaeus, Hesiod, Plato, Socrates, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, Plotinus, Maximus of Tyre, Cicero, and Apuleius of Madaura.<sup>288</sup>

In Book III of *De Arte Cabalistica*, Simon rejoins Philolaus and Marranus and proves Christianity. Simon reveals the 32 paths of Kabbalistic wisdom and the 72 sacred names of God.

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<sup>284</sup> Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, 113, 115.

<sup>285</sup> Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, 203.

<sup>286</sup> Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, 211.

<sup>287</sup> For a modern rebuttal of the antiquity of the so-called Ancient Theology, see Mary Lefkowitz, *Not out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (New York: Basic Books, 1997). Lefkowitz demonstrated that these ideas arose with the ancient Greeks, who wanted to trace their own ideas back to Egypt to give them more credibility.

<sup>288</sup> Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, 213.

Reuchlin has Simon refer to his own book: “But the Tetragrammaton did not inform them that the name Tetragrammaton is the name through which a man can effect miracles, by acting as a fellow-worker and as a delegate from God. A clearer account of this is given in Capnion’s book *On the Wonder-working Word*.”<sup>289</sup> Finally, Marranus reveals the wonder-working word at the end of the dialogue by stating that the Cross is the most efficacious symbol:

All that the Kabbalists can do through the ineffable Name with the signs and characters you have just shown us, can be done in a much stronger way by faithful Christians through the effable name *IESV* with the sign of the Cross that belongs to it. They believe that they have much the best pronunciation of the Name of the Tetragrammaton in the name of *YHSVH*, the true Messiah,

the unfounded pronunciation Reuchlin had advanced in *The Wonder-working Word*. Marranus gives a jab to Jews who refuse to believe in Jesus: “to this end [the Christian Hebraists] cite what your people have written in Midrash Tehillim: ‘Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said in the name of Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair: Why do Israel pray in this world and are not heard? Because they do not know the Semhamphores, that is, the Tetragrammaton.’”<sup>290</sup> Marranus thus shows that Jews rejected the true Tetragrammaton, *YHSVH*, i.e., Jesus. Simon responds that the words *cross* and *tree* in Hebrew have the numerical valence of 153. He adds, “But I put a finger to my lips. Time is brief, my good friends, and I am restricted from saying all I might wish,” thereby leaving open the possibility that Simon is a secret Jesus-follower. Thus, Reuchlin had Simon the Jew prove Christianity in this trialogue.

Though strange and uneven, *De arte cabalistica* is an erudite work. Reuchlin had to immerse himself completely into Hebraica and Kabbalah for many years in order to write this

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<sup>289</sup> Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, 309.

<sup>290</sup> Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, 353.

dense and learned work. He cited a myriad of rabbinic and Kabbalistic authors. While he wrote the text in Latin, every time he referenced a Hebrew work or word he quoted the Hebrew original in the text. At points, there are whole pages of Hebrew text. Besides the fact that his audience, Pope Leo X, did not read Hebrew, Reuchlin's humanist background made it imperative for him to quote from the original. While Reuchlin believed that Christianity was superior to Judaism, he delved into Jewish learning to produce his works. Whole works about such learning cannot be considered anything other than Philo-semitic.<sup>291</sup>

In the final years of his life, Reuchlin took professorships at the University of Ingolstadt (1520 – 1521) and at Tübingen (1521 – 1522). He claimed that more than four hundred students packed into his Hebrew and Greek classes. His *Rudiments of Hebrew* had ensured his popularity, but it was too expensive to have the students buy as a textbook, so instead he used Moses Kimḥi's *Mahalakh* without any Christian varnish whatsoever. The men who passed through his classes continued the tradition of Christian Hebraism, including Conrad Pellican, Sebastian Münster, Johannes Oecolampadius, Johannes Cellarius, Jacob Ceperinus, and Johann Forster. However, this trajectory went two ways, despite Reuchlin's endorsement of rabbinic scholarship. Some, such as Sebastian Münster, cited rabbinic sources, inducing Luther to label him a Judaizer. Another former student of Reuchlin, Johann Forster, produced a Hebrew lexicon whose title page stated it contained information only from Holy Scripture "without the lies of the rabbis."<sup>292</sup> Thus, Reuchlin's own ambiguity led his followers to go two different ways—to endorse rabbinic sources or to create an über-Christian Hebraism.

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<sup>291</sup> Abraham Melamed, "The Revival of Christian Hebraism in Early Modern Europe," in *Philosemitism in History*, ed. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 66, 65.

<sup>292</sup> Price, *Johannes Reuchlin*, 77.

While we might conclude that Reuchlin supported Jews, Reformation historian Heiko A. Oberman argued the opposite: “The great ‘watershed’ Johannes Reuchlin did not defend the Talmudic books because of concern for the Jews or reverence for the Talmudic tradition of as an expression of Jewish faith.” Rather, Reuchlin, according to Oberman, “wanted to save these books from Pfefferkorn’s fire as crucial linguistic resources for the understanding of the Old Testament. They had therefore to be preserved for posterity, not in Jewish hands but preferably in episcopal libraries.”<sup>293</sup> Analyzing *De arte cabalistica*, which Oberman did not cite, confirms Oberman’s thesis: Reuchlin’s eagerness to study Jewish texts did not extend to nurture Jewish souls but preserving Jewish books to nurture Christian souls. Studying Jewish texts gave Christians better understanding of the Old Testament and, therefore, of Christianity.

When Jewish works become divorced from Jewish bodies and Jewish minds, the Jewish texts become sites of Christian colonization, misinterpretation, and, in some cases, even anti-Judaism. One could use the passages in the Kabbalah to prove the Trinity and use that understanding as a weapon against Jews and Judaism. As Oberman argued, Reuchlin “remained true to his program from the very beginning: his defense was not meant for impenitent Jew [*sic.*] or the Jewish Talmud, but rather for the gaining unblocked access to the sources of the Christian cabala.” While Jews were “inimical to our faith,” they were also *concives*, legal equals, in Reuchlin’s two-kingdom understanding. But if they did not show repentance, they ought to be expelled.<sup>294</sup> Reuchlin cared about Jewish bodies to the extent to which they conformed to

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<sup>293</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, “Discovery of Hebrew and Discrimination against the Jews: The *Veritas Hebraica* as Double-Edged Sword in Renaissance and Reformation,” in *Germania Illustrata: Essays on Early Modern Germany Presented to Gerald Strauss*, ed. Andrew C. Fix and Susan Karant-Nunn (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992), 32-33.

<sup>294</sup> Oberman, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism*, 30-31.

Christian and legal morality and allowed access to Jewish texts, texts which he used for his own ends. In another sense, Reuchlin really only cared about the learning itself and not its source. As he expressed in *De arte cabalistica*, he sought Pythagoras, but that truth lay dormant in Hebrew Kabbalah, so he had to go there. However, he defended Jewish books in an age when others wished to burn them. For that reason, he was one of the positive Christian Hebraists.

### **Catholic Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1469 – 1536)**

Even though Erasmus never learned Hebrew fully, his inclusion here as a humanist serves as a contrast to understand the ways in which Renaissance humanism led to Hebraism, and because the debate around him shows us the dangers of trying to use someone's words from the time to either prove they were or were not anti-Semitic. Erasmus wrote many dialogues, colloquies, and biblical commentaries, all of which touch on Jews in one way or another. Erasmus's comments about Jews have produced considerable debate. There is not one, coherent statement that Erasmus made regarding Jews; rather, he made flippant remarks here and there that give the impression that he was indifferent regarding Jews as people. I examine his correspondence because Tremellius and others employed Erasmian humanism and text criticism. My conclusions about Erasmus's views are not exhaustive—that would be a book in its own right—rather, I illuminate what he said about Jews to others, which may skew the results more negatively as he tried to provoke other's sympathy. Erasmus used the characteristic that he often termed "Judaism," to refer to rote, dead formalism in the church that he feared was infecting Christianity, whether the referent of his sentence was a Jew or not.

The most famous humanist, Erasmus was born illegitimately to Gerard of Gouda, a priest, and Margaretha Rogers, the daughter of a physician in 1468. He and his brother were schooled in Gouda and, from the age of nine, in Deventer. His mother died when he was thirteen and his

father shortly thereafter, leaving him orphaned. The Brethren of the Common Life taught him. Due to his small inheritance, his guardians urged him to enter the Augustinian canons at Steyn in 1487, where he learned Greek, classics, and patristics. He became a priest in 1492. The bishop and then papal bulls gave him dispensation to leave the monastery, so he could become secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai. He never made it, instead studying under the bishop's command in Paris. Not completing his doctorate, Erasmus went to England in 1499 with William Blount, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Mountjoy (d. 1534), where he developed a humanist following (John Colet, Thomas More, Thomas Linacre, William Grocyn, Thomas Lupset). He returned to Paris and Louvain and refused a professorship but immersed himself in Greek. While at a monastery in Louvain in 1504, he discovered a manuscript of Lorenzo Valla, a humanist who had applied the critical methods of studying classical texts to biblical scholarship and to the writings of the church fathers. This manuscript, *Adnotationes*, compared the Latin Vulgate of several passages with Greek manuscripts, a process known as text criticism. Erasmus published Valla's work in 1505 and devoted his life to text criticism. Erasmus applied Valla's text critical principles to the entire New Testament more consistently and comprehensively than Valla ever did.<sup>295</sup> In 1504, Erasmus wrote a letter from Paris to his dear friend Colet, stating that he had spent the last three years, "not altogether wasted," studying Greek and reading the church father Origen. Erasmus then narrates: "I began to take up Hebrew as well, but stopped because I was put off by the strangeness of the language, and at the same time the shortness of life and the limitations of human nature will not allow a man to master too many things at once." Erasmus's reference to the "strangeness" of Hebrew does not shine much light into his thoughts about Jews, but simply

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<sup>295</sup> Cornelis Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence*, trans. J. C. Grayson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 39, 191.

shows how many mental obstacles a potential Hebraist had to overcome in order to learn that holy tongue.

He went to Italy and received a doctorate in theology at Turin on 4 September 1506. He continued his Greek studies at Bologna, published a Latin translation of Euripides, and joined the “new academy” in Venice. Mountjoy induced him to return to England in 1509 at Henry VIII’s accession, where he stayed at Thomas More’s house and wrote his famed *In Praise of Folly*. Erasmus became the first professor of Greek at Cambridge, with little financial support, so he went to Basel in 1514. In Basel, he prepared his New Testament translation, which included the variant text critical skills he had received from Valla. In 1516, Froben published his New Testament with Greek text from various manuscripts, his Latin translation, and annotations; it went through five editions during his lifetime (1516, 1519, 1522, 1529, and 1535) and became the basis for the so-called *Textus Receptus* of the Greek New Testament and of the King James Bible (1611). In 1516, Erasmus took an invitation as royal councilor to the court of the future Charles V in Brussels. In 1517, a papal brief freed him of all obligations to the Steyn monastery, so he resumed his wanderings and settled at Froben’s house at Basel in 1521. To keep his intellectual independence, he refused offers from Francis I at Paris, Archduke Ferdinand at Vienna, and Henry VIII in England. In 1529, the Reformation came to Basel, and he fled to Freiburg-im-Breisgau, where he died in 1535, having advocated religious peace. In addition to *Praise of Folly* and *Novum Testamentum*, he wrote a myriad of other works, most famously *Colloquies* and *Enchiridion militis Christiani (Handbook of the Christian Soldier)*.

Scholars have long debated the significance of Erasmus’s writings on Jews. Some have stated that his words revealed a fundamental hatred of Jews. For example, Guido Kisch charged



that Erasmus held a “deeply rooted, unbounded hatred for Jews.”<sup>296</sup> Émile Villemeur Telle stated that Judaism meant to Erasmus everything “that he did not like...all that seemed to him senseless, outdated, burdensome, or the [*sic.*] blind obedience to human rules.”<sup>297</sup> Others have argued that his words reveal his own cavalier attitude towards Jews, not an intractable Jew-hatred. Heiko Oberman, for example, cited evidence that Erasmus used *Jew* flippantly, stating “should someone fall from favor with Erasmus, as in the case of the papal nuntius Aleander, the explanation was readily at hand: the man must be a Jew.”<sup>298</sup> Oberman did not attach much weight to Erasmus’s use of *Jew*; it signified his frustration with society and did not condemn actual Jews. Erasmus scholar Shimon Markish, drawing on the interpretation of Émile Villemeur Telle agreed with Oberman’s minimization of Erasmus’ anti-Jewish views, but they add a spin: Markish and Tell argued that whenever Erasmus spoke of Jews and Judaism, Erasmus meant formalized, dead, monkish traditions, not that Christians were actually converting to Judaism. Markish admitted that “there is no doubt that anti-Judaism belongs to the defining particularities of Erasmus’ world view,” adding that Telle is “absolutely correct to speak of the ‘anti-Judaic evangelism’ in Erasmus.”<sup>299</sup> Markish subtly distinguishes between anti-Judaism arising out of hatred of Jews versus anti-Judaism arising out of inherited tradition: “However, to see this anti-Judaism as the result of hatred for Jews and their religion, as Telle does, means to simplify

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<sup>296</sup> Guido Kisch, *Erasmus’ Stellung zu Juden und Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1969), 29, quoted in Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Age of Renaissance and Reformation*, trans. James I. Porter (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 38.

<sup>297</sup> Émile Telle, *Érasme de Rotterdam et le septième sacrement: étude d’évangélisme matrimonial au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et contribution à la biographie intellectuelle d’Érasme* (Geneva: Droz, 1954), 194.

<sup>298</sup> Oberman, *Roots of Anti-Semitism*, 38.

<sup>299</sup> Shimon Markish, *Erasmus and the Jews*, with an afterword by Arthur A. Cohen, trans. Anthony Olcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 25, quoting, Telle, *Érasme*, 86.

unforgivably a complex and contradictory subject, as well as, in part, to confuse cause and effect.”<sup>300</sup> Markish summarized his own interpretation of Erasmus: “For Erasmus ‘new paganism’ is a danger no less real and, apparently, no less dangerous than ‘new Judaism,’ as is demonstrated by the *Ciceronianus* and the whole line of struggle against the ‘Ciceronian apes,’ as well as by the many remarks, in several other contexts, including some having to do with Judaism.”<sup>301</sup>

A study of Erasmus’s letters from 1501 to 1527 supports the general conclusions of Markish and Oberman. Most of the time, Erasmus used the charge of “Judaism” against other Christians when he found their theology to be stuck in legal formalism. The lens of medievalist David Nirenberg illuminates the anti-Jewish tropes that Markish and Oberman overlooked. Nirenberg’s *Anti-Judaism in the Western Tradition* argued that non-Jewish nations used the language of *Judaism* to describe that from which they separated themselves.<sup>302</sup> Erasmus used *Judaism* to describe that which he most disliked about Christianity—formalism and ritualism—but in the process he alienated and otherized Jews.

Erasmus’s references to *Jews* and *Judaism* in his correspondence have overwhelmingly negative valence; he repeated tropes from an inherited anti-Judaism that permeated late medieval and early modern Christian European culture. We can divide Erasmus’s references to Judaism into three categories, although the categorization has overlaps: Erasmus calling monastic formalism “Judaism,” Erasmus referring to the influence of “Judaism” on Christianity, and

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<sup>300</sup> Markish, *Erasmus*, 25.

<sup>301</sup> Markish, *Erasmus*, 25-26.

<sup>302</sup> Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, 1–12.

Erasmus referring to individual Jews. In each case, Erasmus only associated Jews and Judaism with a negative valence, showing that he otherized Judaism, as Nirenberg indicated.

Erasmus's correspondence has a myriad of references to Judaism. In the first volume of his edited correspondence from 1481 to 1500, he made no references to Jews. From 1501 on, he made many, and one can only speculate on what caused this shift. Since his friend John Colet's lectures on the Epistles of Paul at Oxford in 1499 deeply influenced Erasmus and Colet argued that Hebrew signs and ceremonies made no difference unless a Jew believed in Christ, it is certainly plausible that Colet's inspiration got Erasmus to start thinking about Jews in relationship to Christianity and the New Covenant.<sup>303</sup> The vast majority of references are negative. One of the few non-negative references was early on, in a 1501 letter to Antoon van Bergen, abbot of St. Bertin, Erasmus made neutral references to Jews paying money for Jesus's body and a reference to Jewish law prohibiting necromancy.<sup>304</sup>

The first category of Erasmian references to Judaism is when Erasmus used the language of *Jews* and *Judaism* but was actually referring to ritual and monasticism within Christianity. In a letter to John Colet in 1504, Erasmus referred to Judaism as a ritualistic tendency in the church: "The *Enchiridion* I composed not in order to show off my cleverness or my style, but solely in order to counteract the errors of those who make religion in general consist in rituals and observances of an almost more than Jewish formality, but who are astonishingly indifferent to

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<sup>303</sup> For Colet's influence on Erasmus, see Augustijn, *Erasmus*, 32–33; For Colet's views on Jews, see Peter Iver Kaufman, "John Colet and Erasmus' *Enchiridion*," *Church History* 46, no. 3 (1977): 302–3, doi:10.2307/3164130.

<sup>304</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 142 to 297, 1501 to 1514*, ed. Wallace K. Ferguson, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, The Collected Works of Erasmus, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 5–6, 9; letter 143.

matters that have to do with true goodness.”<sup>305</sup> Here, Erasmus equated Judaism with dead formality, rituals, and observances and the lack of personal integrity, but he imagined the public for whom he wrote as exceeding in dead formality beyond the level of Judaism. Thus, Judaism has a certain level of formality, but certain religious Catholics maintained an even greater, and therefore, in his mind, worse sense of formalism.

Erasmus identified the monastic situation in which he had operated as purveying a form of “Judaism” in this sense of stultifying obedience to tradition. In a letter from Hammes Castle at 8 July 1514 to his prior Servatius Rogerus, prior of Steyn since 1504, Erasmus apologized for not returning to the monastery. Among other reasons, they would not let him study literature (*littera*). “And I will not deny that I had a tendency to grievous faults; however my nature was not so corrupt that I could not have been led to yield a harvest of good, given a suitable director, one who was truly Christian, not full of Jewish scruples” (*non Iudaice superstitiosus*). In Erasmus’s mind, the novitiates and priests with whom he interacted in the monastery propagated not Christian faith but Jewish superstitions. Erasmus later stated: “Again, if you turn towards approved, even highly approved, practices, I do not know what picture of Christ you could find there, beyond cold and Judaic rites.”<sup>306</sup> Following religious practices leads to a stale Christianity, and Erasmus identified *coldness* with *Judaic rites*, suggesting that he used Judaism as foil for true, vibrant, evangelical Christianity as opposed to ritualistic, monastic, formalistic, legalistic Catholicism.

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<sup>305</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 142 to 297, 1501 to 1514*, 87; letter 181.

<sup>306</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 142 to 297, 1501 to 1514*, 295, 296–97, letter 296.

Erasmus reiterated this same idea throughout his letters: monasteries bred Judaism. Erasmus stated that he did not wish to admonish the Franciscans “for being devoted to their own rule and the Benedictines for devotion to theirs.” Rather, he objected that “some of them think their rule more important than the Gospel.” Erasmus continued that these monks maintained what he saw as a “Jewish” spirit of hypocrisy: “I do not attack them because some live on fish, some on vegetables and salads, and some on eggs; but I do point out that those men make a grievous mistake who, in a Jewish spirit, flatter themselves in things like this that they are just, while those same men count it no fault at all to make lying attacks on another man’s fair fame.”<sup>307</sup> Erasmus referred to monastic discipline as keeping people in “Judaism”: “And if two or three of them have misused this liberty, it is not right from this reason to keep them all without more ado in perpetual Judaism.”<sup>308</sup> In each case, Erasmus used the charge of “Judaism” to counter to specific attacks against himself by members of religious orders. In that way, Erasmus employed the language of Jews and Judaism with little actual denotative reference. Judaism was a negative foil for Erasmus against which he pitted Christianity.

In a variety of letters, Erasmus used the term *rabbis* in a sarcastic sense to refer to priests and others who took it upon themselves to decide dogma: “And these are the reverend rabbis, the salt of the earth, the light of the world, whose opinion decides whether we are Christians or not, who in succession to the apostles dictate to us new articles of faith, who hand us down oracles

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<sup>307</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, ed. Peter G. Bietenholz, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 86; letter 858.

<sup>308</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, 87; letter 858.

like divine beings and do not deign to give us mere mortals any reason for their opinions.”<sup>309</sup>

Similarly, in a 1520 letter to the rector of the University of Louvain Godschalk Rosemond, Erasmus used rabbis in a sarcastic and negative sense: “With all these thousands of rabbis, these thousands of men who think themselves god, not one was found to give Luther a sober and scholarly reply, whether the reason was ignorance or laziness or fear, none of which should apply to a true theologian.”<sup>310</sup> Erasmus only uses the language of Judaism to denigrate other Christians, showing that he held Judaism in contempt. To Johannes Thurzo, bishop of Wrocław, , from Louvain on 31 August 1520, Erasmus indicated that his life effort had been fighting academic pedantry and “Jewish” ceremonialism: “I have tried hard to recall a world too far sunk in sophistical quibbling to the sources in Antiquity, and to arouse a world that places too much trust in Jewish ceremonies to a pursuit of true religion.”<sup>311</sup> He nearly stated the same thing in a 1521 letter to Arkele of Boskovic: “In all my work my sole object has been to resuscitate the humanities, which lay almost dead and buried among my own people; secondly to arouse a world which allowed too much importance to Jewish ceremonial to a new zeal for true religion of the Gospel; and finally to recall to its sources in Holy Scriptures the academic theologies in our universities, too deeply sunk in the quibbling discussions of worthless minor problems.”<sup>312</sup> Erasmus did not like Kabbalah, academe, and quibbling over arcane texts; he was intellectually the opposite of Pico and Reuchlin, but he did approve of classical study.

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<sup>309</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 1122 to 1251, 1520 to 1521*, ed. Peter G. Bietenholz, trans. R. A. B. Mynors, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 8 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 17; letter 1126.

<sup>310</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 1122 to 1251, 1520 to 1521*, 72; letter 1153.

<sup>311</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 1122 to 1251, 1520 to 1521*, 36; letter 1137.

<sup>312</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 1122 to 1251, 1520 to 1521*, 150; letter 1183.

The second category is Erasmus describing the threat of Jewish influence on Christianity. Erasmus believed that Jews had rejected the gospel of Christ in a 1520 letter to Lorenzo Campeggi, cardinal of San Tamaso in Parione: “So it was in the old days, when the Jews rejected the new wine of the gospel teaching, accustomed as they were to the old wine of the Mosaic law, and saw as a disgrace to their earlier code what really filled out and beautified it; they thought it a novelty and hated it, when they were really recalled to the original truth.”<sup>313</sup> In a 1517 letter to the Reformed Hebraist theologian Wolfgang Capito, Erasmus presented Judaism and Christianity in the starkest opposition. Erasmus feared that the study of Hebrew risked reviving Judaism. Erasmus wanted to enrich New Testament study with Valla’s principle of using ancient and genuine manuscripts and abolish what he saw as scholastic theology in the universities. Erasmus attacked the humanist recovery of Greek, Roman, or Hebrew ancient texts to the extent that he deemed them corrupting true Christianity:

In a word, all seems to me to promise the greatest success. There is still one misgiving in my mind: that under cover of the reborn literature of antiquity paganism may try to rear its ugly head, for we know that even among Christians some scarcely acknowledge Christ in more than name, and under the surface are rank heathens; or that the rebirth of Hebrew studies may give Judaism its cue to plan a revival, the most pernicious plague and bitterest enemy that one can find to the teachings of Christ.... There have lately been published several pamphlets which breathe the unadulterated air of Jewry. I watch our great hero Paul toiling to defend Christ against Judaism, and I feel that some men I could name are slipping back into it secretly.<sup>314</sup>

Erasmus saw Judaism as a most pernicious threat to Christianity. Erasmus feared that Hebrew studies (as advanced by Pico and Reuchlin) would unleash Judaism, which had been kept at bay

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<sup>313</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 993 to 1121, 1519 to 1520*, ed. Peter G. Bietenholz, trans. R. A. B. Mynors, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 7 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 197, letter 1062.

<sup>314</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 446 to 593, 1516 to 1517*, ed. James K. McConica, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 266–68; letter 541.

for thousands of years. James K. McConica, the annotator to Erasmus's collected works, understood this passage as mere rhetoric: "'Judaism' to Erasmus was a spiritual phenomenon rather than a social or 'racial' issue, a problem with Christendom: the habitual tendency to substitute legalism and the satisfactions of formal devotional observances for a personal and faithful following of Christ."<sup>315</sup> Judaism for Erasmus was a state of mind, a form of mental slavery, which shackled its parishioners into servitude and slavish drudgery (a metaphor which the nineteenth-century Judaism-hating Jew Karl Marx employed as well).<sup>316</sup>

Erasmus was very concerned about the study of Kabbalah infecting the church. In Louvain, Erasmus wrote to Capito on 13 March 1518 and essentially pleaded with him to not neglect the study of Greek for that of Hebraica and Judaica.

I could wish you were more inclined to Greek than to that Hebrew of yours, with no desire to criticize it. I see them as a nation full of most tedious fabrications, who spread a kind of fog over everything, Talmud, Cabbala, Tetragrammaton, *Gates of Light*, words, words, words. I would rather have Christ mixed up with Scotus than with that rubbish of theirs. Italy is full of Jews, in Spain there are hardly any Christians. I fear this may give that pestilence that was long ago suppressed a chance to rear its ugly head. If only the church of Christians did not attach so much importance to the Old Testament! It is a thing of shadows, given us for a time; and now it is almost preferred to the literature of Christianity. Somehow or other we are all the time turning away from Christ, who was enough for us, all by himself.<sup>317</sup>

Erasmus believed that Jewish learning only brought confusion to the church. For Erasmus, a text critic himself, study of Hebrew was not safe unless one clearly criticized it and the resulting

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<sup>315</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 446 to 593, 1516 to 1517*, 267 note.

<sup>316</sup> Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, 3. Marx, in "On the Jewish Question," wrote that Christian society will continue to "produce Judaism out of its own entrails," just as Erasmus saw that Christians continually reverted to and recreated *Judaism*.

<sup>317</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, ed. Peter G. Bietenholz, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 5 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 347–48; epistle 798.



errors of the Jews. If one is studying it in a neutral or, heaven forbid, a positive light, then the mist of Judaism has already engulfed them, and it is too late.

Like his letters to Capito, many of Erasmus's references to Jews are in the context of his study of the Greek language and his desire to correct the Latin Vulgate of the New Testament using Greek manuscripts, following Valla's practice. Erasmus's opponents had argued that since the Greek Orthodox Church was no longer in communion with the Bishop of Rome since 1054, their texts had no papal approval and therefore no authority. The Latin Vulgate, which the Roman Church had approved, was the sure version of the Bible. Anything else was heresy; but Erasmus as humanist text critic, began to notice the differences between the Vulgata manuscripts and the inherited Greek manuscripts, prompting him to publish his New Testament with annotations and manuscript variants. In many letters, Erasmus repeatedly defended his choice of correcting the Latin from the original Greek manuscripts in his *Novum Testamentum* (Basel: Froben, 1516). In a 1518 letter to Maarten Lips, Erasmus used the reprobate and rejected status of the Jews to argue that they preserved the texts, in a version of an *a fortiori* argument:

But if the fact that the Greeks have split off from the Roman Church is a valid reason for mistrusting the Greek text of the Bible, it was equally illicit in Jerome's day to correct the Old Testament out of the Hebrew texts, for the Jewish people had already rebelled, not from the Roman Church but from Christ himself, which I consider somewhat more damnable.<sup>318</sup>

Here, Erasmus argued that since the Church accepted Jerome's translation of the ancient Hebrew texts from unbelieving Jews into the Latin Vulgate as the holy word of God, Erasmus was certainly justified in using the Greek texts of Christian believers to correct errors in the Vulgate.

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<sup>318</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, 16; letter 843.

Erasmus was truly concerned about Judaism in the church. He portrayed St. Paul as a valiant fighter against the evils of Judaism. In his dedicatory preface to “the right honorable prince and right reverend prelate Erard de la Marck, bishop of Liège,” dated Louvain, 5 February 1519, Erasmus wrote that St. Paul worked to spread the glory of Christ’s name throughout “superstitious Jewry, clever Greece, and Rome, the queen of earthly kingdoms.”<sup>319</sup> But despite Paul’s pioneering efforts, the pull of Judaism was too great, such that it had consumed the Church. After Paul’s death, “such a mass of weeds sprang up, which almost overwhelmed Christ’s sowing while it was young and still in the blade; nor was it long before worldly philosophy and Jewish superstition, as though they had deliberately joined forces, were conspiring against Christ.” Paul’s actions had staying power that had formed in Christianity its antinomian tendencies which exist to this day: “Judaism would have imposed on us the whole of Moses and even the crowning indignity of circumcision and would have reduced that heavenly philosophy to a matter of coarse and lifeless ritual, had not this valiant Isaac of ours opened so many wells of the authentic Gospel, so many springs of living water against the Philistines that would all fill with dirt.” Ironically, Erasmus, in his fight against the Jewish Torah of Moses, compared the Jewish anti-Jew Paul to the Jewish patriarch Isaac, thus demonstrating the dizzying allegiances and fictive lines in the sand that Erasmus and other theologians and religious leaders had create to inculcate normative religious community identities. In Erasmus’ view, Judaism was still a threat in his own time: “Judaism, acting through men disguised as apostles, was creeping in still more perilously under a false mask of piety and occupied Christ’s whole cornfield to such

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<sup>319</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, 244; letter 916. The letter was originally published in the *Paraphrasis in duas epistolas Pauli ad Corinthios* (Louvain: Martens, 30 January 1519).

an extent that even now it cannot be weeded out.”<sup>320</sup> It is unclear whether Erasmus believed this to be a losing fight or he simply expressed exasperation as to the great extent of Jewish influence in Christianity. From the beginning of Christianity, according to Erasmus, Judaism has always and already been creeping in, threatening to destroy the valiant efforts that St. Paul made in his fight against the weeds of Judaism taking root in the church.

Erasmus’s correspondence with Martin Luther similarly reveals his concern about Judaism in the church. Luther wrote to Erasmus in 1519, thanking him for approving of him in the *Enchiridion*. Erasmus cordially responded that his letter “displayed the brilliance of your mind and breathed the spirit of a Christian.” However, “even now it is impossible to root out from men’s minds the most groundless suspicion that your work is written with assistance from me and that I am, as they call it, a standard-bearer of this new movement.”<sup>321</sup> Erasmus remained a staunch Catholic all his life; he simply criticized what he saw as hypocrisy and “Judaism” in the Church. He was not a Protestant nor an evangelical, although he did approve of Luther’s writings in the beginning, before Luther created a new movement. Erasmus approved of evangelical reform as a renewal movement, but not when it became schismatic. He stated that he kept himself “uncommitted, so far as I can, in hopes of being able to do more for the revival of good literature.” Erasmus was a Catholic humanist, through and through. Through courtesy and moderation rather than by clamor, “Christ brought the world under his sway; that was [also] how Paul did away with Jewish law, by reducing everything to allegory.” He went on to say people

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<sup>320</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, 244.

<sup>321</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, 391; letter 980.

ought to protest those who abuse the authority of bishops, and not to despise universities, but to recall them “to more serious studies.”<sup>322</sup>

In a letter to Reuchlin’s opponent Jacob von Hoogstraten, Erasmus indicated that Christians have mistreated Jews. Erasmus wrote “If it is Christian to detest the Jews, on this count we are all good Christians, and to spare.” The context is Reuchlin’s defense of Jews that they not be “unfairly treated,” so Erasmus was not necessarily taking pride in this state of affairs but merely stating the facts or possibly speaking sarcastically, as Markish interpreted it. Erasmus also stated hyperbolically his distaste for Jewish texts, such as the Cabala: “May Christ be as merciful towards me as I would be unmerciful towards the Cabala!”<sup>323</sup> Later in the letter, Erasmus stated that Jesus “so much wished them to abstain from divorce as known to the Jews, who used to repudiate their wives for the most frivolous reasons, that he forbade divorce altogether.”<sup>324</sup> Erasmus acknowledge that Christians, ever since Jesus and including Erasmus, have been unmerciful to Jews and Jewish sources.

The third category is Erasmus writing about individual Jews or actual Jews living in Europe. Erasmus defended his *Novum Testamentum* and text critical endeavors in an extended dispute with the Catholic theologian Maarten van Dorp. Dorp had dismissed the Greek texts by arguing that “we cannot trust the texts of men who have separated from the Roman Church.” In reply, Erasmus argued that even though the Jews are a rebellious and rejected people, that does not invalidate their biblical texts: “The whole Jewish nation turned away from Christ; are we to

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<sup>322</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, 392.

<sup>323</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 993 to 1121, 1519 to 1520*, 49; letter 1006.

<sup>324</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 993 to 1121, 1519 to 1520*, 51.

give no weight to the Psalms and the Prophets, which were written in their language?”<sup>325</sup> Dorp told Erasmus that “to correct the Latin copies by means of the Greek requires careful thought,” and argues that “the Latin version contains no admixture of falsehood or mistake,” and tells him that his efforts are “superfluous” and wasted. Dorp compared Erasmus to Jesus: “And so like Christ you spurn the Pharisees as moved by ill will, the blind leading the blind.”<sup>326</sup> In another letter, Dorp criticized Erasmus and his “grammarians” for showing more sympathy to a Turk and a Jew, “provided he is not wholly uneducated,” than towards a “fellow Christian infected with the malady of barbarism [i.e., not knowing Greek],” mockingly adding, “which you could almost call the deepest heresy; so true it is that scarcely a man among them ever once uses a non-classical word.”<sup>327</sup> In Erasmus’s preface to the reader in *Novum Testamentum*, however, he praised Jerome for learning Hebrew from a Jew: “To learn these details St. Jerome was not too proud to take lessons from a Jew, lessons at night, and spurned no drudgery.”<sup>328</sup> Erasmus here indicated that it was debasing yet necessary for a Christian of Jerome’s stature to learn Hebrew from a Jew. In these cases, Erasmus did not use Jews as the objects of war, but as the weapons of war. He used Jews in his fight against other Christians in order to prove his point. In that way, Erasmus used Jews as rhetorical props to bolster his arguments.

Erasmus exhibited enmity to the Jewish people more explicitly, especially in asserting their overwhelming presence in Europe. In a letter from Antwerp, 10 March 1517, to Riccardo

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<sup>325</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 298 to 445, 1514 to 1516*, ed. James McConica, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 134; letter 337.

<sup>326</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 298 to 445, 1514 to 1516*, 21, 20; letter 304.

<sup>327</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 298 to 445, 1514 to 1516*, 157; letter 374.

<sup>328</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 298 to 445, 1514 to 1516*, 202; letter 373.

Bartolini, Erasmus condemned the idea of starting a war with France on the grounds that it was the last civilized bastion against the waves of heresy, Judaism, and Islam. He exclaimed: “Is the Christian world to be leagued together against the most spotless and most flourishing part of Christendom? France alone remains not infected with heretics, with Bohemian schismatics, with Jews, with half-Jewish *marraños*, and untouched by the contagion of Turkish neighbours, as are some other countries which everyone can recognize for himself without naming any names.”<sup>329</sup> Erasmus saw Spain as a land crawling with Jews and half-Jews. In a 1519 letter to Jan Šlechta of Bohemia, Erasmus continued the trope that Europe was crawling with Jews. From Louvain, on 1 November 1519, Erasmus wrote: “For an admixture of Jews is a thing you share, perhaps, with parts of Italy and the rest of Germany, but especially with Spain.”<sup>330</sup> According to Erasmus, Europe teemed with Jews who had rejected the Christian faith.

At times, his opponents accused Erasmus of siding with Jews, confirming that many early modern Christians used the term as an insult in order to attack their intellectual opponents. In a letter to his contemporary Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples, Louvain, 11 September 1517, Erasmus restated Lefèvre’s characterization of his own writings as “words which support the case of those pestilent Jews and treat Christ with contumely as they do.”<sup>331</sup> (Erasmus included his *Apologia ad Fabrum* to which Lefèvre referred and asked him to re-read it.) Here, Lefèvre clearly labeled Erasmus a supporter of Jews, though this was clearly far from the case. Lefèvre’s accusation galled Erasmus to such an extent that he repeated it to John Fisher on 5 March 1518, claiming

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<sup>329</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 446 to 593, 1516 to 1517*, 279; letter 549.

<sup>330</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 993 to 1121, 1519 to 1520*, 122.

<sup>331</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, 115; letter 659.

that Lefèvre is not responding. Lefèvre had represented Erasmus as “undermining the understanding of prophecy,” of “degrading the glory of Christ with contumely,” of “siding with blasphemous Jews,” and of “saying things unworthy of Christ and of God.”<sup>332</sup> This fact indicates that the word really had little denotative value and merely referred to those with whom one disagreed and wanted to insult. *Jew* was a harsh insult, revealing the hatred and animosity that late medieval and early modern Christendom had inherited and which many people (Erasmus and his opponents) imbibed and regurgitated.

Defending Reuchlin, Erasmus went on a rage against the Jewish convert Johannes Pfefferkorn, using every trick in the book to insult him. Erasmus described him as “a man utterly uneducated, of the most brazen impudence, whom no amount of misdemeanour could make worse than he is; I would not cast the words ‘half a Jew’ in his teeth if he did not behave like a Jew and a half. What better instrument could the devil hope to find...”<sup>333</sup> Erasmus’s quotes evoke the stereotype that Jewish converts to Christianity never shed their Jewishness:

My life upon it, he had no other motive in getting himself dipped in the font than to be able to deliver more dangerous attacks on Christianity, and by mixing with us to infect the entire folk with his Jewish poison. What harm could he have done, had he remained the Jew he was? Now for the first time he is playing the part of a real Jew, now that he has donned the mask of a Christian; now he lives up to his breeding. The Jews brought false accusations against Christ, but it was Christ alone; this man let loose his fury against so many upright men of proved integrity and learning. He could render to his fellow Jews no service more welcome than to pretend he is a turncoat and betray the Christian polity.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, 324; letter 784.

<sup>333</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, 167; letter 694.

<sup>334</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, 167–69.

Erasmus claimed that Pfefferkorn covertly poisoned the well of the church and masqueraded as a convert in order to attack Christianity. Erasmus saw Pfefferkorn a secret Jewish traitor.

Erasmus continued on his tirade in another letter written on the same day (2 November 1517) to Gerardus Listrius, revealing that converts never change their inherent Jewishness. “My learned friends tell me that one Pfefferkorn, once a damned Jew and now a most damnable Christian, has published a book in German in which like a mad dog he tears the whole learned world to pieces, and me with it. A poisonous fellow, unworthy to be pitted against such opponents, fit only for the hangman. It was indeed worth his while to be dipped in the font: as a Jew in disguise he could throw peace among Christians into confusion.”<sup>335</sup> Erasmus made the same critique on the next day to Jacopo Bannasio. “I wish he were an entire Jew – better still if the removal of his foreskin had been followed by the loss of his tongue and both hands....My life upon it, you would find in his bosom more than one Jew.”<sup>336</sup> Erasmus wished that Pfefferkorn received loss of limbs instead of circumcision. Erasmus compared him to a demoniac whose body is infused with not demons, but Jews, recalling the medieval connotation of Jews and devils. He called him a “rascally Jew turned greater rascal as a Christian.” He repeated the trope to Johannes Caesarius: “my life upon it, if he could be opened up, you would find in his bosom not one Jew but a thousand.”<sup>337</sup> In Erasmus’s mind, Pfefferkorn’s body was infested by Jews, an exceptionally graphic image. Continuing, Erasmus reaffirmed the idea that one cannot convert a Jew: “If only the old saying were not so true, that a bad Jew always makes worse Christians!”

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<sup>335</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, 175; epistle 697.

<sup>336</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, 179; epistle 700.

<sup>337</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, 181; epistle 701.



Remarkably, Erasmus would have rather had Pfefferkorn remain a Jew (and, in his understanding, be cut off from Christ and salvation) than for him to have infected the church with *Judaism*. Erasmus wanted a strict screening process for potential Jewish converts:

What could suit the Jews better (for it is their battles he fights while pretending to oppose them) than for concord among Christians to be rent asunder like this? I would rather, if the New Testament could remain inviolate, see the entire Old Testament done away with than to see the peace of Christendom torn to ribbons for the sake of the Jewish scriptures. If only he were still an entire Jew, and we were showing more caution in admitting the others!

Erasmus did not want any Jews to convert, as they infected the church. He apparently believed that salvation could not help them. On 4 November 1518, Erasmus wrote to Hermann von Neuenahr: “Why do not men who are genuine Christians keep their claws off that Jewish scab?” For Erasmus, Christians were continually reverting to Judaism, to dead formalism, like a moth drawn to the flame. In the same letter, he wrote: “They do not see that from this hellish seed, which Satan, the friend of the Jews, has begun to sow with his own hand, a monstrous jungle will grow up unless timely steps are taken.”<sup>338</sup> Although Erasmus did not explicitly call Jews devils, the implication is clear: that Satan is operating alongside the Jews. Erasmus required a culling or pruning of Jewish converts from the Church (but not from society). To Reuchlin, on 15 November 1518, Erasmus wrote: “This half-Jew Christian by himself has done more harm to Christendom than the whole cesspool of Jewry.”<sup>339</sup> Just as he believed crypto-Jews infested Spain, he saw Jewry as a place of rot and decay. To Erasmus, Pfefferkorn, despite his affirmed conversion to Christianity, was the crypto-Jew who embodied all the evils of Judaism in one person and indeed possessed one thousand Jews himself.

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<sup>338</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, 183, 184; epistle 703.

<sup>339</sup> Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, 204; epistle 713.

In summary, Erasmus's words are anti-Judaistic in this specific sense. It is unknowable whether he held a deep-seated hatred for Jewish people. It is clear, however, that Erasmus despised the connotative qualities with which he associated *Judaism*—formalism without faith, rote religion, superstition, and the like. In many cases, *Judaism* does not mean Judaism in an actual sense but is a stand-in for everything he disliked about the Christian world around him. Erasmus never used *Judaism* to describe actual Judaism; he only used it to critique others in Christendom. His use of *Judaism* to describe that which one hates falls into the line of anti-Judaism that David Nirenberg described; we can't let Erasmus off the hook that easily.

Many of the Christian humanists and reformers of the sixteenth century did not view Judaism on its own terms, but only as rhetorical tools to critique understandings of Christianity with which they disagreed. Christian Hebraism created a Christian echo chamber about Jews and not true inquiry into Judaism. Pico and Reuchlin were impressive because they learned Hebrew from Jews in order to understand its wisdom traditions more deeply. However, the supreme irony of these Christian Hebraists is that while they deeply valued Jewish texts, they did not, in many cases, value Jewish minds and bodies. Pico and Reuchlin, though loving Hebraica deeply, did not write positively or supportively about living Jewish persons. Moreover, they actively advocated using Jewish sources as theological weapons against Jews. Even though Reuchlin saved the Talmud from the fire, it was more out of personal interest, or to advance Christianity, than to support Jews. Nevertheless, Reuchlin supported rabbinic interpretations against those who claimed that Christians should devalue rabbinic voices as lies. These two Hebraists valued Jewish sources. They risked their lives and reputations to delve into Jewish wisdom. Yet even these pro-Hebraic men could not shake the anti-Judaism they had inherited and internalized from a millennium of Christian anti-Jewish attitudes. This reality proves that knowing Hebrew did not

necessarily make Christians more embracing of Jews and Judaism. In many cases, it upgraded their weapons.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CALVINISM AND JUDAISM

“Let us, therefore, bring forward the covenant which God once ratified as eternal and unending.”<sup>340</sup> Thus wrote Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1559. Although many Reformed theologians held more positive views about God’s Law in the Pentateuch than other Protestants and Catholics, Calvin taught that God established a single covenant with Jews and Gentiles that required equal obedience. This idea was radical in the history of Christian exegesis. Previously, the Catholic Church had taught that the Church had replaced Israel as the people of God, that the Church was the new Israel, known as *verus Israel*. Christians believed that the Jews had lost their place in the covenant because they had killed God’s son. Calvin radically disagreed with this idea. Instead basing the Jews’ exile on the charge of deicide, Calvin, in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, claimed that disobedience to the covenant was the reason for their oppression. In this way, the Jews were not cursed, as in the view of the medieval Catholic Church, but rather they just needed to obey God’s commandments found in the Bible to regain his favor. Reformed ideas about Jewish law influenced the Calvinist Tremellius’s own thinking of the subject.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first offers an analysis of Tremellius’s social networks related to the Reformed tradition. Included in this network analysis are Martin Bucer

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<sup>340</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 2nd ed., vol. 20, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1990), 2.11.4. I employ Henry Beveridge’s English translation, which the Calvin Translation Society published in Edinburgh in 1845–1846. This version translated the final, French Genevan, 1559, edition of Calvin’s *Institutes*. The first edition of the *Institutes*, 1536, had eight chapters; the 1559 edition had four books and eighty chapters. Wulfert de Greef, “Calvin’s Writings,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 42–43.

(1491–1551), Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562), John Calvin (1509–1564), and Theodore Beza (1519–1605). I emphasize these four men because they knew and interacted with Tremellius. The friendships that Tremellius formed offer a window into sixteenth-century Reformed networks with which Tremellius substantively identified only after he crossed the Alps from Lucca to Strasbourg in 1541.

The second part of the chapter analyzes select writings from the pens of three of Tremellius's Reformed friends, Calvin, Bucer, and Beza, to understand what views they held about Jews and Jewish law, views that Tremellius may have encountered and possibly influenced his own views (discussed in chapter 4). Calvin helps us understand Tremellius because they were of the same generation, born one year apart. I examine Calvin's *Commentaries on Romans* (1540) and *Psalms* (1557), the final edition of his *Institutes* (1559), and his *Refutation* of the Jewish polemic *Sefer Nizzahon* (unknown date). Calvin's *Institutes* addressed Jews and Judaism's relationship to Christianity more systematically than his other writings. I choose his commentary on the Psalms because Calvin interpreted passages that Christians had applied to Jesus in a spiritual sense as strictly historical, while his commentary on Romans chapters 9–11 and *Refutation* reveal his thought on contemporary Jews. For Bucer, I examine his commentaries on Psalms (1520) and a document he wrote that outlined his views about policies toward Jews (The Cassel Advice 1538). For Beza, I examine two of his books on Jewish law, one of which Tremellius certainly read. This Reformed network was the cradle for Tremellius to develop his more radical views on Jewish-Christian relations and the Law of Moses. While the Reformed theologians John Calvin, Martin Bucer, and Theodore Beza did not care about Jews themselves, they all valued Jewish exegesis and Jewish law as contained in the Mosaic covenant.

## Reformed Networks and Tremellius

Tremellius's entrance into the Reformed community was through a specific set of friendships, formed by living and working together, moving together, and exchanging correspondence and ideas. Tremellius's first entrance into the community was through Peter Martyr Vermigli in Lucca and reading Martin Bucer. Upon moving to Strasbourg, the network became part of Tremellius's daily life, as he lived and interacted with Bucer, Calvin, and other reformers. The linkage between Tremellius, Vermigli, and Bucer continued at Cambridge as these Reformed refugees found positions there and then returned to the continent after the accession of Queen Mary in 1553 and the re-establishment of Catholicism in England.

Tremellius's network can be determined, first, by the people with whom he lived. In Lucca, Tremellius lived with Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) at the San Frediano monastery. At the time, both were officially Catholic, although much of their readings and interactions were with Reformed people. Pietro Martire Vermigli was born in Florence to one of Savonarola's followers, Stefano Vermigli, who, having lost several children, dedicated any that lived to Saint Peter Martyr (c. 1200–1252). The Augustinians educated Vermigli at Fiesole and he joined the order, becoming Augustinian abbot in 1530 at Spoleto and prior of St. Petrus-ad-aram at Naples in 1533. Vermigli read and was influenced by Bucer's *Commentaries on the Gospels* and *On the Psalms* and Ulrich Zwingli's *On True and False Religions*. The Catholic Church accused Vermigli of error and prohibited him from preaching, but the evangelical-sympathizing Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, Reginald Pole (1500–1558), appealed to Rome and removed the charge. In June 1541, Martyr became prior of San Frediano monastery in Lucca and reorganized it through moral and educational reforms. As part of his reforms, Martyr aimed to install a faculty of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew at the monastery. Martyr hired Emanuel Tremellius to teach

Hebrew, whom Pole had recommended. Tremellius came to San Frediano in 1541 and taught Hebrew.<sup>341</sup> Philip McNair, Martyr's twentieth-century biographer, indicated that Tremellius likely lived at Lucca, even though he never took orders at the monastery.<sup>342</sup>

At San Frediano, Tremellius encountered a Reformed network of ideas, which the Catholic Church considered heterodox, flourishing in Italy. Martyr circulated writings from Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), Bucer, Calvin, Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), and Juan de Valdés (1490–1541) during his 15-month stay as the prior, writings the Catholic Church defined as heretical. Vermigli allowed Protestantism to flourish in Lucca, just as it was flourishing elsewhere. In Ferrara, Tremellius's birth city, Renée de France, wife of Ercole II, received John Calvin and began harboring Protestant views.<sup>343</sup> In fact, Renée made Calvin her spiritual advisor and her court became a refuge for heretics.<sup>344</sup> In 1544, however, the Inquisition tried Renée. As a result, she recanted but continued aiding Protestants.<sup>345</sup> One of the people whom Renée helped was Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564), a famous Franciscan preacher, called the greatest Italian preacher of his time.<sup>346</sup> In 1534, he became a Capuchin and was the General of the Order from 1538 until 1542. Although called to stand before the inquisitor in Rome, he decided to flee *en route*, due to conversations with the dying senator Gaspar Contarini in Bologna and with Peter

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<sup>341</sup> Philip McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy: An Anatomy of Apostasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 223. However, he is not on the list of canons for June 1541.

<sup>342</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 224.

<sup>343</sup> Carol Maddison, *Marcantonio Flaminio: Poet, Humanist, and Reformer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 128.

<sup>344</sup> Ulinka Rublack, *Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 171.

<sup>345</sup> Maddison, *Marcantonio Flaminio*, 129.

<sup>346</sup> Maddison, *Marcantonio Flaminio*, 137.

Martyr Vermigli in Florence. McNair described Contarini as “the public champion of Evangelism in Italy just as Juan de Valdéz was its private prophet.”<sup>347</sup> While Contarini acknowledged the Protestantism’s scriptural foundation, he wished to avoid condoning the least act of disobedience against the Holy See; he considered Luther’s sin not so much his doctrine as his rebellion.<sup>348</sup> On 22 August 1542, Ochino wrote Vittoria Colonna, a follower of Valdés and posthumously attacked by the Inquisition. Ochino wrote that he was fleeing Italy and that his doctrine remained what Renée had approved so many times: namely, justification by faith alone. Ochino fled to Ferrara and to Renée, who helped him get to Geneva. Calvin received him, where he broke with Rome and tried to marry. In 1547, Cranmer invited him to England and made him a canon of Canterbury. There he stayed until the accession of Mary in 1553. He then went to Strasbourg, Geneva, Basle, Zürich, and Locarno. The Swiss Protestants did not like his views, accusing him of believing in polygamy and denying the Trinity. They banished him from Switzerland in mid-winter. He took his four children with him to Poland, where he preached polygamy. There, the papal nuncio attacked him and expelled him from Poland, so he went to Moravia with two daughters and a son in the plague that was raging there. He died in 1564.<sup>349</sup> Due to Martyr’s influence at the monastery, Tremellius interacted with Reformed, spiritualist, and protestant/evangelical-leaning people in Lucca, part of wider Italian movement.

Yet again, Tremellius entered a city and met its reformer, just as he met Martyr in Lucca. In Strasbourg, Tremellius’s network expanded to include not just Peter Martyr, but also John

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<sup>347</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 12.

<sup>348</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 13.

<sup>349</sup> Maddison, *Marcantonio Flaminio*, 138.



Calvin and Martin Bucer, in whose house he lived for a year. Bucer (1491–1551), born in 1491 at Sélestat in Alsace, was the first born of these reformers. At the age of sixteen, he entered the Dominican Order in his hometown, but hated monasticism.<sup>350</sup> In 1517, the monastery transferred him to Heidelberg, where he heard Martin Luther (1483–1546) preaching in April 1518 and actually dined with him. Bucer took a Greek course with John Brenz (1499–1570) and desired to be a second Erasmus. Bucer received a Bachelor of Theology in 1519 and was ordained a priest at Mainz. He journeyed to Basel that summer and met the famous humanist printer Johann Froben (c. 1460–1527), who housed Erasmus, and made the acquaintance of his lifelong friend Wolfgang Capito (c. 1478–1541), a Hebraist scholar. Bucer started a Luther reading group in Heidelberg and corresponded with him and Luther’s collaborator Philip Melancthon (1497–1560). On 29 April 1521, the Bishop of Speier released Bucer from his monastic vows. He married Elizabeth Silbereisen in 1523, the first reformer to do so, and settled in Strasbourg with his parents. Tremellius’s network now included Bucer, the morning star of the Reformed.

In the years before Tremellius’s arrival, Bucer led the effort to reform Strasbourg. Through Capito’s influence, the city council gave Bucer the right to preach one hour each day on the Gospel of John; but the great crowds made them prohibit him from German preaching, so he preached in Latin from the home of the Strasbourg minister Mathias Zell (1477–1548). Zell invited Bucer to preach at the cathedral on alternate days. Bucer asked the vicar whether he could preach whilst having a wife; the vicar avoided the question. Bucer exclaimed that if he could not prove his stance from scripture, he would accept stoning, the punishment for false prophets in Mosaic Law, indicating his high regard for Mosaic Law. William von Hohenstein,

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<sup>350</sup> Details of Bucer’s life are from Hastings Eells, *Martin Bucer* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1971).

the bishop, notified the council that Speier had excommunicated Bucer; they sent Bucer a letter. Bucer wrote an apology entitled *Verantwortung* and read it on 20 June 1523, arguing that he could have a wife because priests had concubines. Bucer convinced other pastors, including Zell, to marry; these married priests challenged the papal legate to punish them if he punished fornicating priests. The legate never showed up. The council installed Bucer as a preacher on 21 February 1524, and he preached his first sermon. Capito and Bucer advocated the Zwinglian doctrine of the Eucharist at the Marburg Colloquy (1529) and authored the Tetrapolitan Confession between Strasbourg, Memmingen, Constance, and Lindau, which advocated a middle way between the Lutheran and Zwinglian understandings.<sup>351</sup> In 1531, Zwingli died, and Strasbourg signed the Lutheran Augsburg Confession, leaving the city to the defense of the Schmalkaldic League; in May 1536, Bucer signed the Wittenberg Concord, thus accepting Luther's view of the Eucharist. Bucer tried to reconcile Catholics and Protestants at Hagenau (1540), Worms (1540), and Ratisbon (1541) and unsuccessfully helped Hermann von Wied in reforming Cologne. By the time Tremellius arrived at Strasbourg, Bucer had secured his role.

In Strasbourg by 1542, Tremellius's relationships with Bucer, Calvin, and other Reformed individuals provided him with avenues for housing, employment, and marriage. Fresh from Italy, Vermigli, Tremellius, Paul Lacisio of Verona, and the physician Girolamo Massario stayed with Bucer initially.<sup>352</sup> Bucer arranged for them to have jobs at Johann Sturm's Gymnasium, or Academy: Vermigli served as theology professor and the canonry of St. Thomas,

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<sup>351</sup> Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion*, 20; Also see Nicholas Thompson, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and Patristic Tradition in the Theology of Martin Bucer, 1534-1546*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 119 (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

<sup>352</sup> Johann Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte der Stadt Strassburg bis zur französischen Revolution* (Strassburg: J. H. E. Heitz, 1922), 223, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006605457>. "Alle vier wohnten zunächst bei Bucer..."; which Eells, *Martin Bucer*, 319, cited.

Lacisio became Professor of classical Greek literature, and Tremellius taught Hebrew.<sup>353</sup> Calvin pastored the French refugee congregation in Strasbourg from 1538 to 1541, after which he returned to Geneva in 1541 and stayed there until his death in 1564.<sup>354</sup> Calvin and Guillaume Farel (1489–1565) visited Strasbourg for six weeks in the summer of 1543.<sup>355</sup> Bucer must have introduced Tremellius to Calvin at this point, for others referred to Tremellius in correspondence with Calvin after 1544, and Tremellius wrote to Calvin after 1551. In letters from 1544 and 1545, Vallerand Poullain (1515–1560) wrote to Calvin from Strasbourg, referring to “our brother Emmanuel.” Poullain indicated that Tremellius had “married Elisabeth, the divorced wife of M. Dominic, to whom we shall bless in the Lord on the next Thursday,” which indicates 19 October 1544 as the wedding day.<sup>356</sup> According to one account, Vermigli’s and Tremellius’s wives escaped from Metz from a nunnery and a marriage, respectively, to marry the men.<sup>357</sup> We do not know how long Tremellius lived with Bucer, but at some point, he had his own residence, presumably when he was married. Evidently, it must have been before 28 April 1545, when one of Tremellius’s students from Geneva, Hilarius Guymonneus, wrote to Calvin explaining that he

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<sup>353</sup> Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte der Stadt Strassburg*, 223.

<sup>354</sup> Donald K. McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xiv.

<sup>355</sup> Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism: The Life and Writings of Immanuel Tremellius (c. 1510–1580)*, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 48.

<sup>356</sup> Valerand Poullain to John Calvin, 13 October 1544, in *Calvini opera*, vol. 11, no. 577, p. 756, “Frater noster Emmanuel ducit in uxorem Elisabetham illam repudiatam M. Dominici, quibus proxima feria 4 benedicemus in Domino” (literally, “next fourth weekday”). Also, 12 January 1545, in *Calvini opera*, vol. 12, no. 605, p. 5.

<sup>357</sup> For the full story, see the epilogue. Thomas Harding, *A Reioindre to M. Iewels Replie: Against the Sacrifice of the Masse. In Which the Doctrine of the Answere to the .Xvij. Article of His Challenge Is Defended, and Further Proued, and Al That His Replie Conteineth against the Sacrifice, Is Clearely Confuted, and Disproued. By Thomas Harding Doctor of Diuinitie* (Louvain: Ioannus Foulerus, 1567), 175. Although it is certainly possible that Vermigli’s wife escaped from a nunnery, it resembles Luther’s story; perhaps, the Reformation caused many nuns to marry.

stayed with Tremellius while in Strasbourg: “My host, Dr. Emmanuel and his wife, send you their greetings.”<sup>358</sup> When Tremellius’s wife visited Geneva in 1554, Tremellius asked Calvin to take care of her, the way a former guest should behave,<sup>359</sup> indicating that Calvin stayed with Tremellius during his visit to Strasbourg in 1543. This fact indicates that Tremellius had his own residence by 1543 and probably lived with Bucer for less than a year. Strasbourg, one of many hubs of the Reformed network, allowed Tremellius to meet Bucer and Calvin and gave Tremellius a residence, a job, and a wife.

These three friends, Vermigli, Tremellius, and Bucer, also lived in Cambridge together from 1547 to 1553. Like Ochino, Tremellius’s friend Vermigli (1500-1562) fled to Switzerland via Ferrara, married, and was invited to England by Cranmer in 1547. Vermigli became theology professor at Oxford. His religious views required protection from the university authorities. He escaped to London for safety and became a canon. He helped Cranmer compose the prayer book. On Mary’s succession, he went to Strasbourg and Zürich, where he died in 1562.<sup>360</sup> Bucer opposed the Augsburg Interim, which required the reintroduction of Catholic worship alongside Protestant; Bucer left for England at the request of Thomas Cranmer. Bucer became Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and he influenced the Anglican Prayer Book. He died on 28 February 1551, and they buried him in Great St. Mary’s Church in Cambridge.

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<sup>358</sup> Hilarius Guymonneus to John Calvin, 28 April 1545, in *Calvini opera*, vol. 12, no. 635, pp. 68-70. “Salutat te hospes meus D. Emmanuel et illius uxor.”

<sup>359</sup> Tremellius to John Calvin, 8 September 1554, in *Calvini opera*, vol. 15, no. 2008, p. 228–229. “Ac ne nunc quidem interpellases: sed uxor mea ecclesiam vestram invisebat, quae te pastorem et antiquum hospitem insalutatum praeterire nec potest nec debet.” “And I would not even ask this now: but my wife will visit your church. As a pastor and a former guest, you cannot and ought not to allow this to pass ungreeted.”

<sup>360</sup> Maddison, *Marcantonio Flaminio*, 139.

Their time spent in Cambridge was productive for these men. Historians repeat the idea that Vermigli, Bucer, and even Tremellius worked on Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer, but we do not really know. Tremellius's first nineteenth-century biographer Friedrich Butters stated that Tremellius, like Vermigli, was a member of the 32 men whom Cranmer selected to discuss ecclesiastical procedure. However, Cranmer reduced it to 16 and then 3, of which Tremellius played no part.<sup>361</sup> David de Sola Pool (1885–1970) stated ambiguously that Tremellius “took some part in the preparation of the Book of Common Prayer.”<sup>362</sup> What part, we do not know.

The Reformed network also influenced Tremellius's personal life at Cambridge. In Cambridge, the Hebraist Antoine Rudolph Chevalier (1507–1572) was sent to assist Tremellius with his teaching duties. Tremellius gave Chevalier room and board in 1550. Within the year, in December, Tremellius gave his wife's daughter by her first marriage, Alice, in marriage to Chevalier.<sup>363</sup> Alice and Antoine named their first child, born at Cambridge in September 1551, Immanuel, after Tremellius. The boy continued the Tremellian Hebraist dynasty by becoming lecturer of Hebrew at Corpus Christi College in 1570.<sup>364</sup> Tremellius provided a preface to Chevalier's 1567 Hebrew grammar, *Petaḥ 'ohel mo'ed: Rudimenta Hebraica linguae*, in which

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<sup>361</sup> Friedrich Butters, *Emanuel Tremellius, erster Rector des Zweibrücker Gymnasiums: eine Lebensskizze zur Feier des dreihundertjährigen Jubiläums dieser Studienanstalt* (Zweibrücken: Kaußler, 1859), 15. “Tremellius gehörte wahrscheinlich, wie Martyr, zu der Commission der 32 Männer, die Cranmer zur Berathung der kirchlichen Angelegenheiten auswählte. Jedenfalls hatte er mittelbaren Antheil daran und er selbst beehrte wohl schwerlich unter die Sechszehn, noch weniger unter die Drei aufgenommen zu werden, auf welche die Commission später beschränkt wurde und unter welchen sich Martyr befand.”

<sup>362</sup> D. de Sola Pool, “The Influence of Some Jewish Apostates on the Reformation,” *The Jewish Review* 2, no. 7 (May 1911): 339.

<sup>363</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 51. Although commentators have been confused about whether it was Tremellius's daughter or sister-in-law, a letter between Calvin and Francis Boisnormand clarifies the relationship: “Antoine Chevallier, the son-in-law of Tremellius: or at least, he has as his wife his [that is, Tremellius's] step-daughter.” Calvin to Francis Boisnormand, 17 March 1559, in *Calvini opera*, no. 3030.

<sup>364</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 65–66.



Common Prayer in 1552, Vermigli helped reform canon law. In 1553, his wife died and was buried in Christ Church Cathedral Oxford near the tomb of St. Frideswide (and disinterred at command of Pole). At Martyr's accession, Martyr was briefly put under house arrest but in September 1553, was allowed to return to Strasbourg where he became professor of theology in 1554. In 1556, owing to his Eucharistic views, he moved to Zurich and became professor of Hebrew, where he died.<sup>367</sup> Moving together secured Tremellius's and Martyr's placement in Reformed networks.

Tremellius's Reformed social network secured his invitation to England. After Emperor Charles V's victory at Mühlberg in April 1547, evangelical exiles felt particular unease.<sup>368</sup> Consequently, in October 1547 an English mission to Strasbourg, composed of merchant John Abell and Sir Thomas Hoby, invited Vermigli and Ochino to take refuge in England. Martin Bucer hosted the English delegation in Strasbourg. Bucer wrote Cranmer a letter on the eve of Vermigli and Ochino's departure at the end of November, which they brought with them.<sup>369</sup> The letter contained praises of the two men and requests that Cranmer invite the Hebrew scholar Emmanuel Tremellius. The English mission, with Vermigli and Ochino, arrived on 20 December,<sup>370</sup> and their delegate, John Abell, escorted them directly into Parliament while it was in session. Cranmer then arranged for their accommodations and appointed them positions to put

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<sup>367</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*.

<sup>368</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 380.

<sup>369</sup> Bucer also wrote a tract praising Cranmer's reformed-leaning views of the Eucharist. Martin Bucer, *The Gratulation of the Mooste Famous Clerke M. Martin Bucer*, trans. Thomas Hoby (London: Richard Iugge, 1549).

<sup>370</sup> Thomas Hoby recounted his visit to Strasbourg with John Abell in *The Travels and Life of Sir Thomas Hoby*, ed. Edgar Powell (London: Royal Historical Society, 1902), 3-6. George Cornelius Gorham, *Gleanings of a few scattered ears during the period of the Reformation in England* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857), 38-40, gave Ochino and Vermigli's expenses on their way home, including sleepwear, horse meat, and book shipping.

their skills to work. In answer to Bucer's letter, Cranmer invited Tremellius to England in 1548.<sup>371</sup> Tremellius's Reformed network established his position in England.

Tremellius's involvement in a Reformed network insured Cranmer's lavish reception of them. On 26 April 1549, Bucer and Paul Fagius (1504–1549) described to the ministers of Strasbourg their experience in Lambeth Palace, where they found Tremellius residing:

We yesterday waited upon the archbishop of Canterbury, that most benevolent and kind father of the churches and of godly men; who received and entertained us as brethren, not as dependents. We found at his house, what was most gratifying to us, our most dear friend doctor Peter Martyr, with his wife and his attendant Julius, master Immanuel [Tremellius] with his wife; and also [Francis] Dryander [c. 1518–1552], and some other godly Frenchmen whom we had sent before us. All these are entertained by the archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>372</sup>

Tremellius appreciated how Cranmer treated him. Looking back at his introduction to England, Tremellius wrote in 1563 that, “when I arrived, I was first welcomed into the house of the archbishop: indeed it was a community of reception to all learned and pious people since that host, patron and father always wished to entertain all such people, for as long as he lived, or was able.”<sup>373</sup> Cranmer treated Bucer, Tremellius, and Vermigli well, due to their association with a Reformed, Protestant network.

Queen Mary's accession to the throne in 1553 caused the Reformed community to flee England. Up to four thousand Protestants, including Tremellius and Vermigli, left for the

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<sup>371</sup> MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 381.

<sup>372</sup> Hastings Robinson, ed., *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation, Written during the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary: Chiefly from the Archives of Zurich. Translated from Authenticated Copies of the Autographs*, Zurich Letters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), vols. 2, 535, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006292353>, no. 248.

<sup>373</sup> Emmanuel Tremellius, *In Hoseam prophetam interpretatio et enarratio Immanuelis Tremellii Theologiae doctoris, una cum aliarum tam veterum quam recentium interpretationum examine et iudicio, unde earum errores non modo facile possint animadverti, sed fontes ipsi ex quibus fluxerint certo comperiri et penitus inspicere a quovis queant* (Geneva: Nicolas Barbier & Thomas Courteau, 1563), 5–6, doi:10.3931/e-rara-6171; quoted in Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 62–63.



continent.<sup>374</sup> Bucer had died in England in 1551. After Mary's arrival, Bucer's body was exhumed and publicly burnt. The Crown briefly put Vermigli under house arrest, but they allowed him, in September 1553, to return to Strasbourg, where he became professor of theology in 1554. In 1556, owing to his Eucharistic views, he moved to Zurich and became professor of Hebrew, where he died.<sup>375</sup> Tremellius ventured to Heidelberg, where he taught Hebrew, and moved from place to place on the Rhineland, until he settled in Sedan and died in 1580.

A third feature of Tremellius's Reformed networks was the centrality of correspondence. Myriads of times in Calvin's, Bucer's and Beza's edited correspondence, the letter-writer referred to Tremellius by his first name, as a sort of commonplace, usually remarking, "our Emanuele" or something similar. So many times does the correspondence refer to Tremellius with the plural possessive, that it suggests they were either quite fond of him or possibly that they saw him in a patronizing light, as their token Jew.

Tremellius played a role in these letter exchanges, both as the object of discussion and as the letter-writer and recipient. The inhabitants of Strasbourg prided themselves on the absence of Jews.<sup>376</sup> In a letter between two Swiss Reformed leaders, dated 24 November 1547, theology professor at Lausanne Pierre Viret (1511–1571) told Guillaume Farel that he could not find Tremellius a job in Berne because "Jews and Italians are not thought well of in Berne."<sup>377</sup> Besides the fact that Viret considered Tremellius a Jew and not a Jewish convert, this letter (and

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<sup>374</sup> Graeme Murdock, *Beyond Calvin: The Intellectual, Political and Cultural World of Europe's Reformed Churches, c. 1540-1620*, European History in Perspective (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 32.

<sup>375</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*.

<sup>376</sup> Rublack, *Reformation Europe*, 110.

<sup>377</sup> Pierre Viret to Guillaume Farel, 24 November 1547, *Joannis Calvini Opera* 969.

a preceding one by John Calvin) shows that the Reformed used their social networks to help each other. Tremellius's wrote letters to Calvin, some of which has been quoted above.<sup>378</sup>

Tremellius's correspondence with one Reformed leader, Theodore Beza, influenced his intellectual trajectory. It is unclear when and how they met, but Tremellius and Beza at least knew of each other since 17 June 1554, when Johannes Haller reported to Heinrich Bullinger that Immanuel Tremellius had come to Berne with the commendation of Calvin, Viret, Beza, and others.<sup>379</sup> On 8 September 1554, Tremellius wrote to Calvin that he had left Lausanne for Berne because "the Lord had wished it," mentioning that Viret and Beza had commended him to the rulers of Lausanne.<sup>380</sup> On 18 November 1554, Peter Martyr wrote to Beza from Strasbourg, telling Beza that he had received Beza's *De haereticis* from "our Emanuele," a reference to Tremellius.<sup>381</sup> On 1 December 1559, the Hebraist son-in-law of Tremellius, Antoine Rudolph Chevallier, recalled to Theodore Beza that he had learned Hebrew from three eminent Hebraists—namely, Francis Vatable, Paul Fagius, and Tremellius, whom he praised over the rest.<sup>382</sup> Haller and Tremellius, in their letters to Bullinger and Calvin, respectively, stated that

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<sup>378</sup> Tremellius to Calvin, 13 March 1551, in *Calvini opera* vol. 14:53–54, no. 1452; 14 June 1554, in *Calvini opera* vol. 15:163, no. 1971; 8 September 1554, in *Calvini opera* vol 15:228–229, no. 2008; and Calvin to Tremellius, 27 October 1562, in *Calvini opera* vol. 19:565–565, no. 3870.

<sup>379</sup> Quoted in Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 85, citing Johannes Haller to Heinrich Bullinger, 17 June 1554, Staatsarchiv, Zurich, E II 370, 199.

<sup>380</sup> Tremellius to John Calvin, 8 September 1554, in John Calvin, *Joannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. Edouard Cunitz, Johann-Wilhelm Baum, and Eduard Wilhelm Eugen Reuss (Brunswick: Schwetschke, 1863), 15:228–229, no. 2008.

<sup>381</sup> Vermigli to Beze, 18 November 1554, in Hippolyte Aubert, Fernand Aubert, and Henri Meylan, eds., *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, vol. 1 (1539–1555), Société Du Musée Historique de La Réformation (Geneva: Droz, 1960), 147, no. 54. "Librum, eximie vir atque in Christo amabilis frater, ab Himmanuele nostro accepi, quem illi cum a vobis discederet mihi tradendum dederas." "I have received the delivered book, o remarkable man and brother worthy of love, from our Emanuele, which you had given to him, although he departs from you all to me." In Beza's edited correspondence, this is the first mention of Tremellius.

<sup>382</sup> Raoul Antoine Chevalier to Beza, 1 December 1559, Hippolyte Aubert, Henri Meylan, et al., eds., *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, vol. 3 (1559–1561), Société Du Musée Historique de La Réformation

Beza approved of Tremellius, which may have been through a letter or in person. Beza would not have had to meet Tremellius to have approved of him if John Calvin had first recommended Tremellius's qualifications to Beza (as Calvin did with Tremellius to others). 1554 was when Tremellius returned from England to the continent, using his Reformed network to find employment. That was not the only time Tremellius and Beza interacted. In addition to helping each other with their respective Latin New Testament translations, Tremellius wrote Beza a letter in the year before his own death (which I will analyze more in the next chapter). Beza had apparently written to Tremellius that the Council of Trent had approved the publication of the Talmud. In response, Tremellius recalled how he had censored a version of the Talmud for the printer Ambrosius Froben (1537–1602). Tremellius told Beza that he feared that the “inquisitor-monk” had readmitted censored portions, including passages that supported the doctrine of purgatory. Tremellius told Beza that Odoard Biset, a refugee in Bale, was going to send Tremellius the published Talmud to see what they readmitted. Tremellius stated that he praised the Talmud in a preface, no longer extant, that he wrote for the Froben edition: “I praise it only after [the Talmud] has been censored and even then, I do not praise it in everything, but only in certain regards that I name in the said preface.”<sup>383</sup> This letter shows that Beza and Tremellius had a cordial relationship and that Tremellius wanted to make sure that he did not appear to show favor to Jewish sources.

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(Geneva: Droz, 1963), 31–32, no. 153. “...et praecipue Immanuele Tremelio socero meo...” “...and chiefly Immanuel Tremellius, my father-in-law...”

<sup>383</sup> Tremellius to Beza, September/October 1579, Hippolyte Aubert, Alain Dufour, et al., eds., *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, vol. 19 (1578), Société Du Musée Historique de La Réformation (Geneva: Droz, 1996), 194–99, no. 1373. “je ne le loue pas si non apres qu’il est retrenché, et mesmes lors, je ne le loue point en tout, maix tant seulement pour certains resguards que je nomme en icelle preface.” I thank Barbara Travers of WSU Vancouver and Steve Kale for the translation.

These Reformed networks were so evident that historians in the 1980s began to treat them as a transnational network called International Calvinism.<sup>384</sup> More recently, in 2011, Ole Peter Grell repeated this argument, arguing that the “social experience of persecution and exile,” “the tendency of the Reformed exiles to intermarry[,] and [the tendency] to form close and repeated partnerships in both trade and finance” were central to Reformed identity.<sup>385</sup> For this group, it appears that personal relationships forged Reformed identity, as I see no evidence of a shared theology or exiled mentality (although they did face exile). With the exception that he translated John Calvin’s catechism into Hebrew, Tremellius gave no clear evidence that he supported specifically Reformed orthodoxy.<sup>386</sup> Tremellius’s network consisted of living together, moving together, and corresponding, and included employment and marriage opportunities.

### **Reformed Views of Jews, Judaism, and the Law of Moses**

While the Reformed theologians inherited stock anti-Jewish tropes, their views about Judaism and its relationship to Christianity and about the Law of Moses was radical compared to medieval Christian thought. This section argues that one of the places Tremellius developed his own philo-semitic thought was the matrix of Reformed theology, which held the Old Testament in high esteem, even if it did not value sixteenth-century Jews as people. It does so by focusing first on writings of one leading Reformed theologian, John Calvin, that represent this new

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<sup>384</sup> See, e.g., Menna Prestwich, ed., *International Calvinism, 1541–1715* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

<sup>385</sup> Ole Peter Grell, *Brethren in Christ: A Calvinist Network in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>386</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 143, 165–67. “Yet this text is surprisingly lacking in confessional quality. This contradiction in many ways encapsulates Tremellius’ position more generally within the Calvinist church.” And, “if there is any indication of his Calvinist affiliation, it is only ever of the most gentle kind.”

relationship between Gospel and Law that was developing among Reformed Protestants in the Swiss lands and Upper Rhine River by the 1550s.

Calvin's views about Jews appear in a wide variety of texts, and they changed over time. John Calvin is most known for his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Basel, 1536), which expanded from eight chapters in the first edition to four books and eighty chapters in the 1559 edition.<sup>387</sup> The first edition was based off of Calvin's Confession of Faith for the Church in Geneva,<sup>388</sup> which Immanuel Tremellius translated into Hebrew in 1554 as *Sefer Hinukh behirei Yah* (*Book of Instruction for the Elect of God*). Calvin also wrote voluminous commentaries on every book of the Bible. A fresh analysis of Calvin's *Commentaries on Romans* (1540) and *Psalms* (1557), the final edition of his *Institutes* (1559), and *Refutation of the questions and charges of a certain Jew* (*Ad quaestiones et obiecta Judaei cuiusdam responsio*, unknown date), shows that his understanding of Jews and Judaism changed over time based on his authority in the Reformed movement. In 1540, as a Reformed exile, he emphasized God's sovereign election of his people, which excluded nonbelieving Jews and included Gentiles who believed in Jesus. In 1559, well established as a Reformed systematic theologian, Calvin emphasized the complementarity of Old and New Testaments and argued that God established a single covenant with both Jews and Christians.

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<sup>387</sup> de Greef, "Calvin's Writings," 42–43.

<sup>388</sup> Dutch Reformed pastor Frans H. Breukelman, *The Structure of Sacred Doctrine in Calvin's Theology*, ed. Rinse H[erman] Reeling Brouwer, trans. Martin Kessler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 67–75, argued that Calvin reworked his 1537 *Instruction et Confession de foy, dont on use en leglise de Genève* from the first edition of the *Institutes*. The Latin title of the Catechism was *Catechismus sive Christianae Religionis Institutio*, which shares its title with *Christianae Religionis Institutio* (1536). Breukelman referred to the *Institutes* of 1536 and the Catechism of 1537 as the "large and small Catechisms," respectively, of Calvin, except that Calvin's, unlike Luther's, were replaced by new books (69). See the whole chapter II, "The Instruction et Confession de Foy of 1537," pp. 67–116.

When Calvin authored his *Commentaries on Romans* in 1540, Calvin was not yet established as a Reformed leader. Geneva had exiled him from the city, and he was living in Strasbourg with Bucer. While the Reformed movement, mostly in Swiss lands, had made some confessions, Calvin had overseen the Geneva Confession of 1536.<sup>389</sup> During this time, Calvin pastored a French congregation in Strasbourg 1538–41 thanks to Bucer’s influence; Calvin produced an updated *Institutes* in 1539, and the first French *Institutes* in 1541. In August 1540, Calvin married the widow Idelette de Bure. In 1540, few people were using Calvin as a benchmark for Reformed orthodoxy.

Calvin opened his commentary on Romans chapter 9 with kindness towards Jews. Calvin wrote that Paul did not want to exhibit bitterness towards the Jews nor exasperate their minds. However, he argued that Paul defended the Gospel against Jews, conceding to them “nothing to the injury of the gospel; for he allows to them their privileges in such a way, as not to detract anything from Christ.”<sup>390</sup> That Calvin portrayed Paul as treating the Jews with kindness shows that he himself wanted to extend kindness to them. Calvin added that, in case anyone thought Paul had thrown off his kin, he stated he did not want their destruction, but exclaimed he would rather be cut off from Christ than they; Paul was more concerned about Jews than himself.<sup>391</sup>

The *Commentary on Romans* evinces Calvin’s belief that God had a special relationship with Jews. “Though the Jews by their defection had produced an ungodly divorce between God and themselves,” Calvin wrote, “yet the light of God’s favor was not wholly extinguished.”

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<sup>389</sup> Arthur C. Cochrane, ed., *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 117.

<sup>390</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 9:1, translated by John King (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 332.

<sup>391</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 9:3, 335.

Calvin emphasized their disobedience: “They had indeed become unbelievers and had broken his covenant; but still their perfidy had not rendered void the faithfulness of God.” Calvin pointed towards God’s faithfulness as the solution to disobedience: “the Lord, passing by other nations, had selected them as a people peculiar to himself, and had adopted them as his children.”<sup>392</sup> For Calvin, the Jews had disobeyed God’s law, but God was still faithful.

Yet the sinfulness of Jews was a problem for Calvin. Even though “the promise of salvation given to Abraham belongs to all who can trace their natural descent to him,” Calvin limited the children of promise to “those in whom its power and effect are found.” Even though all Israel is elect, Calvin kept Paul’s dichotomy and limited it to a certain subsection of Israel:

Paul denies here that all the children of Abraham were the children of God, though a covenant had been made with them by the Lord, for few continued in the faith of the covenant; and yet God himself testifies that they were all regarded by him as children. In short, when a whole people are called the heritage and the peculiar people of God, what is meant is, that they have been chosen by the Lord, the promise of salvation having been offered them and confirmed by the symbol of circumcision; but as many by their ingratitude reject this adoption, and thus enjoy in no degree its benefits, there arises among them another difference with regard to the fulfilment of the promise. That it might not then appear strange to any one, that this fulfilment of the promise was not evident in many of the Jews, Paul denies that they were included in the true election of God.<sup>393</sup>

God’s election of Israel was extremely important for Calvin, who based his ideas of predestination on it. Calvin understood that God elected the whole nation, yet some rejected the covenant—those were never in the “true election” in the first place. Calvin’s understanding of Romans removed human knowledge from the equation; one did not know if they were saved; if they were lifelong sinners, they were never elect to begin with. Calvin made it more explicit: “God deigns to make a covenant of life with a nation” through a general election, “but his hidden

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<sup>392</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 9:4, 339.

<sup>393</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 9:6, 344–345.

favor appears more evident in that second election, which is confined to a part only.” Calvin found this distinction in Paul’s words: “when he says, that *all who are of Israel are not Israelites*, and that *all who are of the seed of Abraham are not children*, it is a kind of change in the meaning of words, (παρονομασία); for in the first clause he includes the whole race, in the second he refers only to true sons, who were not become degenerated.”<sup>394</sup> Calvin thus limited the elect to a few, which did not necessarily correspond with the Jewish people.

As a lawyer by training, Calvin expressed a high view of the Mosaic Law. Calvin stated that the Mosaic Law was “nothing more than a renewal of the covenant.” Calvin highlighted the specialness of God’s act of legislation, or lawgiving, stating that, “it was no common honor conferred on the Jewish people, that they had God as their lawgiver. For if some gloried in their Solons and Lycurguses, how much more reason was there to glory in the Lord?” Calvin praised the fact that God provided the law and bolstered Jewish reception of the law. Calvin added that God commanded a certain form of worship, which ought to be continued to this day. “By *worship* [Paul] understands that part of the law in which the legitimate manner of worshipping God is prescribed, such as rites and ceremonies. These ought to have been deemed lawful on account of God’s appointment; without which, whatever men devise is nothing but a profanation of religion.”<sup>395</sup> Since God had given the law, he prescribed a certain form of worship. Calvin, in good Reformed fashion, highlighted that God laid out certain rites and ceremonies; to follow anything else would be idolatry.

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<sup>394</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 9:6, 345.

<sup>395</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 9:4, 341.



Calvin had two caveats to his otherwise high view of Mosaic Law. The first led him to adopt a rather confusing attitude about circumcision. He stated that making “no account of the circumcision, which was conferred on them by God’s command” cannot be “so regarded without dishonor to God.” Thus, dishonoring circumcision dishonors God. However, Calvin immediately qualified this statement. Circumcision “belonged to them,” and not to others, as Paul said before, “‘whose are the covenants,’ though they were unbelieving.”<sup>396</sup> Circumcision belonged to them, to Jews, not to Gentiles.

The second caveat of Calvin’s high view of Mosaic Law was that he reprimanded Jews for misusing the law. According to him, the proper use of the law was to lead them to “another righteousness,” that is, the righteousness that Christ offers. The one who seeks to be justified by his own works is “a false interpreter of the law.” Calvin wrote that people cannot use the law correctly unless they, “being stripped of all righteousness, and confounded with the knowledge of our sin, seek gratuitous righteousness from [Christ] alone.” Calvin illogically critiqued Old Testament Jews for valuing the law too highly and not looking ahead to the future Christ for their righteousness; calling this action “absurd.” “It hence follows,” Calvin wrote, “that the wicked abuse of the law was justly reprehended in the Jews, who absurdly made an obstacle of that which was to be their help: nay, it appears that they had shamefully mutilated the law of God; for they rejected its soul, and seized on the dead body of the letter.”<sup>397</sup> By seeking to keep the law to the letter, the Jews, according to Calvin, mutilated it.

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<sup>396</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 9:6, 344.

<sup>397</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 10:4, 384–385.

For Calvin, the result of Jews' mutilation of the law was their spiritual death and loss of the covenant. "The people," he wrote, "through false zeal, had rejected the righteousness of God, they suffered a just punishment for their presumption, were deservedly blinded, and were at last cut off from the covenant." Calvin considered the idea that the covenant "should fail through any perfidiousness of men" to be "wholly unreasonable; for Paul holds this as a fixed principle, that since adoption is gratuitous and based on God alone and not on men, it stands firm and inviolable, howsoever great the unfaithfulness of men may be, which may tend to abolish it." Calvin countered the claim "lest the truth and election of God should be thought to be dependent on the worthiness of men." Calvin stated that Paul listed his own status as an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin to prove "how unreasonable it was to think that the nation was utterly forsaken by God."<sup>398</sup> Disobedient Jews could fall from the covenant, but God did not abolish it.

Calvin believed that God was sovereign. Calvin used the example of the Israelites to prove that "it is absurd to blend foreknowledge of works with election." Calvin reasoned that

if God chooses some and rejects others, as he has foreseen them to be worthy or unworthy of salvation, then the grace of God, the reward of works being established, cannot reign alone, but must be only in part the cause of our election. For as Paul has reasoned before concerning the justification of Abraham, that where reward is paid, there grace is not freely bestowed; so now he draws his argument from the same fountain, — that if works come to the account, when God adopts a certain number of men unto salvation, reward is a matter of debt, and that therefore it is not a free gift.<sup>399</sup>

God's election is not based on him seeing our future actions; it was solely on his own divine prerogative. "It hence follows," Calvin wrote, "that the cause of salvation exists not in men, but depends on the good pleasure of God alone." God saves based on divine will, not human action.

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<sup>398</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 11:1, 409.

<sup>399</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 11:6, 415.

Calvin considered Jews blind, as the non-elect. He divided between “the whole of Israel, or body of the people,” and “the remnant which was to be saved by God’s grace.” The non-elect are spiritually blinded and forsaken: “As the elect alone are delivered by God’s grace from destruction, so all who are not elected must necessarily remain blinded. For what Paul means with regard to the reprobate is, — that the beginning of their ruin and condemnation is from this — that they are forsaken by God.”<sup>400</sup> Calvin added graphic language that “brutal stupor seizes on all the senses of men, after they are given up to this madness, so that they excite themselves by virulent stimulants against the truth.”<sup>401</sup> Calvin thereby implied that Jews are blind.

Calvin cleared up the confusion about why simultaneously some Jews are spoken of as being rejected and others part of God’s covenant. Paul sometimes spoke of the nation as a whole, and other times as an individual. “Onewhile” Paul spoke “of the Jews as being banished from the kingdom of God, cut off from the tree and precipitated by God’s judgment into destruction, and that at another he denies that they had fallen from grace, but that on the contrary they continued in the possession of the covenant, and had a place in the Church of God.” However, since “the Jews for the most part rejected Christ, so that perverseness had taken hold almost on the whole nation, and few among them seemed to be of a sane mind.” Here, Calvin used tropes of blindness, perversity, and insanity, which he would continue to use regarding Jews throughout his career. Is there any hope for the Jews? According to Calvin, Paul justly denied that “the salvation of the Jews was to be despaired of, or that they were so rejected by God, that there was to be no future restoration, or that the covenant of grace, which he had once made with them,

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<sup>400</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 11:7, 417.

<sup>401</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 11:8, 418.

was entirely abolished, since there had ever remained in that nation the seed of blessing.”<sup>402</sup>

Since a remnant of Jews was faithful to Christ, it can be said that all Israel will be saved.

Calvin’s exile from Geneva caused him to reinterpret the Reformed Church as the new Israel, God’s true church. Whereas the flow of Paul’s argument around, “So all Israel shall be saved,” suggested that Gentiles would cause Jews to be jealous and therefore believe in Jesus, Calvin argued that the Church became the people of Israel. Calvin wrote that “many understand this of the Jewish people, as though Paul had said, that religion would again be restored among them as before: but I extend the word *Israel* to all the people of God.”<sup>403</sup> Calvin interpreted “Israel” as referring to God’s church, not Jews. The Jews were presently

alienated from God on account of the gospel, that thus the salvation, which at first was deposited with them, might come to the Gentiles; and yet that God was not unmindful of the covenant which he had made with their fathers, and by which he testified that according to his eternal purpose he loved that nation: and this he confirms by this remarkable declaration, — that the grace of the divine calling cannot be made void.

For Calvin, God exhibited mercy by his own free will. While the Jewish community regarded themselves as the people of God, Calvin believed that God was not beholden to any people. He could choose or un-choose whom was his at will. “Extremely gross,” Calvin wrote, “is their folly who hence conclude that all shall be saved; for Paul simply means that both Jews and Gentiles do not otherwise obtain salvation than through the mercy of God, and thus he leaves to none any reason for complaint. It is indeed true that this mercy is without any difference offered to all, but every one must seek it by faith.”<sup>404</sup> God’s mercy extended unilaterally to whomever he wanted;

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<sup>402</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 11:11, 421.

<sup>403</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 11:26, 437.

<sup>404</sup> *Commentary on Romans* 11:28, 440.

on the one hand, Calvin's theology unmoored God from his promises to the Jewish people; on the other hand, Calvin magnified God's sovereignty in a way unparalleled in Christian tradition. Calvin's emphasis on the elect and non-elect was his own reaction to his relationship to Geneva. The Geneva city council expelled Calvin and Farel in 1538 for suggesting a clear confession of faith at each celebration of the Eucharist and accompanying preaching. The council rejected this proposal.<sup>405</sup> Calvin felt that the council's apathy towards a clear confession of faith signaled their own apostasy. Since they did not want clear doctrine, they wanted it watered-down; to Calvin, God must not have elected them, there was no other explanation for their refusal. The elect, the true remnant, wanted true Bible preaching without superstitious sacrament.

Between 1540 and 1555, Calvin became an internationally recognized leader of the Reformed movement. When Calvin wrote *Commentaries on Romans*, his authority was not yet largely recognized. In 1555, he became a full citizen of Geneva; when he commented on Psalms in 1557, he was no longer a legal resident alien. Scholars consider 1555 as the watermark year in which Calvin established his authority in Geneva.<sup>406</sup> His ideas had circulated and more people widely recognized his leadership of the Reformed movement. After 1555, English and French reformed alike began using his theology as a touchstone for their confessional statements. In 1556, the English Congregation at Geneva established their Confession and Calvin oversaw the French Confession of Faith in 1559.<sup>407</sup> He established a Genevan Academy in 1559, which

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<sup>405</sup> Alexandre Ganoczy, "Calvin's Life," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim, trans. David L. Foxgrover and James Schmitt, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>406</sup> Cochrane, *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century*, 127.

<sup>407</sup> Cochrane, *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century*, 127, 138.

spread Calvinist ideals to other areas, including the French Huguenots. Calvin's authority was recognized locally and internationally by the late 1550s.

Another event that solidified Calvin's leadership of the Reformed movement was the so-called Servetus affair. Miguel Servetus was a Spanish physician who questioned the details of the doctrine of the Trinity in *On Errors about the Trinity* (1531). Taking a new identity and living among the French, he practiced medicine and discovered the pulmonary system. In 1545, Servetus sent to Calvin a draft of his *Restoration of Christianity* (*Christianismi Restitutio*). Calvin responded with a copy of his *Institutes*; thereupon Servetus returned the copy to Calvin with marginal corrections and suggested a personal debate in Geneva. In 1553, Servetus published *Restoration* anonymously. Calvin had the evidence to prove Servetus wrote the work and indicted him to the Catholic Inquisition, although Servetus escaped from prison in Lyon. Then, Servetus went to Geneva, where, attending a service, Calvin recognized him and had the Genevan authorities arrest him. On 27 October 1553, the Genevan authorities burnt Servetus at the stake because he refused to recant. Calvin defended the practice in *Refutation of the Errors of Servetus*.<sup>408</sup> Beza wrote a defense of Calvin's approval of Servetus's execution, *De haereticis* (1554), which Tremellius read. For Reformed believers, Calvin's defense of the trinity by executing Servetus secured his leadership in their eyes, a leadership that the city granted in 1555.

Calvin's discussion of Jews in his *Commentaries on Psalms* (1557), exhibited his strong desire to treat the Biblical text with sensitivity to the Jews. Secure in his power, Calvin allowed

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<sup>408</sup> Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 105. For the classic biography of Servetus, see Jerome Friedman, *Michael Servetus: A Case Study in Total Heresy*, Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance, no. 163 (Genève: Droz, 1978); also, Jerome Friedman, "Michael Servetus: The Case for a Jewish Christianity," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 4, no. 1 (1973): 87–110; Roland H. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511-1553*, Tipple Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953).

Jews their interpretation. In many cases, Calvin followed the historical reading and not the Christological reading. G. Sujin Pak commented on Calvin's use of rabbinic exegesis: "Most of the time, he mentions the christological application of a Psalm as a valid interpretation, but there are passages where he explicitly rejects the reading of the Psalm in reference to Christ."<sup>409</sup> Calvin wanted the Jews to see his interpretations as defensible.<sup>410</sup> In one example, he interpreted the Hebrew word *'elohim* in Psalm 8:5 as referring to "gods" and not "angels," as the Septuagint had rendered it, because that translation seemed more natural to him, and "as it is almost universally adopted by the Jewish interpreters, I have preferred following it."<sup>411</sup> He wrote on Psalm 16:10 that "it is better to adhere to the natural simplicity of the interpretation which I have given, that we may not make ourselves objects of ridicule, to the Jews."<sup>412</sup> Calvin did not want the Jews to ridicule his interpretation and he hoped to earn their favor. This principle caused Calvin to reject the eternal sonship reading of Psalm 2:7 ("you are my son; today I have begotten you"). According to Calvin, past interpreters had seen "today" as referring to Christ's eternal generation from the father; but according to him, the passage merely demonstrated the manifestation of the Son of God at one time.<sup>413</sup> Calvin wanted to be faithful to the Jewish tradition of exegesis and not expound an interpretation that could not be verified.

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<sup>409</sup> G. Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth-Century Debates over the Messianic Psalms*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 79.

<sup>410</sup> Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin*, 82.

<sup>411</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* 8:5, translated by James Anderson (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 102, 103.

<sup>412</sup> Quoted in Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin*, 82.

<sup>413</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* 2:7, 17; cf. *Calvini opera* 31:46-47.

Calvin listed three conditions under which a reader could viably interpret a Psalm as referring to Christ. First, if the prophecy was completed or most appropriately referred to Christ. If a psalm described the eternity, vastness, invincibility, and unified peace of the messianic kingdom or the priestly function of the king, then that could not be applied to David, the King of Israel and Judah and purported author of the Psalms. Rather, it must refer to the future reign of King Jesus as Messiah upon the earth. Second, if Christ applied the psalm to himself, the reader could too. Thirdly, if it was clear that David intended to refer to the Messiah figure, according to the “simple and natural” sense of the passage, one could interpret it as referring to Jesus.<sup>414</sup> At the beginning of Psalm 2, Calvin wrote: “at present I would briefly inform my readers that as David’s temporal kingdom was a kind of earnest to God’s ancient people of the eternal kingdom, which at length was truly established in the person of Christ, those things which David declares concerning himself are not violently, or even allegorically, applied to Christ, but were truly predicted concerning him.”<sup>415</sup> Calvin did not want to force a Christological interpretation on the text, but if it made sense naturally, he approved it.

Calvin’s final edition of *Institutes* (1559) emphasized the unity of Jew and Gentile. Calvin’s discussion of Jews of the Old Testament in his *Institutes* reveals his generally positive view about Jews in biblical times, seeing them as part of God’s single covenant. According to Calvin, the Biblical Patriarchs were noble and did not live in darkness. Calvin wrote that Christ’s advent “brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel,” a quote from II Tim. 1. 10. Calvin added that Paul did not mean by these words “that the Fathers were plunged in the

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<sup>414</sup> Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin*, 79–80.

<sup>415</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* 2, 11.



darkness of death before the Son of God became incarnate,” but rather that the Gospel has “the honourable distinction of being a new and extraordinary kind of embassy, by which God fulfilled what he had promised, these promises being realised in the person of the Son.”<sup>416</sup> The Israelites were not in darkness, but Christ represented a clearer expression of God and that which the law promised. When Calvin had control over the Reformed church in Geneva and had unified its confession, Calvin wrote about Jews and Christians as unified in a single covenant.

In the final edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin saw the Old Testament and New Testament as complementary. Calvin wrote against the errors of Lutherans, who sharply delineated between Law and Gospel, between “the merit of works” and “the gratuitous imputation of righteousness.” However, Calvin considered Law/Gospel a valuable schema. He wrote that since followers of the law have not received the promise for their obedience, Paul “appropriately” represented the Law and the Gospel as in opposition. “But,” Calvin clarified, “the Gospel has not succeeded the whole Law in such a sense as to introduce a different method of salvation.”<sup>417</sup> Law and Gospel are not different means of salvation but the same. The Gospel, he wrote, “rather confirms the Law, and proves that everything which it promised is fulfilled. What was shadow, it has made substance. When Christ says that the Law and the Prophets were until John, he does not consign the fathers to a curse, which, as the slaves of the Law, they could not escape. He intimates that they were only imbued with the rudiments, and remained far beneath the height of the Gospel

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<sup>416</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.9.2.

<sup>417</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.9.4.

doctrine.”<sup>418</sup> God had not cursed the Jews, but they were living in shadow, but not in spiritual darkness; Law and Gospel are not entirely different modes of salvation.

Calvin believed that the Old and New Covenants were the same covenants, although administered under different administrations. He wrote: “the old and new dispensations are in reality one, although differently administered.” They agreed in “hope of immortality and eternal life,” and “both were established by the free mercy of God, and confirmed by the intercession of Christ.”<sup>419</sup> In chapter 10 of book two, Calvin sought to prove that “the Fathers were partakers with us in the same inheritance, and hoped for a common salvation through the grace of the same Mediator.”<sup>420</sup> God saved the Biblical Jews the same way he did Christians—namely, bestowing his grace through Christ. Calvin refuted the “monstrous miscreant” Michael Servetus and those he termed “some madmen of the sect of the Anabaptists,”<sup>421</sup> who, Calvin claimed, perceived “the people of Israel just as they do of some herd of swine, absurdly imagining that the Lord gorged them with temporal blessings here, and gave them no hope of a blessed immortality.”<sup>422</sup> Calvin was one of the first biblical commentators to see Jews as spiritually inclined, not simply backward, corrupt, or rejecting of Christ.

While Christians may have easily thought that Biblical Jews only cared about their earthly lives, the truth, according to Calvin, is that they were just as concerned about eternal life

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<sup>418</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.9.4.

<sup>419</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.10 heading.

<sup>420</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.10.1.

<sup>421</sup> For the Anabaptists and other radical reformers, see George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964).

<sup>422</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.10.1.

as Christians were. Calvin's functional soteriology was inclusive and universal in the sense that Calvin saw Jews and Christians as equally sinful and therefore equally savable; in contrast to many other Christians, Calvin did not insist that Jews had a taint that even baptism could not erase. God, according to Calvin, was an equal-opportunity savior. He believed that the same covenant belonged to both communities. In a break from a millennia-long history of replacement theology in the church, which insisted that the church replaced Israel as God's chosen people, Calvin refuted that claim and showed that God saved Jews and Christians in the same manner. Calvin's thought left no room for Christian theological superiority; Jews and Christians were equal in salvation, in covenant, and in morality.

Calvin argued that Christians observed the same covenant as the Israelites, but the administration of the covenants differed. Calvin wrote: "The covenant made with all the fathers in so far from differing from ours in reality and substance, [...] is altogether one and the same: still the administration differs."<sup>423</sup> In contrast to other Christian theologians who depicted Jews as fleshly and Christians as spiritual, Calvin showed the Biblical Jews as spiritual. "Temporal opulence and felicity," Calvin wrote, "was not the goal to which the Jews were invited to aspire." Rather, they hoped for immortality, and "assurance of this adoption was given by immediate communications, by the Law and by the Prophets." Calvin understood that the Lord had showered his grace on them by electing them: "The covenant by which they were reconciled to the Lord was founded on no merits of their own, but solely on the mercy of God, who called them." In Calvin's theology, he imagined that the Biblical Jews "both had and knew Christ the Mediator, by whom they were united to God and made capable of receiving his promises." By

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<sup>423</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.10.2.

this statement, Calvin presumably referred to the angel of the Lord in the Hebrew Scriptures, who acted on God's behalf in conveying God's messages to his people. However, few Christian theologians imagined that the Jews of the Old Testament knew Christ *as Christ* before his advent. Nevertheless, Calvin's theological generosity to the Israelites in that he granted them the same covenant as the Christians was quite groundbreaking for his time.

Calvin recognized Jews as part of the Gospel covenant. Calvin asked the rhetorical question: "Who, then, will presume to represent the Jews as destitute of Christ, when we know that they were parties to the Gospel covenant, which has its foundation in Christ? Who will presume to make them aliens to the benefit of gratuitous salvation, when we know that they were instructed in the doctrine of justification by faith?"<sup>424</sup> Calvin's commitment to understanding both Christians and Jews as saved by Christ is noteworthy here, given the long history of Christian anti-Judaism, that portrayed the Jews as spiritually darkened.

Calvin was clear to repudiate the harsh dichotomy of Jews as fleshly and Christians as spiritual. "Let us put far from us the senseless and pernicious notion, that the Lord proposed nothing to the Jews, or that they sought nothing but full supplies of food, carnal delights, abundance of wealth, external influence, a numerous offspring, and all those things which our animal nature deems valuable." However, Calvin's generosity towards the Jews stopped at the Cross. His soteriology had a logical disjunction—namely, if the Jews of the Old Testament were saved by Christ, what of the Jews of the New Testament and today? Here, Calvin maintained the same answer as all other Christian writers had—Jews of the Christian Era needed to give up their

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<sup>424</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.10.4.

Jewish ways and be converted to Christ; even though, according to Calvin, the Jews of the Old Covenant followed their Jewish ways and were supernaturally, unwittingly, converted to Christ.

Calvin extended this equality between Jew and Christian to the sacraments themselves. As Christians are baptized, the Israelites had also been baptized. Christians eat Christ's body; the Israelites had received the same spiritual sustenance. Calvin understood that God baptized the Jews in passing them through the Red Sea; and that they ate his body by means of the manna in the wilderness. Calvin believed that St. Paul taught these matters: "The Apostle makes the Israelites our equals, not only in the grace of the covenant, but also in the signification of the Sacraments.... The Lord not only visited [the Jews] with the same mercies, but also distinguished his grace among them by the same symbols,"<sup>425</sup> namely, baptism and communion. "The Apostle's object [was] to prevent Christians from imagining that they excelled the Jews in matter of baptism." "The same promises of celestial and eternal life, which the Lord now gives to us, were not only communicated to the Jews, but also sealed by truly spiritual sacraments."<sup>426</sup> Not only did the Jews have access to salvation in the same manner, but the Jews who lived before Christ were *actually* saved by means of crossing the Red Sea. Calvin extended the Pauline metaphor and interpreted this event as an actual, effectual baptism for the entire nation. Christ had made sure that he had baptized the entire ancient Israelite body. Additionally, Christ had fed them his body by giving them manna in the wilderness. The impressive catholicity and generosity of Calvin's theology here is outstanding in regards to his peers. According to Calvin, ancient Jews and Christians were entirely equal in every manner.

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<sup>425</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.10.5.

<sup>426</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.10.6.

The current generation of Jews, however, had rejected Jesus and so were spiritually blind: “They read, and are constantly turning over the pages of Moses, but a veil prevents them from seeing the light which beams forth in his countenance (II Cor. 3. 14); and thus to them he will remain covered and veiled until they are converted to Christ.”<sup>427</sup> While God had saved the pre-Christian Jews, the Jews of Christ’s day had rejected the savior and therefore lost the favor of God’s covenant. The Christians, though belonging to the same covenant, stepped in and were faithful to God’s covenant by means of believing on Christ. Current Jews could return to the covenant if they too believed on Christ. Calvin’s theology here represented a creative reworking of what the Catholic Church had taught—replacement theology, the idea that the Church, the *Verus Israel* (true Israel), that had replaced Biblical Israel as God’s chosen people. Catholicism taught that there were two separate covenants, one of grace and one of works, one of light and one of darkness, (and in Luther’s view), one of Gospel and one of Law. In Calvin’s view, however, there was only one covenant—the same one God gave to the ancient Jews—and into which the Christians entered. Access to this single covenant was through believing in Christ, so in that way Calvin maintained the equality of Jew and Christian in that they have the same entrance requirements, namely, belief in Christ.

Despite seeing them as one dispensation, Calvin maintained five distinctions between the Old and New Testaments. Chapter 11 of the *Institutes* repeated iterations of previous Christian thought and seemingly contradicted his ideas about Old Testament Jews expressed in chapter 10. The first distinction was that, “in the Old Testament[,] the heavenly inheritance is exhibited under temporal blessings; in the New, aids of this description are not employed.” Calvin seems

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<sup>427</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.10.23.

to contradict himself from his earlier statements that the Jews looked for spiritual blessings. The second distinction was that “the Old Testament typified Christ under ceremonies,” whereas “the New exhibits the immediate truth and the whole body,” thereby Calvin maintained that Jewish ceremony was secondary. Third, “the Old Testament is literal, the New spiritual.” Fourth, “the Old Testament belongs to bondage, the New to liberty.” Fifth, “the Old Testament belonged to one people only, the New to all.”<sup>428</sup> Calvin, while thinking he did the right thing by spiritualizing Jews, spiritualized them to the point of making them paper waifs in his theological schema. He argued that the Jews did not want the land of Israel; they really wanted Christ all along. “Our opponents,” he argued, “hold that the land of Canaan was considered by the Israelites as supreme and final happiness, and now, since Christ was manifested, typifies to us the heavenly inheritance; whereas we maintain that, in the earthly possession which the Israelites enjoyed, they beheld, as in a mirror, the future inheritance which they believed to be reserved for them in heaven.”<sup>429</sup> According to Calvin, Old Testament Jews looked forward to heaven to represent their promised land. Calvin did not really care about sixteenth-century Jews; he more cared about fitting them into his theological categories.

Calvin’s harshest views towards then-living Jews can be found in his response to the claims of the *Sefer Nizzahon* (*Book of Victory*), an anonymous anti-Christian polemical tract in circulation since the fifteenth century. Calvin quoted from the *Sefer Nizzahon* and responded to its claims in his *Refutation of the questions and charges of a certain Jew*.<sup>430</sup> (Tremellius could

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<sup>428</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.11 heading.

<sup>429</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:2.11.1.

<sup>430</sup> Jean Calvin, *Ad quaestiones et obiecta Judaei cuiusdam responsio*, in *Joannis Calvini Opera*, 9: 658-674. Rabbi Susan Frank translated it in Mary Sweetland Laver, “Calvin, Jews, and Intra-Christian Polemics,”

have provided Calvin with his copy of the *Sefer* when he came over the Alps from Lucca in 1542.<sup>431</sup>) In the *Refutation*, Calvin produced a humanist dialogue between himself and the figure whom he termed “the Jew,” a stand-in for all Jews and the anonymous author of the *Sefer Nizzahon*. Calvin’s treatment of Jews in *Refutation*, not published during his lifetime and whose timing is uncertain, is much more anti-Judaistic than Calvin’s other writings, akin to other anti-Judaists of the age.

While Calvin held positive views towards the ancient Jews who embraced God’s law in *Institutes*, he described sixteenth-century Jews as “wicked dogs” in *Refutation*. Nevertheless, Calvin’s scorn was not limited to Jews; he believed they were on equal footing with Christians in terms of depravity. For nearly every Christian in Calvin’s day, the primary reason why Jews had lost favor with God was not only that they rejected Christ but that they had crucified him as well. Jews were God-killers, and this crime of deicide has continued to haunt them to this day.<sup>432</sup> Calvin had the Jew with whom he debated inquire how Jesus could be the solution for sin, when his crucifixion indicted the Jews for killing him and increased their sin all the more; “because

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appendix 2. The work to which Calvin responded is published as David Berger, ed. and trans., *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus* (Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1996).

<sup>431</sup> Stephen G. Burnett, “Calvin’s Jewish Interlocutor: Christian Hebraism and Anti-Jewish Polemics during the Reformation,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 55, no. 1 (1993): 113–23; William Horbury, “The Basle Nizzahon,” in *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 244–61. The flyleaf states that after Tremellius brought it from the Alps, Samuel Hortinus gave the copy to Johann Buxtorf the Elder (1564–1629) in 1623 at Berne, then loaned it to Wilhelm Schickard of Tübingen in 1624, who returned it to Buxtorf and entered it to the Basel library, where Buxtorf taught.

<sup>432</sup> Modern scholarship about Jesus’s life now sees Jesus’s death as the result of the Romans and not Jewish treachery, thereby lifting the crime of deicide off their shoulders. James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 40–41. *Nostra Aetate*, October 28, 1965, declared: “Although the Church is the new People of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God...Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church...decries hatred, persecution, displays of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.” In fact, the idea has become so common in the twenty-first century, that a more popular book like Shmuley Boteach, *Kosher Jesus* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2012), 53 argues that “the Jews did not kill Jesus, nor did they want him dead. The Roman government did, and it was they who dispatched him with great alacrity” once they perceived him as a threat.



there can be no greater sin found than the hanging of God.”<sup>433</sup> Calvin’s response shows his contempt for Jews as covenant-breakers, but not Christ-killers. He wrote: “For it is clear that the Jews at once violated the covenant of God and greatly provoked God’s wrath against themselves by violating the justice of the law.” Calvin cited Ezekiel 12:53, arguing that Israel is worse than Sodom and Gomorrah because Israel “spurned the salvation offered to it,” which “makes it quite clear that there is no remedy for these wicked dogs that they do not curse.” Calvin regarded Jews as rejecting salvation whenever it was offered to them. However, strikingly absent from Calvin’s answer is the idea that they killed Jesus. The anonymous Jew to whom Calvin responded brought up the accusation of deicide, but Calvin did not repeat that claim but merely that of covenant breaking. The Jew’s leading question set up Calvin to charge the Jews with deicide, but he did not. According to Stephen G. Burnett, this manoeuvre meant that Calvin saw Jews as unbelievers but not cursed: “In this respect at least Jews were one more group in the host of unbelievers, rather than the victims of a special divine curse.”<sup>434</sup> In Calvin’s mind, the Jews were not bad because they killed Jesus, but because they broke God’s law. Gentiles, as equally as Jews, were guilty of breaking God’s law. The solution to breaking God’s law is to repent and to follow God’s law; there is, however, no solution for killing God’s son. In this way, Calvin’s view of Jews was strikingly emancipatory and egalitarian compared to previous theologians’, as he regarded the primary sin of both Jews and Gentiles as not believing in Christ and failing to follow God’s law. Jews were not uniquely cursed but were equally sinful to Gentiles.

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<sup>433</sup> John Calvin, “John Calvin’s Response to the Questions and Challenges of a Jew,” trans. Susan Frank, in *Calvin, Jews, and Intra-Christian Polemics*, by Mary Sweetland Laver (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1988), 229.

<sup>434</sup> Burnett, “Calvin’s Jewish Interlocutor,” 115.

Calvin did not write kindly about Jews and seemingly did not like them—if he ever knew any besides Tremellius (who was, by then, a Christian convert). Calvin only wrote about Jews to extent that they related to the subject of his theological discourses, namely, God, covenant, and the human’s relationship to law. In the *Refutation*, which should not be taken as entirely representative of his full views due to the polemic and aggressive nature of such dialogues, Calvin referred to Jews with vicious names. At one point, he stated that they could not accept a Suffering Messiah because “these brutes, out of their own personal pride, seek to conform God to their own laws.” In the same context, Calvin referred to Jews as “yapping dogs” that cause the majority of men to perish.<sup>435</sup> The Jewish interlocutor asked Calvin why Jesus felt hunger if he was God. Calvin responded: “Answer this: Why did the angels eat with Abraham? How did it happen that they were rudely bothered by the Sodomites? Why did God tell Moses to stand in his way lest he carry out the punishment he had ordained? The solution is of no importance to these pigs.”<sup>436</sup> In bestial terms, Calvin called Jews wicked dogs, yapping dogs, brutes, and pigs, but the way to salvation was open to them through God’s will.

Admittedly, Calvin did not use bestial language just for Jews, but also for other Christians with whom he disagreed. Stephen Burnett argued, therefore, that this language does not inform us of Calvin’s views of Jews, but instead reflects the rhetorical aspersions he cast on his Christian opponents (e.g., Anabaptists).<sup>437</sup> While it is certainly true that Calvin used bestial terms as a rhetorical tool to belittle his opponents’ objections, this does not help us determine

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<sup>435</sup> Calvin, “John Calvin’s Response,” 242.

<sup>436</sup> Calvin, “John Calvin’s Response,” 249.

<sup>437</sup> Burnett, “Calvin’s Jewish Interlocutor,” 121.

whether he liked Jews. Since he saw those with whom he disagreed (e.g., Anabaptists) as outside the true faith, using bestial language was a way to separate and make his opponents “other.”

Calvin thus implicitly otherized Jews by using bestial language.

Calvin also used vitriolic language regarding Jewish exile in the *Refutation*. Calvin wrote: “First of all men, the Jews displayed by their obstinacy that they did not wish peace with God. Deservedly, therefore, do they tear their entrails up until the final destruction of their homeland. And others followed after, each in his turn, because no people was beyond this poison.”<sup>438</sup> According to Calvin, the Jews resisted peace with God by refusing to believe in God’s son; the result was exile until their homeland is destroyed.<sup>439</sup> Vitriolic language expressed his antipathy towards Jews.

Following a long-standing medieval tradition, Calvin depicted Jews as both insane and blind.<sup>440</sup> He wrote that God wanted Jews to have “a sane mind” so that they could understand their end. He exasperatingly asked: “How did they still remain blind and foolish when it was in the power of God, who had deprived them of it in the first place, to restore their sanity?”<sup>441</sup> This idea reinforced Calvin’s emphasis on God’s absolute sovereignty, who gives and takes away Jewish sanity without regarding to their chosenness. How does Calvin then condemn them for

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<sup>438</sup> Calvin, “John Calvin’s Response,” 240–41.

<sup>439</sup> Intriguingly, Christian theologians of the pre-modern period believed that Jews were destined to wander the earth until they were destroyed. They applied passages in the Bible about returning to the Land and God gathering the exiles as referring to the blessings of the Church. However, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 caused some theologies to be rethought, as it countered what Christians imagined the Jewish future to be like.

<sup>440</sup> David Nirenberg, *Aesthetic Theology and Its Enemies: Judaism in Christian Painting, Poetry, and Politics*, The Mandel Lectures in the Humanities at Brandeis University (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015), 10, note 9.

<sup>441</sup> Calvin, “John Calvin’s Response,” 260–61.

something over which they have no power? Calvin continued to call sixteenth-century Jews stupid and crazy. “Indeed,” Calvin asked rhetorically, “does not that stupid craziness convict them enough, namely that not only is our Christ an object of mockery for them, but so also are their Law and Prophets?”<sup>442</sup> The Jewish interlocutor had asked: if Father and Son are one, why are their wills separate? Calvin responded that God did not desire the death of a sinner, even though he condemned them to destruction. Calvin highlighted God’s sovereignty, and asked how the Bible could describe God as regretting and changing his mind. “The answer to this question depends on a principle unknown to the Jews because they have been stricken by a spirit of dizziness and insanity. That Christ is one and the same with God his father does not at all stand in the way of the fact that having been made man, he took up human feelings.”<sup>443</sup> Since Jews have dizzied, insane minds and decry God’s mysteries, they have no rational faculty. Calvin portrayed Jews as irrational creatures, drawn from centuries of anti-Judaistic discourse.

At the end of the *Refutation*, Calvin linked what he considered Jews’ insane mind with “their transgression” (*peccatis eorum*) and their cursed state. The Jewish interlocutor claimed that they were not in exile for the murder of Jesus, who claimed that they “were in exile before [Christ’s] death,” and even so, Christ would forgive them, because he himself said, “My father, forgive them for what they do, because they know not what they are doing.” Calvin responded with the quote that Jews have an insane mind, calling them accursed: “Their cursed, unconquerable obstinance” merits them no pity. Despite their oppression, they “reveled in the huge mass of their miseries and evils.” “What kind of stupidity is this,” Calvin explained, “that

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<sup>442</sup> Calvin, “John Calvin’s Response,” 248.

<sup>443</sup> Calvin, “John Calvin’s Response,” 254–55.

makes them so sure of the cause when for so many centuries they have been openly worn down by the hand of God? It is clear from the prophets how the horrendous heap of all their crimes grew among this people long before the exile.” He continued: “They have not ceased provoking God’s punishment against themselves by their devilish obduracy. Still, God eventually punished them with a seventy-year exile and says that he has exacted from them a double penalty for their transgressions.”<sup>444</sup> The Jews will continue to walk the earth until they are vanquished for their crimes. Calvin’s message extended beyond Jews, whose exile could be the fate of any person who rejected God’s law.

While Calvin repeated vicious, anti-Jewish tropes such as blindness, insanity, and beastliness, he did not repeat the main anti-Jewish accusation: that of deicide. Medieval theologians had used the charge that Jews were responsible for Christ’s death for centuries to disenfranchise and deny the validity of the Jewish covenant. Calvin, instead, based the fault on Jewish sinfulness, which for him, was equally as characteristic of Jews as of Gentiles. God had a covenant accessible through Jesus, and Jews and Gentiles were equivalently excluded due to their sinfulness. If they repented and believed in Jesus, they could rejoin the covenant and become God’s chosen people, even though God already knew and decided whom he elected. Between 1540 and 1559, Calvin’s emphasis shifted from Jews’ sinfulness and loss of covenant to the idea that there was a single covenant accessible to ancient Jews and Christians alike.

While Calvin was the most systematic exponent of this idea, other Reformed theologians wrote about Israel’s relationship to the church. Martin Bucer, for instance, did not care about Jews in his civic policy, but utilized rabbinic learning in his biblical commentaries to a greater

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<sup>444</sup> Calvin, “John Calvin’s Response,” 261.

degree than previous exegetes. Bucer's civic policy was anti-Jewish, as he rejected a Jewish proposal for toleration of Jews. In 1518 at Heidelberg, he heard one of Martin Luther's disputations, embraced evangelical teachings, renounced his monastic vow, and married. He served as a Reformed leader in Strasbourg from 1523 to 1548. After his time in Strasbourg, he moved to Cambridge, where he helped Thomas Cranmer draft the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England.<sup>445</sup> In Strasbourg, Bucer wanted to create a city free of Jews. In 1538, after the rights of the Jews in Hesse expired, the landgrave of Hesse, Philip, asked Bucer and Jacob Sturm, the former *Ammeister* of Strasbourg, to what degree he should allow toleration of Jews.<sup>446</sup> Bucer's answer to "whether it is fitting that a Christian authority should tolerate the Jews living among Christians, and if so, under what conditions," insisted that Jews could not participate in Christian society.<sup>447</sup> The Synod of Ziegenhain and the Ordinance of Ziegenhain of 29 November 1538 re-organized the church along Reformed lines. A group of Jews brought Philip a petition, "Proposals for Toleration of the Jews," in November 1538. The seven articles of the toleration proposal provided a compromise.<sup>448</sup> The proposals indicated that Jews would be able to buy and sell in cities where there were no guilds, since they could not injure the guilds. The proposals exhorted Jews do their business honestly, without contriving any dishonest

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<sup>445</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 63; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 380; Maddison, *Marcantonio Flamino*, 138; Eells, *Martin Bucer*, 411–13.

<sup>446</sup> Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion*, 88, 153, 156; The grammarian lexicographer Johann Christoph Adelung, "Ammeister," *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart mit beständiger Vergleichung der übrigen Mundarten, besonders aber der oberdeutschen* (Leipzig, 1801 1793), 249, <http://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/Adelung?bookref=1,249,9>, gave the following description for the title *Ammeister*: "They led in Strasburg, for example, over the six council people, and had the highest power beside the city regiment."

<sup>447</sup> Quoted in Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion*, 88.

<sup>448</sup> Hastings Eells, "Bucer's Plan for the Jews," *Church History* 6, no. 2 (1937): 128.

business or finance, or else the landgrave would punish them. Third, the proposals stated that no Jew should engage in money lending for gain or usury, but they might lend small amounts to any person, with civil supervision and “a just interest.” Fourth, the Jews should elect special supervisors to find those deserving punishment and make sure they received punishment “in their own way” (according to Jewish law). Fifth, the proposals indicated that each Jew should pay the landgrave the protection tax, either the traditional amount, or whatever the prince should tax him. Sixth, they should go to “preaching.” Finally, the proposals forbid them from arguing about their religious beliefs.<sup>449</sup> Bucer received the Jews’ petition while he was meeting with the Hessian theologians at a synod in Cassel.<sup>450</sup> Bucer rejected the petition for its leniency.

Martin Bucer displayed a deep-seated animosity towards Jews because they did not fit into his ideal of a perfect Christian society. Jacob Sturm drafted a proposal regarding the place of Jews in Hesse and sent it to Philip of Hesse and Bucer. According to Debra Kaplan, Bucer wanted to expel Jews, but argued that if the Jews were to remain, they needed harsh punishments and instruction in Christianity.<sup>451</sup> Bucer drafted his own proposal about how to handle Jews in a

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<sup>449</sup> “Das sie möchten kauffen und verkauffen / doch in den Stedten da kein zunfft were / wo sie zünfft nicht leiden möchten. Sollen alle ire handel auffrichtig treiben / mit keinem ungebührlichen handel oder finanz umbgehen / Wo einer solchs ober füre / der solt von M. G. Herrn getrafft werden. Sollen keinen Jüdischen süch oder wüchter treiben / würden sie aber einem / einen gulden zween drey oder mehr leihen / Solchs sol geschehen im beysein der amptknecht / oder mit wissen eines Rahts / und dauon nach billicher widerung der selbigen gegeben werden. Sollen sonderliche personen under inen haben / die auff die straffwirden Juden sehen / beneben den Amptknechten / unnd das die selbige sondere personen die straffwirdigen Juden / den anderen Juden anzeigen / damit sie die straffwirdigen nach irem gesetz unter sich selbst straffen. Ein jeder Jude sol M. G. H. und fürsten den Schutzpfenning geben wie von alters / oder was mein G. H. im wird auff setzen. Sollen inn die predig gehen. Sollen von irem glauben nicht disputieren.” Martin Bucer, *Von den Juden ob und wie die under den christen zu halten sind ein rathschlag durch die gelerten am ende disbuechclins verzeichnet zugericht. Item ein weitere Erklerung und beschirmung des selbigen rahtschlags* (Strasbourg: Wolfgang Köpfel, 1539), Ai.

<sup>450</sup> Eells, “Bucer’s Plan,” 129; Steven Rowan, “Luther, Bucer and Eck on the Jews,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 1 (1985): 82.

<sup>451</sup> Debra Kaplan and Magda Teter, “Out of the (Historiographic) Ghetto: European Jews and Reformation Narratives,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 375.

Christian society, known as the Cassel Advice (1538).<sup>452</sup> Bucer's Cassel Advice upheld the following principles: First, there was only one true religion; all differing religions should be punished as false. Second, Bucer considered Jews dishonest and thought they treated Christians harshly. He believed that they had a religious duty to cheat Christians. In his view, they had no right to toleration. Third, he concluded that God had condemned the Jews. Fourth, he believed that Jews wrongly took business away from Christians. Lastly, Bucer proposed that he treat the Jewish problem practically. Ideally, he did not want Jews at all, but since emperors and bishops had allowed Jews to settle in the Holy Roman Empire, Bucer recognized that he had no choice but to allow them to continue living among Christians in Strasbourg.<sup>453</sup>

Despite Bucer's dislike of Jewish people, he valued Jewish exegesis, especially in his commentary on the Psalms (1520). Bucer published his translation of the Psalms set to ritual music as *Strassburger Gesangbuch* (Strasbourg, 1541), with large font so that many could view it simultaneously.<sup>454</sup> Viewing contemporary Jewish practice or hearing the remark of a Jew influenced Bucer's commentary on Psalm 19:6, where he indicated that the word traditionally translated "inner chamber" was *huppah*, the Jewish wedding canopy.<sup>455</sup> Bucer used Hebraic spellings (Mosheh for Moses, Iaacob for Iacob) to indicate his dependence on Hebraic learning.<sup>456</sup> According to the fascinating study by G. Sujin Pak, Christians before Bucer and

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<sup>452</sup> Kaplan and Teter, "Out of the (Historiographic) Ghetto," 375.

<sup>453</sup> Eells, "Bucer's Plan," 130–31; Bucer, *Von den Juden*, Aii-Bii.

<sup>454</sup> Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion*, 122.

<sup>455</sup> R. Gerald Hobbs, "How Firm a Foundation? Martin Bucer's Historical Exegesis of the Psalms," *Church History* 53 (1984): 488.

<sup>456</sup> R. Gerald Hobbs, "Bucer, the Jews, and Judaism," in *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Dean Philip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 143.



Calvin interpreted the Psalms as speaking about Jesus Christ. Bucer and Calvin were the first to interpret the Psalms as speaking about King David; both agreed that David was a type of Christ and foreshadowed Christ. Bucer made sure to keep Christ at the center of interpretation, while Calvin focused his interpretation almost entirely on David. Bucer used Jewish exegetes, especially David Kimḥi, to a greater extent than Calvin did. Bucer stated that the main reason for using Jewish sources is for the information that they provide regarding the historical context and the “plain sense” (*peshat*) of a psalm. On Psalm 2, Bucer read the psalm as speaking about the historical life of David and the Philistines, not the Christological interpretation.<sup>457</sup> Instead of reading Psalm 2:12 as “kiss the son,” as medieval Christians had done, Bucer cited Jerome’s non-Christological interpretation as “worship purely.”<sup>458</sup> All in all, Bucer employed the Jewish exegesis of Kimḥi, Rashi and Ibn Ezra extensively in his commentaries on the Psalms, showing the degree to which he valued Jewish interpretation.

The Reformer Theodore Beza (1519–1605), Calvin’s successor at Geneva, sought to apply the Mosaic Law to the lives of believers using a rubric put forth by the scholastic theologian Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas had divided the laws in the Pentateuch into three categories: Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial. According to Aquinas, Jesus’s Advent had abolished the ceremonial laws, such that following them after Christ was mortal sin. These laws included circumcision, Shabbat, Passover and other Jewish holidays, and any distinctive Jewish practices. By declaring that Jesus abolished the ceremonial, Aquinas targeted Jewish laws, and tacitly advanced and gave approval to a particular, legalistic form of anti-Judaism. According to

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<sup>457</sup> Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin*, 65.

<sup>458</sup> Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin* Chapter 3, note 46.

him, judicial laws no longer applied after Christ, but it was not sinful to enforce them. These included laws for society, such as authorizing executions for capital sins. Moral laws, however, were still in force. Moral laws included the sins of lying, adultery, murder, and theft. Christians could dismiss Jewish practice by dividing the Law.

Beza did not believe that the judicial law had been abrogated. In 1554, Beza wrote *De haereticis* to defend the burning of Michael Servetus and which Tremellius read:

Although we are not bound to the formulae of the Mosaic polity, yet when those judicial laws prescribe equity in judgments, which is part of the Decalogue, we—inasmuch as we are not bound to them to the extent that Moses prescribed them to one people—are yet bound to observe them to the extent that they embrace a general equity, which must prevail everywhere. For the ordinances are apparent for this reason, not because they have been ordained by Moses upon one people of the Israelites, but because they have been ordained by nature upon the entire nation of man.<sup>459</sup>

While not bound to them, Beza recommended that non-Jews follow judicial laws because they exhibit “general equity.” Since the Law perfectly embodied justice and equity, everyone ought to turn to it for judicial decisions. Should someone observe the Mosaic punishment for a judicial law? Christian magistrates need not follow the punishment for theft, for example, but ought to look to Moses as a guide to follow: when “some specific circumstance either of time, place or persons does not hinder, magistrates must act most properly to look toward the most perfect example of the Mosaic laws in establishing their own laws.”<sup>460</sup> Moses is the guiding star toward which Christian magistrates must aim. Beza stated that the Mosaic Law “is not imposed upon us as a yoke, but yet the judgements are exercised with the highest moderation.”<sup>461</sup> Beza suggested

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<sup>459</sup> Théodore De Bèze, *De haereticis a civili magistratu puniendis libellus, adversus Martini Bellii farraginem, et novorum Academicorum sectam, Theodoro Beza Vezelio auctore*. (Geneva: Robert Estienne, 1554), 222, <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-2720>.

<sup>460</sup> Bèze, *De haereticis*, 222.

<sup>461</sup> Bèze, *De haereticis*, 222.

comparing Mosaic, Greek, and Roman law to find the truth in the common denominator. When one finds similar punishments for similar crimes, that means all the laws have “the goal of natural equity.”<sup>462</sup> Beza cited two laws which must be punished immediately, without question. Those were “defection from the religion which is constituted by the Word of God” and “solicitation” of such defection.<sup>463</sup> Beza’s interpretation of the Law of Moses led him to hold that not belonging to the Reformed religion was punishable by the civil magistrates.

Later, in his 1577 *Lex Dei moralis, ceremonialis, et politica*, Beza collated the Mosaic laws into the ethical/moral, ceremonial, and judicial categories. The entire one hundred pages of the book are the Biblical texts of the commands arranged into Beza’s categories. According to him, the political exhibits the ethical in human society and provides the magistrate a weapon against his transgressors.<sup>464</sup> The magistrate is supposed to defend both tables of the commandments, laws about God and society.<sup>465</sup> Beza listed the moral commandments as simply the Ten Commandments, divided into two tables, the first of four, and the second of six. Beza included the following under political, showing his concern with civil punishment: idolatry, blasphemy, divination and false prophecy, treaties and contracts, Sabbath violation, the magistrate and his authority, the power of the father, capital punishment, homicide voluntary and

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<sup>462</sup> Bèze, *De haereticis*, 223.

<sup>463</sup> Bèze, *De haereticis*, 224. “Primùm enim quum defectio à religione quæ verbo Dei est constituta, & sollicitatio ad defectionem...”

<sup>464</sup> Théodore De Bèze, *Lex Dei moralis, ceremonialis, et politica, ex libris Mosis excerpta, et in certas classes distributa, a Theodoro Beza Vezelio* (Geneva: Pierre de Saint-André, 1577), 1, <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-2431>. Πολιτικὴ ostendit quis sit τῆς ἠθικῆς vsus in communi hominum societate, & aduersus transgressores eius magistratum armat. “The political exhibits what might be the use of the ethical in common human society and arms the magistrate against his transgressors.”

<sup>465</sup> Bèze, *Lex Dei*, 61. Magistratus custos est utriusque tabulæ præceptorum, habita societatis humanæ ratione. “The magistrate is the protector of both tables of commandments, maintained with reason to human society.”

involuntary, sanctuary cities, just war, illicit relations, prostitution, adultery and jealousy, coitus beyond nature, kidnapping, fair weights, usury, and coins. Everything else was ceremonial.

For its context, Reformed thought about the Law was radical enough that it made Reformers the target of anti-Jewish attacks by Catholic theologians and authorities. Bucer had to defend himself against charges of having Jewish parentage in 1546.<sup>466</sup> Two of his enemies accused Calvin of judaizing: Miguel Servetus and the Lutheran theologian Aegidius Hunnius, who, in 1593, wrote *Calvinus Judaizans*.<sup>467</sup> In letters to Calvin, Servetus accused Calvin of imposing Mosaic Law “with [his] true Jewish zeal” onto the citizens of Geneva, forcing them to submit to an “irrational, impossible, [and] tyrannical law,” and “twisting [the Mosaic] law to apply to us and from violently agitating for its observance.”<sup>468</sup> This name-calling demonstrates that Calvin and Bucer took a markedly different approach to the Old Testament, an approach others labelled “Jewish.”

Sixteenth-century Reformed theologians had a high view of Jewish law, but a low view of Jewish persons. This Reformed anti-Judaism was degrees removed from anti-Semitism. Calvin, in one of his writings, called Jews accusatory epithets, with which he also abused his Anabaptist opponents. However, Calvin gave Jews and Gentiles a theological equality of footing by maintaining they were equally sinful. Calvin did not repeat the charge of deicide against Jews as the rationale for their exile, nor did he speak of them as cursed. Instead, he argued that it was

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<sup>466</sup> Salo Wittmayer Baron, “John Calvin and the Jews,” in *Ancient and Medieval Jewish History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 339–40.

<sup>467</sup> Benjamin R. Merkle, “Triune Elohim: The Heidelberg Antitrinitarians and Reformed Readings of Hebrew in the Confessional Age” (PhD Dissertation, Christ Church College, 2012), 124; Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin*, 105. Hunneus critiqued Calvin’s tendency to not explicate Biblical support for the trinity in his commentaries.

<sup>468</sup> Quoted in Baron, “John Calvin and the Jews,” 341. *Calvini opera*, vol. VIII, pp. 703ff.

their lack of following God's law and rejection of Jesus that led to their oppression. There was only one covenant, which consisted of God's elect; if the elect did not live up to God's law, then they were punished, and God elected those who would. In one sense, Calvin should not fault the Jews for their failures because he believed that God willed it. However, while maintaining similar tropes about Jews' blindness and insanity, Calvin paved a new view of God's relationship to the law, the church, and the Jews. This positive view of God's law as a single covenant equally applicable to Jew and Gentile (though different in dispensation) appealed to Tremellius, who made similar arguments about the Law not being abrogated and continuing to apply to Jews after their conversion.

In summary, this network of Reformed theologians introduced Tremellius to his friends, who helped him for the rest of his life. Tremellius met Vermigli in 1541, Bucer in 1542, Calvin in 1543, and Beza in 1554. While we do not know exactly what ideas they shared when they met, we can discern that Tremellius adapted ideas from Reformed networks regarding the Law of Moses and its relationship to the New Covenant. Each Reformed theologian outlined in this chapter provided a unique contribution to an intellectual milieu that allowed Tremellius's theology regarding the relationship between Judaism and Christianity to develop. Calvin's treatment of Jew and Gentile as equal(ly sinful) and part of a single covenant justified Tremellius's invitation to welcome Christian Hebrew-readers into his community, composing the single community of God, consisting of both Jewish-Christians and Gentile Hebrew-readers. Bucer demonstrated what Christian use of Jewish exegesis looked like, a pattern Tremellius followed for the rest of his life. Beza provided a solid footing in categorizing Mosaic Law and in considering the applicability of judicial law to a wider audience. Tremellius's synthesis of the ideas of these men added to Tremellius's own Jewish background and Italian, spiritualist

spirituality and combined to create the first truly philo-semitic thinker of the sixteenth century, whose thought we will explore in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TREMELLIUS AND THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

The scene is 1510. At the Royal Château de Blois, a crowd of nobles gather around the bed of Anne of Brittany as she brings forth a baby girl. The father, Louis XII of France, is happy to have a child, but he was hoping for a son, as his previous three sons were stillborn. Anne had three additional miscarriages, and their first-born was a daughter. Still, he took the baby in his arms, anticipating her bright future. Louis took the baby to the chapel accompanied by a retinue and gave her to the priest, who immersed her in the waters. The priest asked, “What name do you give your child?” Louis answered, “Renée.” They recited the creed and returned to the palace for a feast. Seven hundred miles to the south-east, in Ferrara, another baby was born, but no nobles attended his birth. This time, a *mohel*, eight days after the birth, crouched over the crying newborn and performed the *bris*, serving to bring this baby into the Jewish community. “What name do you give your child,” the *mohel* asked. “Emanuele,” the father answered.

These two children, Renée of France and Emanuele Tremellio, were born in the same year, both lived in Ferrara, and had connections to Judaism and the Reformed Christian community. Emanuele Tremellio, hereafter designated by his Latinized name Immanuel Tremellius, would grow up in Ferrara, leave Judaism and Ferrara in 1530, and join the Christian Reformed community. Renée would come to Ferrara in 1528 when Ercole d’Este, duke of Ferrara, married her. As the duchess of Ferrara, Renée allowed Reformed theologians into her court, including John Calvin; her husband would allow the Jews to stay safe in Ferrara. Tremellius and Renée crossed paths going in opposite directions—one leaving, one coming—but they ended up in the same Reformed community and maintained sympathy for Jews. In an age of

strict religious boundaries and religious wars, these two figures' toleration for Jews and for Calvinists was rare indeed.

This chapter argues that Tremellius wanted to create a prayer book for an imagined Jewish–Christian community. Unlike other Jewish converts to Christianity, other Christian Hebraists, and other Reformed theologians, Tremellius was a true philo-semitic, an appreciator of Jewish people, teachings, and customs, due to his early life in the tolerant community of Ferrara, the influence of spiritualism on his Christianity, and his synthesis of Reformed views of the law.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first section explores Tremellius's upbringing in Ferrara and the role of spiritualism as an explanation for his philo-semitism. The second section argues that Tremellius maintained a hybrid identity – at once both Jew and Christian – by examining the contents of a heterodox Jewish book that Tremellius owned, the preface to his catechism, and his biblical annotations and correspondence with Reformed leaders. Tremellius sought to maintain normative Protestant theology while interacting with Jewish sources in ways that others considered dangerous. Tremellius succeeded in his Protestant aspirations, as he became a revered name among Protestants for years to come. Kenneth Austin's important 2007 biography has examined Tremellius's thought within the wider context of his life.<sup>469</sup> Nevertheless, while Austin carefully examined Tremellius' biblical annotations and other sources, he did not consider Tremellius's catechism. Thus, my research supplements Austin's by examining the catechism through the lens of religious hybridity.

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<sup>469</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*; Wilhelm Becker, *Immanuel Tremellius: Ein Proselytenleben im Zeitalter der Reformation*, 2., veränderte Auflage, Schriften des Institutum Judaicum in Berlin, no. 8 (Leipzig: F. C. Hinrichs, 1890), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hw2ky7>; Butters, *Emanuel Tremellius, erster Rector*.



Ferrara's pluralism and diversity towards Jews influenced Tremellius's upbringing (b. 1510). While other states expelled Jews in the medieval and early modern periods, Ferrara's dukes supported Jews both in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, despite external hostility, such as Pope Eugenius IV's application in 1432 of the distinctive clothing ruling of the 1215 Fourth Lateran Council to Ferrarese Jews. The Jewish community established a cemetery in Ferrara in 1451.<sup>470</sup> At a time when Spain and Portugal were banishing Jews, Ferrara passed an edict in 1493 inviting twenty-one Spanish families in exile to settle in Ferrara.<sup>471</sup> By the turn of the century, the Jews of Ferrara had their own synagogue.<sup>472</sup> Ercole I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara (r. 1471–1505), exempted Jewish moneylenders from Eugenius's clothing rule. However, in 1496, at the harsh prodding of Savonarola, Ercole I removed the exemptions from Ferrarese Jewry to wear a yellow badge of identification.<sup>473</sup> Whether through conversion, expulsion, or inquisition, European Jewry was dwindling, while Ferrara remained a relatively safe haven for fleeing Jews.

Tremellius's upbringing in Ferrara gave him positive views of Christians. The city had a sizeable Jewish population of around 2,000 by mid-century, out of a total population of 50,000,

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<sup>470</sup> David B. Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew: The Life and Thought of Abraham Ben Mordecai Farissol*, Monographs of the Hebrew Union College, Number 6 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1981), 15.

<sup>471</sup> Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, "Ebrei sefarditi e marrani a Ferrara dalla fine del Quattrocento alla devoluzione del Ducato estense," in *Libri, idee e sentimenti religiosi nel Cinquecento italiano*, ed. Albano Biondi and Adriano Prosperi (Ferrara: Istituto di studi rinascimentali, 1987), 119.

<sup>472</sup> Ruderman, *World of a Renaissance Jew*, 15.

<sup>473</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 6; David B. Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew: The Life and Thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1981), 27. IV Lateran had ruled that Jews and "Saracens" (Muslims) dress differently from Christians in public to prevent intermixing (canon 68). The Third Reich re-employed this device as a yellow Star of David to distinguish Jews in the twentieth century.

one of only twenty European towns to house that many people.<sup>474</sup> Tremellius grew up within this dense Jewish community. His early Jewish education came from the broad-minded Jewish teacher Abraham ben Mordechai Farissol, who studied and taught New Testament as well as Old.<sup>475</sup> Not having witnessed pogroms or anti-Jewish violence, Tremellius grew up with a positive perception of Christians' attitudes towards Jews.

Ferrara continued its Jew-friendly policies throughout the sixteenth century. Ferrara gave residency to Portuguese Marranos in 1531 and to exiles from Naples in 1541, including those of the famous rabbinic Abravanel family.<sup>476</sup> The ducal d'Este family of Ferrara was, according to scholar Jonathan Israel, "notably more tolerant towards the Jews in this period" than elsewhere in Italy.<sup>477</sup> Israel stated that Ferrara in the 1550s was "the most liberal of all the Italian states toward the reversion of Marranos to Judaism," due to a safe-conduct entitled, "Hebrews of the Spanish and Portuguese nation," that Duke Ercole II (r. 1534–1559) issued in 1550.<sup>478</sup> In August 1553, the papacy declared the Talmud sacrilegious and recommended its burning, taking place at Rome, Bologna, Florence, Venice, and the Venetian colonies of Crete and Corfu. Paul IV issued a bull, *Cum nimis absurdum*, in 1555 that ordered the establishment of ghettos in the papal

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<sup>474</sup> Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 3. Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550–1750*, 3rd ed. (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998), 16, stated that Ferrara "then had one of the largest Jewish communities in Christian Europe," estimating the number at 1,000, while Moses Avigdor Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. Elvin I. Kose (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 21, "on the basis of very reliable witnesses," offered the number as 2,000 Jews.

<sup>475</sup> Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 13–14. For his biography, see Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew*.

<sup>476</sup> Moses A. Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. Elvin I. Kose (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 21.

<sup>477</sup> Israel, *European Jewry*, 16, included the dukes of Urbino, Tuscany, and Mantua as well.

<sup>478</sup> Israel, *European Jewry*, 16. The original title was "nazione hebraica lusitana et spagnaola."

states and prohibited the reversion to Judaism of those forcibly baptized in Portugal in 1497. In 1555, Ferrara offered itself as a safe space to which Jews escaping the Iberian Inquisition could flee.<sup>479</sup> When duke Alfonso II d'Este died in 1597 without a male heir, his illegitimate cousin Cesare d'Este moved the ducal capital to Modena with a number of Jews following.<sup>480</sup> A contemporary chronicler tersely described the train of Jews following Cesare d'Este out of Ferrara in 1598: "There went out Don Cesare and the Jews."<sup>481</sup> Shulvass stated that one-fourth of the Jews left in 1598, leaving 1,500 in the now papal state of Ferrara.<sup>482</sup> In terms of its relations to Jews, the sixteenth-century duchy of Ferrara was remarkably tolerant and pluralistic.

Ferrara's diversity of inhabitants and rich cultural life influenced Tremellius. Due to the oversight of the wealthy d'Este Family, Ferrara expanded the city walls, incorporating formerly semirural land into the city, an urban space known as the Erculean Addition.<sup>483</sup> The city was situated sixty miles from Bologna, Padua, and Venice and commanded access to the River Po. Due to the impressive late fifteenth-century building projects, Jacob Burckhardt described Ferrara as "the first really modern city in Europe," with "large and well-built quarters."<sup>484</sup> The vibrant cultural life, pluralism, and success of Ferrara influenced Tremellius's upbringing.

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<sup>479</sup> John Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400–1700* (London: Routledge, 1988), 67.

<sup>480</sup> Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, 21. In 1598, Pope Clement VIII annexed Ferrara into the Papal States. As a papal holding, the papacy opened a Jewish ghetto in Ferrara in 1627, well after Tremellius's death. Previously, the status of Jews in Ferrara was based on the goodwill of the d'Este rulers.

<sup>481</sup> *The Chronicle of Hamagiha*, in Joseph Hachohen, *Emek habaka*, 2nd ed. (Cracow, 1895), 187, quoted in Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, 21.

<sup>482</sup> Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, 21.

<sup>483</sup> Charles M. Rosenberg, *The Este Monuments and Urban Development in Renaissance Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4, 6–7, 130–152. The addition included palace buildings.

<sup>484</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy: An Essay*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (London: The Folio Society, 2004), 40; near the end of chapter V, "The Greater Dynasties."

The princess Renée was born on 25 October 1510 (d. 12 June 1574). As a young girl, Henry VIII considered marrying Renée and she was close friends with Anne Boleyn, who was educated in France. Renée became duchess of Ferrara in April 1528 when she married Ercole II, son of Alfonso I d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia. Although raised Catholic, Renée entertained Protestant ideas and thinkers in her household. Upon her marriage, Renée brought with her a retinue of 160 people, creating a sort of court within a court. Raised sympathetic to Christian humanism and reform, she allowed John Calvin to stay with her in 1535 and in spring 1536, after he published the first edition of *Institutio Christianae Religionis*.<sup>485</sup> In 1542, she received Bernardino Ochino (1487 – 1564), the famous Franciscan preacher fleeing the Roman Inquisition due to his Protestant views. She helped Ochino escape to Geneva, where Calvin received him, along with Peter Martyr Vermigli.<sup>486</sup> Although her husband did not approve, Renée showed hospitality to Protestants. For these actions, the church put her on trial. She survived by recanting her heresies on 23 September 1554, although she refused to attend Mass thereafter.

While Renée's court received Protestants, Ercole's court received Jews. For his lenience, the translator and publisher Abraham ben Solomon Usque and typographer Yom-Tob ben Levi Athias—both *ex-conversos* living in the safety of Ferrara—dedicated their Ladino Bible translation to Ercole in 1553.<sup>487</sup> One edition they dedicated to the duke and to the Inquisitors for

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<sup>485</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 15.

<sup>486</sup> Maddison, *Marcantonio Flaminio*, 138.

<sup>487</sup> “Translating the Bible into Spanish,” *The National Library of Israel*, [http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/library/reading\\_corner/Pages/ferrara.aspx](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/library/reading_corner/Pages/ferrara.aspx).

review; they intended another edition of the Ferrara Bible, *Biblia en Lengua Española*,<sup>488</sup> for a Jewish audience, with a preface dedicated to Doña Gracia Mendes Nasi (1510-1569), also known as Beatrice de Luna, a wealthy Jewish businesswoman who helped Jews escape the Inquisition.<sup>489</sup> These facts demonstrate that the Ferrara court received both ex-Christian Jews and ex-Catholics.

The Ferrara Bible translation shows how Jews influenced society in Ferrara (although not legally allowed to). In 1569, the monk Casiodoro de Reina (c. 1520 – 15 March 1594), whom detractors accused of Jewish ancestry, published his own Spanish translation of the Bible in which he credited the Ferrara Bible as his inspiration.<sup>490</sup> Tremellius, the Ferrarese Jew, published his own Latin translation of the Bible in 1575, with the help of Theodore Beza. In 1602, Cipriano de Valera edited Reina's translation, producing the Reina–Valera Translation, monumental in the

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<sup>488</sup> *Biblia en lengua Española, traduzida palabra por palabra de la verdad Hebrayca por muy excelentes letrados, vista y examinada por el officio de la Inquisicion. Con privilegio del yllustrissimo Señor Duque de Ferrara.* ("The Bible in the Spanish Language, translated word for word from the true Hebrew by very excellent Literati, Viewed and Examined by the Office of the Inquisition With the Privilege of the most Illustrious Lord Duke of Ferrara"). Ferrara, 1553.

<sup>489</sup> Zorattini, "Ebrei sefarditi," 127; Cecil Roth, "The Marrano Press at Ferrara, 1552-1555," *Modern Language Review* 38 (1943): 307–17.

<sup>490</sup> In the preface, entitled "Amonestacion al lector," Reina wrote: "De la vieja Tranflacion Española del Viejo Testamento, impressa en Ferrara, nos auemos ayudado en femejantes necefsidades mas que de ninguan otra que haña aora ayamos visto, no tanto por auer ella siempre acertado mas que las otras en caños femejantes, quanto por darnos la natural y primera significacion de los vocablos Hebreos, y las diferencias de los tiempos de los verbos, como estan en el mismo texto, en lo qual es obra digna de mayor estíma (à juyzio de todos los que la entienden) que quantas haña aora ay: y por esta tan singular ayuda, de laqual las otras translaciones no há gozado, esperamos que la nuestra por lo menos no será inferior à ninguna deellas."

"Of the old Spanish translation of the Old Testament, published in Ferrara, we have availed ourselves hereof more than any other that we have seen thus far, not simply due to it always being accurate in such things, but rather because it gives us the natural and first meaning of Hebrew terms, and the differences between the tenses of the verbs as found in the same text; it is a work that is worthy of greater esteem (in the judgement of all those that understand it) than the many others found to this day: and by this exceptional aid, of which the other translations have not taken advantage, we hope that ours will not be considered inferior to any of them." *La Biblia, que es, los sacros libros del vieio y nvuevo testament*, trans. Casiodoro de Reina, (Basel, 1569), [Biiir], Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, USTC, image 28.

history of Spanish Bible translations and in Catholic translations. While Reina's translation became prized in Catholicism, the (ex-)Jewish, (ex-)Catholic Tremellius's translation became eminently prized as the premier Latin Protestant translation, and the Ferrara Bible became prized as the main Sephardic translation in Ladino. Thus, all three Bibles, having a relationship to Ferrara and its Sephardic Jews, made waves in their respective contexts. This facet shows the degree to which Jews in Ferrara thrived and made contributions beyond what they might have expected. This is the context in which Tremellius arose.

While Renée was a young duchess, Tremellius attended the University of Padua in 1530, presumably because it was one of the only schools that allowed Jews.<sup>491</sup> The Roman cardinal Alessandro Farnese, who became Pope Paul III in 1534, introduced Tremellius to Catholicism in the early 1530s.<sup>492</sup> Fifty years later, Tremellius described this event in the humanist dialogue *Specularius*, in which Tremellius debates another Hebraist named Gilbert Génébrard. This text had Tremellius say:

On account of this situation, the famous cardinal of Rome, Furnese [*sic.*] ... took me, a Jew by birth, fifty years ago, into his household when I had first crossed over to the Christians having been led by a sure knowledge of religion; he had illuminated the doctrine of truth to me, but you, a man most importunate, prosecute me to the fullest.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Maria Rosa di Simone, "Admission," in *Universities in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 295. Padua graduated 80 Jews from 1517 to 1619.

<sup>492</sup> Immanuel Tremellius, *Specularius, Dialogus pernecessarius...* (Neapoli Nemetum, 1581), 10-11; Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 21-25. The fact that Tremellius said "fifty years ago" and mentioned him as cardinal, not Pope, indicates that this event transpired in the early 1530s, since Paul III reigned as Pope 1534 to 1549.

<sup>493</sup> Tremellius, *Specularius*, 10-11. The Latin reads: "Quamobrem etiam celebris ille Furnesius Cardinalis Romæ, vestrarum (ut scis historiographie) id est, Gallicarum partium studiosissimus, me Iudæum genere ante annos quinquaginta in familiam suam asciverat, cum ad Christianos primum transiui certa religionis ductus conscientia: idemque mihi ad eam veritatis doctrinam præluxit, quam tu, homo importunissime, nunc remis et velis persequeris."

According to Tremellius, Farnese instructed him in Christianity, to which he had already been exposed. This was not his baptism but instruction and, apparently, a form of patronage.

Farnese earned a reputation as being sympathetic to Jews, consistent with his treatment of Tremellius. During his papacy, Farnese's personal physician from 1534 was Jacob ben Samuel Mantino (d. 1549). Farnese had Mantino teach at the Sapienza from Rome from 1538 to 1541.<sup>494</sup> Farnese encouraged Jewish exiles from Naples to settle in Rome in 1541. In March 1542, he issued a bull, *Cupientes Judaeos*, that allowed Jewish converts to retain their property and offer them full rights of citizenship.<sup>495</sup> In February 1543, Farnese established a *domus catechumenorum*, "house of converts," a monastery to shelter Jewish converts from contact with non-baptized Jews instead of living in the ghettos with their former co-religionists.<sup>496</sup> During the Council of Trent in 1545, he permitted a Hebrew printing press in Rome.<sup>497</sup> Because Farnese ultimately hoped to convert Jews, he treated them with respect. Tremellius was therefore treated well living in Cardinal Farnese's household.

Tremellius had what Austin and other scholars have called a "second conversion," but it was simply his initial baptism. The last Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, Reginald Pole (1557 – 17 November 1558), with the aid of the Catholic poet Marcantonio Flaminio, baptized

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<sup>494</sup> Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983), 22.

<sup>495</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 24.

<sup>496</sup> Kenneth R. Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy, 1555-1593*, Moreshet 5 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977), 51–52; Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 315–16.

<sup>497</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 24.

Tremellius sometime around 1540, which the Anglican ecclesiastic Matthew Parker described some fifty years later in his account of the lives of the archbishops of Canterbury.<sup>498</sup>

The circle of evangelicals declared to [Pole] frequently; including the company of Antonius Flaminus, most learned orator and poet, who translated the Psalms of David into lyric poems; then the company of Immanuel Tremellius, a most learned man, who from Jewish stubbornness was converted to Christ in the household of Pole and instructed against pontifical doctrine; he also drank up evangelical doctrines in the same place, and further he was baptized by Pole and Flaminio within Pole's household.<sup>499</sup>

The presence of Flaminio in the text presents a problem for the dating of Tremellius's baptism.

Pole took up residence in Padua in 1532 through 1541 (and he was made Papal Legate to England in 1536); Farnese (as Pope Paul III, 1534–1549) appointed Pole governor of Viterbo of the patrimony of St. Peter on 13 August 1541, which he entered on 14 September. Flaminio joined Pole's circle in Viterbo in October 1541.<sup>500</sup> Austin used this evidence to argue that Pole and Flaminio baptized Tremellius in Viterbo between October 1541 and early 1542, when the latter left for Lucca.<sup>501</sup> Austin's set-up requires Tremellius to travel 300 miles from Padua to Viterbo to be baptized and then 200 miles back north to Lucca so that Vermigli can snatch him up before the end of 1541. This scenario seems far-fetched, although it is theoretically possible. Without more evidence, we cannot determine where Tremellius underwent baptism. It seems likely that Parker wrote Flaminio into the narrative to describe the spiritualist and evangelical

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<sup>498</sup> See Matthew Parker, *De Antiquitate Britannicae Ecclesiae & Privilegiis Ecclesiae Cantuariensis, cum Archiepiscopis eiusdem* 70 (London, 1572), 519, and Austin's discussion, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 25–31.

<sup>499</sup> Parker, *De Antiquitate Britannicae*, 519. Latin: "Id indicabat frequens ad eum Evangelicorum concursus; & Antonii Flaminii disertissimi oratoris ac poetae, qui Psalmos Davidicos in Lyrica vertit carmina, consuetudo; tum Immanuelis Tremellii, doctissimi viri, qui a Judaica pertinacia ad Christum in Poli familia conversus, & contra pontificiam doctrinam edoctus, fuit; ac evangelica dogmata ibidem hausit; nec non a Polo & Flaminio in Baptismo intra domesticos Poli parietes susceptus est."

<sup>500</sup> Maddison, *Marcantonio Flaminio*, 118; Dermot Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy: Cardinal Pole and the Counter Reformation* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 28.

<sup>501</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 25–26.



company that Pole kept, not that Flaminio was actually present at Tremellius's baptism. Other than adherence to Parker's late narrative, there is no reason to doubt Tremellius's nineteenth-century biographer Wilhelm Becker on this point: Becker simply has Pole baptize Tremellius in Padua in 1540.<sup>502</sup> Becker's understanding allows Tremellius two years before Vermigli employed him as a Hebraist, enough time for Tremellius to establish his identity as a Christian. While Farnese introduced the Jew Tremellius to Catholic Christianity, Pole baptized him into that faith in his home in Padua.

Parker's text is suspect on polemical grounds. Some commentators consider the second conversion to be Tremellius's conversion to Calvinism. However, I consider the Farnese conversion his initial experience of Catholicism. Then, Pole baptized him into the Church Catholic. Once he crossed the Alps and reached Strasbourg, Tremellius began to substantively identify with the Reformed community associated with Calvinism. Parker's text actually described the Catholic baptism of Tremellius, but its Anglican author Matthew Parker contextualized it as a Protestant baptism. If that passage appeared in a Catholic work, *pontifical* would have ecclesiastical connotations; whereas in a Protestant work, as it is, the word has an authoritarian connotation.<sup>503</sup> Pole entertained heterodox religious opinions; however, he was never disloyal to the pope and maintained submission to Rome. Therefore, the rebellion against

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<sup>502</sup> Becker, *Immanuel Tremellius: Ein Proselytenleben*, 6–7. “Poole vermittelte auch die Taufe, die in des Kardinals Wohnung zu Padua stattfand.” “Pole also mediated the baptism, which took place in the cardinal's house in Padua.”

<sup>503</sup> A parallel issue is encountered in New Testament interpretation. If one reads Jesus's statement to the Jews “you are of your father the devil” (John 8:44) from a Christian—understood as a non-Jewish—perspective, it is clearly anti-Semitic. However, if you read it *within* Judaism, within the context of the debates of various first-century Jewish sects, the passage merely becomes a weapon of internecine warfare. Jews critiquing other Jews is not as anti-Semitic as Gentiles critiquing Jews, although it can be more vitriolic. And Catholics critiquing Catholics is not anti-Catholic, but only if a Protestant does so.

*pontifical doctrine* in which Pole allegedly instructed Tremellius is fabricated or described a minor issue with which he disagreed. Pole engaged Evangelical mysticism but remained committed to Rome to such an extent that he no longer received Tremellius after the latter's alignment with Calvinism.<sup>504</sup> When the text says *evangelical*, it does not mean Protestant as Protestants might assume, but rather a mystical strain within sixteenth-century Italian and Spanish Catholicism.<sup>505</sup> Therefore, a shift in meaning had taken place, and the Protestant publication of *De antiquitate Britannicae* obscured and silenced the actual Catholic baptism that took place in Pole's household.

The difference in the language between the texts suggests that Tremellius was a reluctant convert. Tremellius, fifty years later, described himself as passive to Farnese. Farnese "took [him] in." The Latin word, *asiverat*, from *ascisco*, means "take to oneself, take, adopt, to admit, receive, appropriate, assume for oneself, arrogate."<sup>506</sup> The Roman cardinal adopted or took Tremellius in. Tremellius was not the active agent, which is additionally bolstered by the fact that he used the Latin word *ductus*, drawn or led, to describe his reception of Catholic teaching. As a cardinal and legate to Rome in 1533, Farnese had 366 members in his retinue.<sup>507</sup> What was one more, Tremellius, to him? Tremellius could have described the action as explaining or teaching truth, but the image is of him being assumed, drawn, and adopted into the Catholic

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<sup>504</sup> Parker, *De Antiquitate Britannicae*, 523; Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 83–84.

<sup>505</sup> Eva-Maria Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14, no. 4 (1953): 511–27, doi:10.2307/2707699.

<sup>506</sup> Lewis & Short Lexicon, Latin Word Study Tool, [perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l](http://perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l), accessed March 16, 2018.

<sup>507</sup> Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages: Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*, ed. Ralph Francis Kerr, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Herder, 1898), 11:24-25. The Pope in 1533, Clement VII, had 700 persons in his palace household.

Church, although he seems to see it in a comforting light, as opposed to the harsh treatment of the man who prosecutes him “with oars and sails” (the literal translation of *remis et velis*).

However, when Parker, from his vantage point as a seventeenth-century Anglican, described Tremellius’s conversion, he depicted Tremellius as incredibly active in it, even ferocious. Here, Tremellius *hausit* evangelical doctrine, a graphic verb that means “draw, drain, drink up, spill, shed, tear up, pluck out, swallow, devour, consume.”<sup>508</sup> He came to the meetings of his own volition. He is passive in that he *was converted* and *was baptized* by Pole and Marcantonio Flaminio; however, those verbs are regularly in the passive voice. Parker made it sound as if Tremellius had much more volition in his conversion than Tremellius’s allegedly described himself. This is consistent with the more Protestant understanding of conversion prevalent in Parker’s time.

Tremellius’s network caused him to identify with Protestantism. Peter Martyr Vermigli, elected the prior of San Frediano monastery in May 1541, sought a Latinist, Hellenist, and Hebraist to teach the clerics—Vermigli chose Tremellius.<sup>509</sup> At Lucca, Tremellius befriended those with evangelical and spiritualist sympathies, with whom Pole also mingled. In addition to the spiritualist teachings of Juan de Valdés and Pole’s own beliefs regarding justification by faith, Vermigli circulated the writings of John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, Philip Melancthon, and Martin Bucer.<sup>510</sup> On 21 July 1542, Tremellius’s convertor Pope Paul III revived the Roman Inquisition with the bull *Licet ab initio*,<sup>511</sup> which induced Protestant

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<sup>508</sup> Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, perseus.tufts.edu.

<sup>509</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 206, 223.

<sup>510</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 230–31.

<sup>511</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 37.

sympathizers including Tremellius and Vermigli, to flee Italy. Martyr and Bernadino Ochino crossed the Alps, escaping to Strasbourg, while Tremellius followed them in early 1543, where he taught at the Gymnasium. There Tremellius befriended Reformed thinkers, including John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Martin Bucer, and Franciscus Junius. In 1548, Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer (1533 – 21 March 1556) invited Tremellius, Bucer, and Vermigli to take posts at Cambridge. While at Cambridge, Tremellius worked on his catechism, the subject of this chapter, and befriended the first Protestant archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker (1559 – 17 May 1575). In 1553, due to Catholic Mary I's accession, 800 English opponents of the Marian regime, plus 4,000 foreign residents, including Vermigli, Tremellius, and Bucer, had to flee to Reformed havens on the Continent.<sup>512</sup> Vermigli and Tremellius returned to Strasbourg. Tremellius later lived in Bern, Lausanne, Geneva, Zweibrücken, Hornbach, Metz, Orleans, and Heidelberg. He was a theology professor at Heidelberg from 1562 to 1577, until the Lutheran prince Ludwig VI, Elector Palatine (4 July 1539 – 22 October 1583), expelled the Calvinists. Tremellius lived out his days in Sedan, the Huguenot stronghold that had declared independence from France in 1560, passing away on 9 October 1580. In addition to his famous catechism, Tremellius produced Hebrew and Aramaic grammars, other biblical works, and his translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic Bible into Latin, which became the premier Latin Protestant Bible translation through the nineteenth-century.<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> Graeme Murdock, *Beyond Calvin: The Intellectual, Political and Cultural World of Europe's Reformed Churches* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 35–36.

<sup>513</sup> See quotes in Kenneth Austin, "Immanuel Tremellius' Latin Bible (1575–79) as a Pillar of the Calvinist Faith," in *Print and Power in France and England, 1500–1800*, ed. David Adams and Adrian Armstrong (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 31.

Tremellius's views, which we will explore in the next section, manifestly emerged from the influence of Jewish *conversos* upon Italian spiritualism. *Conversos* in Spain, even before the expulsion, maintained views that saw Judaism and Christianity in a new light. For example, some *conversos* stated that Jesus lived his life as a Jew, was circumcised, or even had himself circumcised at a later age.<sup>514</sup> While most people now know that Jesus was a Jew and was circumcised, that knowledge was radical in the sixteenth century due to its implications. Other *conversos* believed that the law of Christ and the apostles was actually the law of Moses, thereby indicating that Judaism and Christianity were not that far apart.<sup>515</sup> Needless to say, these views led *conversos* to the stake. *Conversos* also believed that observance of the Law of Moses, alongside faith, was necessary.<sup>516</sup> While one could try to trace if *conversos* came to Ferrara while Tremellius lived there, the connection is much easier: the primary reading material of Tremellius's social network in Italy was that of *converso alumbrados*. In fact, so many *alumbrados* were also *conversos*, whom the Inquisition investigated, that one author stated that the movement stemmed from a "*converso* religiosity."<sup>517</sup> One of them, the Spanish humanist Juan de Valdés (c. 1500–1540) was a Jewish *converso* who became involved with the mystical movement of *alumbrados* or illuminism.<sup>518</sup> Among other things, Valdés advocated for the

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<sup>514</sup> David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 138–39.

<sup>515</sup> Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 139. This particular example is from 1686 in Majorca.

<sup>516</sup> Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 55.

<sup>517</sup> Quoted in Daniel A. Crews, *Twilight of the Renaissance: The Life of Juan de Valdés*, Canadian Electronic Library. Canadian Publishers Collection (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 20; Jose C. Nieto, "The Franciscan Alumbrados and the Prophetic-Apocalyptic Tradition," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 8, no. 3 (October 1977): 6, doi:10.2307/2539841, made the same claim that many alumbrados were Jewish *conversos*.

<sup>518</sup> Crews, *Twilight of the Renaissance: The Life of Juan de Valdés*, 8–26.

rejection of external religion and direct communication with God.<sup>519</sup> Valdés and Valdesian spirituality influenced all of Tremellius's Italian network.<sup>520</sup> Flaminio brought some of Valdés's disciples into Pole's household shortly after he moved to Viterbo as papal legate in 1541.<sup>521</sup> Kevin Ingram, quoting Américo Castro, stated that one can deduce an "antagonism" among sixteenth-century *converso* mystics towards Christianity, even though they externally accepted it.<sup>522</sup> Valdés wrote commentaries on all of Paul's epistles, which Martyr's sixteenth-century biographer Josiah Simler noted, with the exception of Hebrews.<sup>523</sup> Possibly, Valdés felt that elaborating on Hebrews, the book of the New Testament dealing with the relationship of Old Covenant and New Covenant, would have revealed his views too explicitly. Whatever Valdés' real views, people as diverse as Erasmians, Protestants, Socinians, and antitrinitarians claimed him as their own.<sup>524</sup> Martyr interacted with Flaminio, Ochino, and Valdéz in Naples from 1537 to 1540, and continued to propagate Valdesian spirituality in Lucca.<sup>525</sup> Thus, Jewish *converso* spirituality directly influenced Tremellius's Christian formation, which may account for his views on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

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<sup>519</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 19.

<sup>520</sup> Maddison, *Marcantonio Flaminio*, 107–112.

<sup>521</sup> Thomas F. Mayer, "'Heretics Be Not in All Things Heretics': Cardinal Pole, His Circle, and the Potential for Toleration," in *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration before the Enlightenment*, ed. John Christian Laursen and Cary J. Nederman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 115.

<sup>522</sup> Crawford Gribben, "Kevin Ingram, 'Converso Non-Conformism in Early Modern Spain: Bad Blood and Faith from Alonso de Cartagena to Diego Velázquez' (Palgrave, 2018)," New Books Network, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://newbooksnetwork.com/kevin-ingram-converso-non-conformism-in-early-modern-spain-bad-blood-and-faith-from-alonso-de-cartagena-to-diego-velazquez-palgrave-2018/>.

<sup>523</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 41.

<sup>524</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 41.

<sup>525</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 147.

## The Sixteenth-Century Moment: Tremellius's Judeo-Reformed Catechism

While previous scholarship has portrayed Tremellius primarily as a Reformed Christian, I argue that he maintained a dual identity even after his conversions. He was born a Jew and he was converted to Catholicism and then to Calvinism. It is clear that Tremellius, while living as a Christian, maintained a sympathy for Judaism. Evidence for this dual identity can be found in his possession of a Jewish book dangerous for a new Christian to own, his preface to the catechism, and his over-compensating desire to conform to orthodox Reformed Christians.

The fact that Tremellius owned an anti-Christian, Jewish tract supports this dual identity thesis. When Tremellius crossed the Alps from Italy to Strasbourg in 1543, he carried with him a book of Jewish responses to Christian claims, called *Sefer Nizzahon* “book of victory.” A subsequent owner, probably Hortinus, inscribed in the flyleaf of the manuscript: “This book belonged to Immanuel Tremellius and was brought by him out of Italy.”<sup>526</sup> Escaping the Inquisition with other Protestants, Tremellius decided to take the most incriminating book possible with him during his arduous journey, one which Hebraist Johann Reuchlin had argued should be burned instead of the Talmud during his debates with the convert Johannes Pfefferkorn. If other Hebraists believed that Inquisitors should burn the *Sefer Nizzahon* and Tremellius escaped the Inquisition possessing the *Sefer Nizzahon*, this suggests Tremellius found something in there that was worth preserving, despite its evident danger should he be caught. There is no indication that Tremellius retained the book because he secretly hated Christianity or

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<sup>526</sup> William Horbury, “The Basle Nizzahon,” in *Jews and Christians in Conflict and Controversy* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1998), 249. “Fuit hic liber Immanuelis Tremellii, et ab eo ex Italia allatus est.” According to the flyleaf, Samuel Hortinus, theology professor at Berne, and Johann Buxtorff the Elder (1564-1629), who wrote the majestic three-volume description of Jewish custom, *De synagoga Judaica* (1603), subsequently owned the manuscript. It was then deposited in the Basel library.

was a “judaizer”; all of his extant work demonstrates that he enthusiastically embraced Christianity. However, as a Jewish convert, he had to deal with his Jewish past—did he reject it or maintain it? Based on what he read in the *Sefer Nizzahon*, I argue that he maintained a deep commitment to his Jewishness.

Tremellius owned *Sefer Nizzahon* as a new Christian (I do not know exactly when he acquired it), so it was probably formative to his Christian spirituality. In that situation, he would have read statements such as “[Christians] do not follow the ways of their god Jesus by circumcising themselves and observing the Sabbath and festivals as he did (for he did observe all these commandments).”<sup>527</sup> Taking this critique seriously, young Tremellius would have realized the antinomian impulse of Christianity and might have desired to rectify that incorrect impulse. As his theology formulated, he may have realized that nowhere does the New Testament teach that *Jews* should not follow the Torah, but only that Gentiles should not be circumcised. He may have decided that Jews can follow both the Old Testament and Jesus at the same time. However, the *Sefer Nizzahon* took this principle a step further by suggesting that Christians, Jew or Gentile regardless, should follow their master Jesus and be circumcised. Additionally, Tremellius would have read: “Rather, [Jesus] commanded [the rich young ruler] to observe the ancient commandments, and it was on the basis of those commandments that he promised him life in the world to come;” and “this shows that if they would listen to the Torah of Moses and the commandments of the prophets, then they would come to paradise.”<sup>528</sup> Tremellius would have seen how far Christianity had come to devalue the Torah, especially compared to the Lutheran

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<sup>527</sup> David Berger, ed. and trans., *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus*. (Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1996), 173 §158.

<sup>528</sup> Berger, *Nizzahon*, 191 §184; and 198 §190.



perspective, which distinguished between Law (of the Old Testament) and Grace (of the New). According to the *Sefer*'s author, God never abrogated the Torah and still expected people (Jews and Christians) to follow it. Tremellius read: "The fact is that Jesus himself said that he 'did not come to the destroy the Torah of Moses'...If so, then, how do you ignore commandments like the Sabbath and circumcision?"<sup>529</sup> The author cannot understand how Christians could reject the Torah and its commandments yet still listen to Jesus, because Jesus told his followers to follow the Torah and its commandments.

Tremellius could embrace any of three possible reactions to this anti-Christian polemic: internalize the critique and reject Christianity, internalize the critique and modify Christianity, or reject the critique. Since it appears that he neither rejected Christianity nor rejected the critique (he never responded to the *Sefer Nizzahon* in writing), it seems likely that he internalized the critique and sought to reform Christianity. Doing so would require developing a coherent theological foundation for creating a community in which Jesus-belief and Torah-observance were not mutually exclusive categories. It does not appear that Tremellius wanted Gentiles to follow Torah, but it seems from the preface to his catechism that he wanted Jews to continue to do so and not reject their Jewishness when they became Christians. Thus, Tremellius intended to create an environment in which Jews, as Jews, could follow Jesus *and* the Torah, and Christians could learn Hebrew. Maybe he saw the legalistic approach of Reformed theology, which wanted Christians to follow Mosaic Law, as compatible with his theology (as discussed in Chapter 3). A Jewish convert to Reformed Christianity, which supported Mosaic Law, would have had fewer theological hoops through which to jump than if he converted to Catholicism or Lutheranism.

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<sup>529</sup> Berger, *Nizzahon*, 215 §221.

In the next section, I will argue that Tremellius's catechism reflected his sympathy with Judaism. Tremellius's catechism was not an original work but was a translation of John Calvin's French Genevan Catechism. Calvin had intended the catechism as a tool to educate children in the Reformed Christian faith. Calvin wrote the first edition in 1537, but children found it too difficult to understand. After his return from exile in Strasbourg in 1541, Calvin produced a more felicitous version that the children could memorize. Published initially in French and then in Latin, another edition came out in 1545. This catechism was mildly popular; the French Reformed Church adopted it, and the Scottish Churches used in translation until they adopted the Westminster Catechisms in 1648. Beginning in 1550, Tremellius translated Calvin's catechism into Hebrew and Greek (and then a nineteenth-century translator translated it into German). I argue that Tremellius did not intend to use the catechism to reach unconverted Jews, as is often thought,<sup>530</sup> but to further educate converted Jews and to give Reformed Christians a safe venue to read Hebrew. By analyzing his catechism, its apparent purpose, and its context, it can be seen that Immanuel Tremellius imagined a new way of seeing the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, one in which Jews, after they converted to Christianity, could continue to follow their tradition and would continue to be Jews, and one in which Christians could study Hebrew alongside their Jewish comrades.

Authors of catechisms and texts in general intend them for specific audiences. The question is: for which audience did Tremellius intend or imagine his catechism? The Reformed community (to which Tremellius belonged after he left Italy) used catechisms to educate youth

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<sup>530</sup> E.g., Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 75-79; Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500-1750* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2001), 164; and Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983), 250-251.

and adults in the faith before they communed for the first time; ministers, elder, or deacons held catechism classes on Sunday afternoons, after church.<sup>531</sup> Since Calvin primarily intended his Genevan Catechism for the catechizing of children, it makes sense that Tremellius had a similar intention with his Hebrew translation of Calvin's catechism. I argue that Tremellius imagined two audiences for his Hebrew catechism translation. One, he wanted Jews to teach their children the Reformed faith with it. Two, he wanted to give the Christian Hebraist community an orthodox outlet to practice their Hebrew-reading skills. I would like to clarify: when Tremellius intended the Jewish community, I argue he did *not* intend it as a tool to evangelize other adult Jews. First, Tremellius's translation has a preface, "To all the descendants of Jacob." In it, he explained that Jewish youth should read this catechism to learn to follow the ways of the Lord. At the end, he exhorted his Jewish brethren: "let us examine our ways, inquire, and return to the Lord, then he will again have mercy on us, for with him is forgiveness; he will again forgive us and establish our seed before him forever and ever, and they will be called the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, amen."<sup>532</sup> While that exhortation sounds perfectly fine to non-Christian Jews, no non-Christian Jew would knowingly read the rest of Tremellius's Christian catechism, even though it was in Hebrew, unless they had already been drawn to Christianity. Catechisms initiate the young into a faith community.<sup>533</sup> Tremellius imagined that Jews would teach this catechism to their children—in order for that to happen, these Jews would have to agree with its

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<sup>531</sup> Graeme Murdock, *Beyond Calvin*, 104.

<sup>532</sup> Immanuel Tremellius, סֵפֶר הַנִּחּוּךְ בְּחֵירֵי יְהוָה [Sefer Hīnuḵh beḥire Yah] [*Book of Instruction for God's Chosen*] ([Paris]: Robertus Ștefanus, 1554), np. 'ak nahpeshah derakeinu v'nahqorah v'nashuvah 'ad 'adonai v'yashuv v'raḥamenu ki lo ha-raḥamim v'hu' yarbeh lislo'ah v'yakin zar'enu lefanaiv 'ad 'olam v'yikre' lahem 'am hakodesh ge'u'lei 'adonai: amen v'amen. Image 21, <http://garfield.jtsa.edu:1801/webclient/DeliveryManager?pid=480971>.

<sup>533</sup> Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 151–175.

contents before they teach it to their children. Since it has Christian content, presumably the only Jews who would do so were Christian Jews. Therefore, Tremellius wanted to bolster a Jewish-Christian community that existed in Europe in the sixteenth century, which could have included *conversos* and crypto-Jews.<sup>534</sup> The second intended audience for Tremellius's catechism was the Christian Hebraists. The fact that the catechism has Hebrew vowel pointings, which help beginning Hebrew readers read Hebrew, suggests that Tremellius intended the catechism for Hebrew-learners, among whom were Christians learning Hebrew—as well as young Jews being catechized in this Jewish-Christian faith.

Take a similar example, the Augsburg Confession. Philip Melanchthon published the Augsburg Confession in Latin on 25 June 1530. He then had it translated into Danish in 1533, English in 1536, and into Greek in order to communicate with the Orthodox Churches.<sup>535</sup> Naturally, by translating it into these other languages, the author intended that speakers of these languages will find use by it. Similarly, by translating Calvin's Catechism into Hebrew, Tremellius intended Hebrew speakers to read it. At that time, there were only two groups of Hebrew speakers: Jews who spoke Hebrew and gentile Christian Hebraists. Therefore, for the translation to mark anything other than an antiquarian venture, Tremellius intended his translation for Christian Hebraists, giving them an opportunity to stretch their Hebrew-reading muscles, and a Jewish audience, who read the language natively.

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<sup>534</sup> There was also the late medieval sect originating in Lombardy of the *Passagii*, described in inquisitorial sources. They were Christians, accepted the New Testament, yet held to circumcision, Shabbat, the Law of Moses, dietary restrictions, and Arianism. It is unclear how many pockets of similar Jewish-Christian groups there were in Tremellius's day. Louis Israel Newman, *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements*, Columbia University Oriental Studies, vol. XXIII (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), 240–290.

<sup>535</sup> Philip H. Pfatteicher, *New Book of Festivals and Commemorations: A Proposed Common Calendar of Saints* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 302.

Would Jews have read this work once they realized it was simply a Christian catechism in Hebrew letters? I argue that Tremellius, while intending the catechism for a Christian Hebraist audience, also intended the catechism for an audience of Jews who already had accepted Christianity or were sympathetic to it. Tremellius imagined a religious community composed of Jews who had accepted Christianity yet still identified as Jews and Christians who read Hebrew, living and worshipping together in harmony. In that sense, we should see the catechism as a Jewish-Christian prayer book, along the lines of the Marrano prayer books that Samuel Usque had produced in Ferrara since 1553.<sup>536</sup>

Tremellius's translation of the Lord's Prayer and Nicene Creed into Hebrew in the catechism effectively created a tool that other Jewish-Christians could use in their Jewish-Christian liturgy if they so chose—or, which antiquarian Christian Hebraists could pore over and debate word choices. By rendering these Christian creeds into Hebrew, he gave Jewish-Christian communities a way to express themselves. While New Christians probably attended Mass, Tremellius may have envisioned sorts of home groups at which Jewish Christians could read and share his catechism. As Jean Carmignac stated, "The idea of a Christian catechism in Hebrew was at that time quite novel,"<sup>537</sup> which explains the long apology in his preface. Tremellius saw himself as doing something new, as re-writing/re-creating the line between Judaism and Christianity. Others apparently recognized the novelty (but also the return to the first-century, since Jesus and the apostles spoke Hebrew) in translating the Lord's Prayer and Creed into

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<sup>536</sup> Israel, *European Jewry*, 16–17.

<sup>537</sup> See Jean Carmignac, "Hebrew Translations of the Lord's Prayer: An Historical Survey," in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor*, edited by Gary A. Tuttle (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 34. Carmignac numbers Tremellius's version as 22 out of 68 Hebrew versions of the Lord's Prayer.

Hebrew, because sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors repeated it in at least three derivative catechisms, one grammar, and two manuscripts (in the second of which the Prayer occurs no less than three additional times). Hebraist antiquarians or Jewish-Christian communities found Tremellius's Hebrew translations helpful in understanding Christianity for themselves.

In summary, as a Jewish-Christian convert, like Pfefferkorn and Carben, Tremellius had to exhibit a lack of sympathy with Judaism and a complete adherence to Christianity. By translating an orthodox Christian confession, Tremellius maintained his commitment to Reformed Christianity. By translating that document into Hebrew, Tremellius exhibited his linguistic skills and appeared to missionize Jews. By including vowel pointings, Tremellius allowed non-native Hebrew speakers (i.e., Christian Hebraists) to read it. By including a preface for Jews, exhorting them to teach this catechism to their children in the vein of the Mosaic covenant, Tremellius appeared to missionize Jews but was also potentially inculcating a Jewish-Christian identity in other Jews who already believed in Christianity—it's okay to be Jewish *and* Christian. However, Tremellius had to minimize this slightly more subversive aim so as not to appear a Judaizer—Christianity's label for anyone who ventures too far down Jewish roads. Only by considering the context and his imagined purpose and audience can Tremellius's true purpose appear. By translating this catechism, Tremellius simultaneously adhered to Christianity faithfully yet also created a subversive discourse in which individuals could identify with elements of Judaism and Christianity concurrently.<sup>538</sup> Through it all, Tremellius had to appear as solely a faithful Christian all his life at all costs (although with a Jewish past—which, by

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<sup>538</sup> Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved*, 55, noted that many *conversos* believed that Judaism and Christianity were equally valid.

becoming a Christian, he had shown to overcome). Only by holding the document up to the light, so to speak, can the subversive element be revealed.

Robert Estienne published the first edition of Tremellius's translation of Calvin's catechism in Paris in 1551. However, like Kenneth Austin, I have been unable to trace a copy of this work;<sup>539</sup> it is not known if any copies are extant. This edition bore the title *Catechismus Hebraice et Graece*, implying it had a Greek column.<sup>540</sup> The Greek text, which few Jews would have read, suggests that Tremellius intended the work for Greek-speaking philologists, theologians, and humanists to help facilitate their Hebrew learning. In his letter to John Calvin on 3 March 1551, Tremellius mentioned that his work is on the press, about to be published by Robert Stephanus.<sup>541</sup>

The second edition came in 1554 also published by the Parisian Estienne family, as they did not leave France until 1555.<sup>542</sup> This one bore the title *Sefer H̱inukh Beḥirei Yah* ("The Book of the Instruction of the Elect of God;"<sup>543</sup> *sefer ẖinukh*, literally meaning, "book of instruction," becoming the word for catechism in Hebrew) and had Hebrew text. The edition I examined on the Jewish Theological Seminary website had printed Hebrew and facing-page, handwritten

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<sup>539</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 75.

<sup>540</sup> One can find references to the 1551 edition in Charles Henry Cooper and Thompson Cooper, *Athenae Cantabrigienses* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1858-1913), 1: 425, and E. Haag, *La France Protestante ou vies des protestants français* (10 vols., Geneva, 1846-59), 9: 419, which Carlyle, "Tremellius" *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB), 187, quoted. In turn, the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1909, drew from the DNB entry and confirmed the Parisian 1551 source.

<sup>541</sup> Tremellius to John Calvin, 3 March 1551, *Calvini opera* 1452.

<sup>542</sup> Robert M. Kingdon, "The Business Activities of Printers Henri and François Estienne," in G. Berthoud et al., eds., *Aspects de la Propagande Religieuse* (Geneva, 1957), 260.

<sup>543</sup> Immanuel Tremellius, סֵפֶר הַנִּיּוּךְ בְּחִירֵי יְהוָה (*Sefer H̱inukh Beḥirei Yah. Book of the Instruction of the Chosen People of God*) ([Paris]: Robertus Stephanus, 1554).

Latin so that each leaf had two pages of Hebrew, followed by a two-page leaf of Latin in translation. This edition bore a letter to the descendants of Jacob, in which Tremellius stated his purpose for the work. The Israeli historian Pinchas Lapide considered the Hebrew title of the catechism “pompous.” Lapide described the history of the work briefly: “under the more sober English title *Catechism for Enquiring Jews*, the work went through several editions.” Lapide quoted William T. Gidney, secretary of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity amongst the Jews, stating that the catechism “was ‘still in use as a missionary weapon’ at the beginning of the twentieth century.”<sup>544</sup> Gidney himself is the source of the English title,<sup>545</sup> but I have not been able to track down an English copy. It is unclear if Gidney loosely translated and interpreted the title into English, or if there was some edition that bore that name. I doubt that it did, because Gidney, a Jewish missionary, simply imputed a missionary purpose into the catechism.<sup>546</sup>

The third edition came in 1591, entitled תַּחֲנוּן: *Hoc est Catechises sive prima institutio aut Rudimenta Religionis Christianae Hebraece Graece et Latine explicate* (Leiden, 1591). The Leiden edition had Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in parallel columns. The Leiden edition did not contain Tremellius’s letter to the Jews, but it did have two Latin prefaces, one of which mentioned Erasmus: *I. Drusius Studiorum Linguarum* (3-5) and *Erasmus anno. in Lucam* (6-7).

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<sup>544</sup> Pinchas E. Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church: The Foundations of Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 64.

<sup>545</sup> William Thomas Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, from 1809 to 1908* (London: 1908), 9, 648.

<sup>546</sup> In the Columbia catalog, I found an English version of the catechism with the same information as the 1820 edition. *The catechism of John Calvin done into Hebrew / by Immanuel Tremellius of Ferara, Italy*. <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/4577764>. The catalogue gives the language as English, but “the title-page and text in Hebrew,” and an “introduction in Latin dated 1554, p. 3-9.”



The second preface discussed how Greek *catechises* became translated into other languages, such as Hebrew (as *Hinukh*, which is in the Hebrew Piel state). The whole work has 250 pages.<sup>547</sup>

In 1820, the London Society for the Propagation of Christianity amongst the Jews translated Tremellius's catechism into Judeo-German and republished it as a missionary tool.<sup>548</sup> Judeo-German is not quite Yiddish, but it is essentially writing German words in Hebrew letters. This edition had the title *Religions-Unterricht in gesprochen für das Auserwählte Volk Gottes* ("Religious Instruction for the Elect People of God"). The Judeo-German edition had the same features as the Hebrew editions; it just added another preface from the nineteenth-century Judeo-German translator. I will speak more about the 1820 edition and its nineteenth-century reverberations in the epilogue.

In a prefatorial letter to the descendants of Jacob, published in the 1554 Hebrew and in the 1820 German editions, Tremellius stated his purposes for composing the work. Tremellius is adamant that the Jewish youth be taught to worship God "in order for our children to learn in their youth how they should serve their God, who directs them with motherly love."<sup>549</sup> Tremellius did not advocate an uniquely Christian perspective. He sincerely wanted his Jewish brethren to worship Adonai in spirit and in truth. He exhorted his brethren to "hold fast to the Lord and reverence the word of the God of Israel with trembling: may the words of this booklet

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<sup>547</sup> Pinchas Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church*, 217, mentioned a Berlin edition of 1671, held at the Hebrew University Library in Jerusalem, but I have not been able to verify its existence through the online catalogue.

<sup>548</sup> Immanuel Tremellius, רעליגיאנס-אונטערריכט אין געשפרעכען, פֿיר דאָז איינזערעוועהלטע פאלק גאטטעס, [*Religions-Unterricht in Gesprächen Für Auserwählte Volk Gottes*], No. 37 German Hebrew (London: A. Macintosh, 1820), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nnc1.50209943>.

<sup>549</sup> Tremellius, *Religions-Unterricht*, 10. "Damit unsere Kinder in ihrer Frühen Jugend erlernen mögen, wi sie ihrem Gotte dienen sollen, der sie von Mutterliebe an leitet..."

always be in your mouths! May your selves think about this and teach it to your sons and daughters!”<sup>550</sup> Additionally, he used the image of God as mother, which was not as common in Christianity,<sup>551</sup> but more common in rabbinic texts. He described the “variety of good and thankful prayers” included in the catechism, “worthy of use by all of Abraham’s seed.”<sup>552</sup> The preface makes it sound as though Tremellius composed a Jewish prayer book. The content as an instructional catechism in Reformed theology seems slightly different than Tremellius’s intention for it as a tool of Jewish community-building. Nevertheless, the catechism ends with five prayers (pp. 108-114 in the German edition), prompting the reader to consider what constitutes a “variety of good and thankful prayers.” The prayers consist of a morning prayer, a prayer for learning, a prayer for meals, a prayer after meals, and an evening prayer. The content of the catechism and Tremellius’s alleged purpose stated in his letter seem not quite aligned.

The German translator’s foreword, not written by Tremellius himself, agrees with the contention that Tremellius understood his work as a tool for spiritual formation for those already converted Jews and Christians. The translator’s foreword opened: “At first sight, the author of this Catechism appears only to have the intention of the education of those Israelites who had already been willing to go over to the Christian religion; although this may have been his main purpose, he might justifiably nourish the hope that this little book would also be beneficial to his

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<sup>550</sup> *Religions-Unterricht*, 13.

<sup>551</sup> For another sixteenth-century example of God as Mother language, see Heiko A. Oberman, “Discovery of Hebrew and Discrimination against the Jews: The *Veritas Hebraica* as Double-Edged Sword in Renaissance and Reformation,” in *Germania Illustrata: Essays on Early Modern Germany Presented to Gerald Strauss*, eds. Andrew C. Fix and Susan Karant-Nunn, (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992), 28-29.

<sup>552</sup> *Religions-Unterricht*, 10. “Nun gibt es Zwar Ferscheidene Geberte und Danksagungen die viel gutes enthalten, und würdig sind von allem Samen Abrahams gebraucht zu werden.” Thanks to Dr. Joshua Bonzo for correcting my German translations.

still unconverted brethren.”<sup>553</sup> The German translator also included a warning of sorts in bold letters: “Note that this catechism is not for the purpose of demonstrating the various proofs upon which the Christian religion is based; but rather to further instruct those who are already convinced of the truth of it.”<sup>554</sup> The nineteenth-century German translator, therefore, recognized that Tremellius primarily intended his work for already converted Jews. However, since this translator was creating the work for missionary use, he noted that Tremellius hoped unconverted Jews would read it too. While Tremellius certainly hoped that unconverted Jews would convert after reading his catechism, Tremellius’s logical and primary orientation was for spiritual formation. As a catechism is primarily for the spiritual formation of young catechumens or those already educated in the faith, catechisms are not primarily an evangelistic tool. Their stated purpose is to instruct believers in the faith. If Tremellius had intended to create an outreach tool for Jews, he would have been better served by creating a refutation of a Jewish critique of Christianity. Creating a refutation of the book listing Jewish responses to Christian claims—the *Sefer Nizzahon*, a work to which he never saw fit to respond—would have presumably given Jews reasons to become Christians or to understand the world from a Christian point of view.

Tremellius explicitly stated his intention for the work. He lamented that he was full of sadness on account of the “miserable condition” of the people of his nation; he “languishes for their redemption.” “Wishing nothing so much as the salvation of Israel, so I have written this

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<sup>553</sup> *Religions-Unterricht*, 3. “Beim ersten Anblick dieses Katechismus scheint der Verfasser nur den Unterricht derjenigen Israeliten zur Absicht gehabt zu haben, die bereits zur Christlichen Religion übergegangen sind; allein obgleich dieses sein Hauptzweck gewesen sein mag, so dürfte er doch mit recht die Hoffnung nähren, dass dieses Büchlein auch seinen annoch unbekehrten Brüdern zum nutzen gereichen werde.”

<sup>554</sup> *Religions-Unterricht*, 5. “Man bemerke, dass dieser Katechismus nicht zum Zwecke hat die verschiedene beweise, auch welchen sich die christliche Religion gründet, darzutun; sondern diejenige, die von der Wahrheit derselben bereits überzeugt sind, ferner darinnen zu unterrichten.”

booklet, compiled in a tiny slim volume.”<sup>555</sup> On the previous page, he mentioned Israel’s hardheartedness keeping the Jews from God and urged them to imitate Abraham, “the rock from which you were hewn.” Tremellius quoted the Hebrew confession of faith *Shema Yisrael* verbatim from the Luther Bible in the German edition: “these words which I command you today, you shall take them to heart, impress them on your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house.”<sup>556</sup> On this point, Tremellius is not unlike any Jewish prophet of the Tanakh, calling Israel to repentance and to make the Hebrews’ hearts soft toward God. Calling Israel hardhearted should not be considered anti-Jewish, for if so, the Tanakh itself is anti-Jewish. Tremellius saw himself, then, as a Jewish renewalist prophet, calling Israel back to sincere devotion to Adonai, a perspective supported by Calvin’s unitary approach to the covenant.

Tremellius gave four specific reasons for compiling this “tiny slim volume,” as he called it. “First, that our children, whom our God elected from all the other peoples to be a special people, should believe.”<sup>557</sup> Tremellius’s use of *election* reveals his Calvinist theology, but he does not clarify what he wants his reader to believe. He does not specify the object of belief, but, given the Hebrew word’s meaning of steadfastness (*emunah*), maybe he meant simply being steadfast in devotion toward God. This first reason can be interpreted as Jewish or Christian.

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<sup>555</sup> *Sefer Hīnukh*, image 18; “vekhōl ḥefṣi līr’ot bitsh’at yisra’el. La-khen katavti zeh ha-sefer ha-qaton veliqatti bo la’agudah.” *Religions-Unterricht*, 13.

<sup>556</sup> *Religions-Unterricht*, 13. “...dem Felsen aus dem ihr gehaust seid.” “Diese Worte, die ich dir heute gebiete, sollst du zu Herzen nehmen, deinem Kinde einschärfen, und davon reden wenn du in deinem Hause sitzt.” Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

<sup>557</sup> *Sefer Hīnukh*, image 18; “’ahat ri’shonah ’et ’asher ya’aminu baneinu ’asher baḥar lo ’eloheinu le’am segulah mi-kol ha-‘amim.” *Religions-Unterricht*, 13.

“Second, I wrote the commandments, in which they should walk all the days of their life.”<sup>558</sup> In the Hebrew edition, Tremellius used the word “*mitzvoth*,” signifying “commandments.” Again, his meaning is ambiguous. Does he mean the 613 *mitzvoth*, the commandments of Christ, or the law of love? Is this simply a Reformed attachment to the Mosaic law, or a sincere statement of Jewish devotion? “Third, I taught them how and what they should pray, as well as the way [*torah*] of prayer.”<sup>559</sup> Tremellius wanted them to pray the five prayers included. Why these prayers? Does Tremellius have a hidden missionizing desire? Does he hope that by the time a Jewish reader reads the hundred-page document and prays the prayers at the end, he will have been converted? Tremellius himself did not teach them to pray, because he merely translated Calvin’s prayers; if anything, Calvin taught them to pray. Fourth, “I wrote about the signs of the covenant which our God set under us so that the remembrance of his love to us not waver from our hearts, and that is his oath to do us good is approved and sealed.”<sup>560</sup> The German translator added *sacraments* as a gloss and is the only explicit Christian phrase in the preface, which he equated with *Bundeszeicher*, covenant-symbols, which includes circumcision in German.<sup>561</sup> In Hebrew, Tremellius used the words אותות הברית (*’ototh habrith*), “signs of the covenant,” which,

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<sup>558</sup> *Sefer Hīnukh*, image 18; “v’ahar zeh katavti ha-mitsvot ’asher yelkhu bahem kol yemei hayeiheim” *Religions-Unterricht*, 13; “Zweitens, die Gebote, darinnen sie alle ihre Lebenstage wandeln sollen.”

<sup>559</sup> *Sefer Hīnukh*, image 18; “v’aharei-khen horeiti ’otam lehitpalel uve’arti mah yevaqsu bitfilatam umah torat hamitpalel.” *Religions-Unterricht*, 13.

<sup>560</sup> *Sefer Hīnukh*, image 18; “v’ahar kol zeh katavti ’al ’otot ha-brit ’asher sam ’eloheinu betoveinu lema’an lo’ yatur miqerev libenu zekhar ’ahavto ’otanu ulqayem velaḥatom shevuato ’asher nishba’ leheitiv lanu.” *Religions-Unterricht*, 13.

<sup>561</sup> The website *Linguee.de* gave a single example of the word, showing its Jewish valence: “Die zwei wichtigsten *Bundeszeichen* waren für Abraham und Moshe die Beschneidung und der Shabbat.” “The two most important signs of the covenant for Abraham were the circumcision and the keeping of the Shabbat.”

At one point, Tremellius does refer to God’s “anointed” (*meshiyho*) as “our redeemer” (*go’aleinu*). However, that statement, in and of itself, is not alien to Judaism. The 1820 German edition renders it as “Christ.”

in the Bible, refer to circumcision, the rainbow after the Noachian deluge, and the sabbath. For Tremellius, practices like circumcision, Sabbath, baptism, and Eucharist were equivalent. While he desired Jews to convert to Christianity, Tremellius himself told the Jews to follow the Torah with more *kavanah*, intentionality and sincerity. He wanted his fellow Jews to love God more and pray more, but does that require baptism or conversion to Christianity? He seemed to imagine a situation in which Jews develop their spirituality to the point that they become Christians. There are two options: he sincerely wanted them to continue living as Jews; or he wanted them to get closer to God, in the process convert to Christianity, and then they will realize that the law is unnecessary and his words were just rhetoric. Either way, he seemed to have a deep-seated desire to follow the Torah, or an understanding of Mosaic law vis-à-vis the Reformed community. He did not call Jews to break from the Torah. Nowhere did he call Jews to give up their traditions, as other apologists had done, such as the coverts Pfefferkorn and Carben. Rather, like Calvin, he imagined the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in a new light. Tremellius believed that Jews following the Torah of God have the same level of spirituality as Christians following their understanding of the commandments. Jews worshipping God and Christians worshipping God are equally acceptable in His eyes, and nowhere does Tremellius express their need to convert to Christianity, but merely become *more* Jewish.<sup>562</sup>

The very fact that Tremellius produced the work in Hebrew makes it sound more Jewish, when the content was really just a Reformed Catechism. Chapter 2, in Hebrew, *shear mitzvoth*, makes it sound as if Tremellius discussed the 613 mitzvoth of the Torah. Given the Reformed community's high regard for the Law, that may not be far off. Additionally, chapter 4's title,

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<sup>562</sup> Incidentally, the Jews for Jesus organization makes similar claims: following the Jewish Messiah (Jesus) will make you more Jewish; Jesus made me kosher, etc.

*shear ototh ha-berit*, “the gate of the signs of the covenant,” implies circumcision, but the Latin and Greek titles of 1591 edition place us firmly in the Christian word of the holy sacraments. While chapter 4 in the Latin and Greek discuss the Word of God, the Hebrew title mentions the “the signs of the covenant.” Then, when the Latin and Greek start a new section regarding the sacraments, the Hebrew continues its “signs of the covenant” section. These aspects make the book a boundary-crossing text, even if only in appearance and not in actual content.

The Hebrew translation bolsters the contention that Tremellius wanted Jews to continue following their traditions upon conversion. The teacher asks what is the way that the Lord wants us to serve him. The talmid (student) answers, “The way of his mitzvoth written in his Torah.”<sup>563</sup> The Hebrew phrase says to follow the Torah, the five books of Moses, and the commandments contained therein. But the Latin and Greek just answer, “his law,”<sup>564</sup> which could either mean the Pentateuch and their commandments or a more nebulous understanding of moral expectations such as the “Law of Love,” or “the Law of Christ.” Thus, the Hebrew seems to imply one direction, while the Latin and Greek implies a different purpose. The next questions simply discuss the Decalogue, in all three languages, but it seems reasonable that the Jewish reader would have been entirely comfortable with Tremellius’s Hebrew discussion of the law in this chapter. Bible quotations are directly from the Hebrew Bible. In fact, Tremellius’s Catechism should be considered belonging to the corpus of Jewish literature. However, as a Christian book, most Jews would not consider it a Jewish work. By translating a Christian book into Hebrew, Tremellius produced ambiguity, as it is not clear whether “Torah,” “mitzvoth,” and “ototh” and

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<sup>563</sup> Immanuel Tremellius, תַּחֲנוּן: *Hoc est catechesis: sive prima institutio avt rvdimenta religionis Christianæ, Ebraicè, Græcè, & Latinè explicata* (1591), 88.

<sup>564</sup> Tremellius, *Hoc est catechesis*, 89.

other Hebrew words should be read with their Jewish meanings in mind or their Christian analogues. Tremellius knew that any Jewish readers would understand the Jewish meanings of the words. Perhaps, Tremellius felt that the Reformed faith transcended this ambiguity and reading the catechism could make them more faithful Jews and Christians.

I argue that Tremellius intended his catechism for two purposes: he wanted to form a spiritual community and give Hebraists a safe Christian outlet to practice Hebrew. Catechisms are to instruct the faithful. Although it is entirely possible to use a catechism as an outreach tool, it presupposes that one is part of the community, explaining its beliefs to a catechumen. In that capacity, it would be less intended for outreach as instruction for someone who is new to a given community. Tremellius did not want the Jewish community to give up their Jewish ways. Although he certainly wanted his fellow Jews to believe that Jesus was the Messiah and to convert to Christianity, his preface is clear that “they should walk all their lifelong” in the commandments.<sup>565</sup> Unless he merely urged observance as a rhetorical flourish to get Jews to convert, it seems that he sincerely believed one could believe in Jesus and follow the commandments. In that vein, he imagined a new way of seeing the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. It is not either/or, but both/and. To Tremellius, becoming a Christian did not mean negating his Jewish observance or heritage, as other converts had understood it.

Moreover, it is possible that the catechism was not primarily intended for Jews at all. The fact that the Hebrew text had vowel markings supports this hypothesis. Native Hebrew readers do not need *niqqud*, vowel markings, to read the Hebrew.<sup>566</sup> Vowel markings, however, do

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<sup>565</sup> *Religions-Unterricht*, 13. “Zweitens, die Gebote, darinnen sie alle ihre Lebenstage wandeln sollen.”

<sup>566</sup> In modern Israeli Hebrew, incidentally, children’s books and resources for immigrants have vowels, while newspapers, websites, novels, and textbooks do not have them.



appear in copies of the Tanakh, in prayer books, and in instructional books for children. Since the catechism has vowel markings and it need not for Jews to have read it, it is entirely possible that Tremellius intended primarily Christians Hebraists to read it. People who are learning Hebrew most certainly need vowel markings in order to pronounce the words; whereas a native speaker knows the words without vowels. Creating a Reformed catechism with Hebrew vowel markings created a perfectly orthodox venue for Christians to stretch their Hebrew reading muscles. The use of vowels allowed not only a Jewish audience but also non-native Hebraists to study the text.

Additionally, the fact that it had vowel markings, while making it easier for Hebrew-learners to read, could also suggest something of the status of the book. Printing *niqqudot*, vowel markings, is more expensive (the 1554 and 1591 editions have vowel markings). Also, the inclusion of vowel markings suggests that the book was intended to be seen in the same class as Tanakhs and *siddurim*, prayer books. Tremellius intended the catechism as a new prayer book for a new community he wished to create, which included Christians reading Hebrew and Jews who believed in Jesus yet kept the Torah. Tremellius imagined a new community, which his catechism bolstered. Although this community he imagined was Christian, it allowed for the possibility of Jews remaining Jewish. In that way, he imagined a philosemitic Christianity. He did not require Jews to entirely drop their Jewishness when they hit the baptismal waters.

Throughout his life, Tremellius had to demonstrate his orthodoxy to his Reformed neighbors. As we have seen, Tremellius's preface to the catechism read at face value is ambiguous, but if read through a Jewish-Christian lens, it shows us that Tremellius sympathized with Judaism. Even though Tremellius taught Hebrew Bible all his life, he scrubbed his publications of any references to actual Jewish works. He certainly understood what accusations

of Judaizing might have entailed. In addition, none of his works give any indication of his personal views, at face value. Unlike other converts, he never narrated his conversion. He wanted to stick to the task at hand, and for him, that was producing a catechism, translating and annotating the Bible, and producing other biblical literature. I agree with Kenneth Austin that “Tremellius pursued a wilful policy go give as little away about himself as he could possibly manage.”<sup>567</sup> Tremellius did not reveal his views publicly at all; he spoke about other matters but was silent about himself. One can see this facet of himself as either a modest personality, not wishing to be in the limelight, or as hiding or protecting his true identity.<sup>568</sup> Whether he did so to hide or for other reasons, Tremellius portrayed himself as orthodox to the Reformed.

In a letter written to Theodore Beza within a year of his death, Tremellius had to tow the Christian line, but it seems more evasive than authentic. The printer Ambrosius Froben (1537 – 1602) had asked Tremellius to edit and censor his publication of the Talmud. Although starting in Basel, Froben, along with the master printer Israel ben Daniel Zifroni, moved their press to Frieberg im Breisgau. Before 1570, Froben printed Hebrew books for Christian audiences to advance their Hebrew skills, often with Latin introductions. After 1570, Froben shifted to printing Hebrew books for Jewish audiences, especially his Basel Talmud of 1578–1581.<sup>569</sup> Froben did not print Hebrew books at the beginning of his printing career, but when he entered

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<sup>567</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, xv.

<sup>568</sup> Austin suggested these options in an e-mail correspondence with the author, 30 January 2019. Austin wrote: “I have generally thought it was either the modesty of a scholar who wanted to let his work speak for him, or else a desire to avoid the limelight because of these factors which might be used against him in some way.”

<sup>569</sup> On Froben, see M. J. Heller, “Ambrosius Froben, Israel Zifroni and Hebrew Printing in Freiburg Im Breisgau,” in *Studies in the Making of the Hebrew Book* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 131-150, and Stephen G. Burnett, “German Jewish Printing in the Reformation Era (1530-1633),” in *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth Century Germany*, ed. Dean P. Bell and Stephen G. Burnett, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006), 503-527.

the business, he printed Hebraica for both Jewish and Christian customers.<sup>570</sup> Tremellius had written a preface to the publication. In the letter to Beza, Tremellius explained that this is “the third or fourth complaint” about the Talmud project, “which truly makes me wish that I had never touched it.”<sup>571</sup> He defended himself: “God knows that I did not work on the Talmud in order to confirm error or blasphemy nor at all to obscure truth and slow its advance. I knew nothing of what the Council of Trent wrote, nor of the inquisitor monk who worked on it.”<sup>572</sup> On 9 September 1553, the Roman Inquisition had publicly burned the Talmud in the Campo de’ Fiori; in 1559, Pope Paul IV placed the Talmud on the *Index of Prohibited Books*.<sup>573</sup> If Tremellius had known, he would not have worked on it, he said.

In 1579, Froben ventured to the Frankfurt book fair to give the fascicles to his financier, Shimon Günzburg zur Gemse (d. 1582). While there, the Imperial Book Commission interrogated him about his activities (10 – 16 September).<sup>574</sup> Tremellius recounted how Froben, while passing through Heidelberg after the fair, had asked him to censor the Talmud before publication, “by reading the books before he printed them and cutting out what was blasphemous and contradictory to the Christian faith, which I was happy to do.” Tremellius continued: “I worked on the books (fascicles) that he sent me as diligently and faithfully as I could and as it was my duty to do, cutting not only the blasphemies but the wicked opinions that they [Jews]

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<sup>570</sup> Burnett, “German Jewish Printing,” 510.

<sup>571</sup> Immanuel Tremellius to Theodore Beza, [Sedan, September/October 1579?], in *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, ed. Alain Dufour, Béatrice Nicollier, and Reinhard Bodenmann, vol. 20 (1579) (Geneva: Droz, 1998), 194. Thanks to Dr. Barbara Travers and Steve Kale for help with the translation.

<sup>572</sup> Tremellius to Beza, in *Correspondance*, 194.

<sup>573</sup> Burnett, “German Jewish Printing,” 508.

<sup>574</sup> Burnett, “German Jewish Printing,” 512.

give themselves permission to make against those that they call Gentiles among whom they also include Christians, even though, when you press them, they deny it.”<sup>575</sup> Here, Tremellius distanced himself from his Jewish brethren. One wonders if this was mere self-protection, as Tremellius attempted to justify himself, or if he had internalized a Christian, anti-Jewish sentiment. He also cut out “of the said books a large number of absurd and false histories and many things either dishonest or full of impiety; thus edited, I sent the said books back to Froben with in the margins written in my own hand in Latin why I had cut out [what I did], as can be attested to by the said books that I sent back and by those who worked in the printshop, they want to tell the truth; this I did on two or three books of the Talmud.” Then he added, “if the print run that followed was thus edited or not, I do not know, because I never saw what was printed.”<sup>576</sup> Tremellius claimed that he had no agency in this activity; he edited what Froben asked him to and sent it back. He never saw the final copy; he never did anything wrong. This is certainly the appeal of a man who wants to save his own skin and not be prosecuted in any way.

Tremellius continued his defense, suggesting that he was concerned about saving himself. “As for this Talmud thus edited by me, I wrote a short preface, not thinking that it would be put out or authorized by the Council of Trent, nor corrected by any hand other than my own,” which preface was never published. He added, “I am confident that if they had left it as I had delivered it, it would never have been approved by the Council, because I cast to the ground the purgatory of the new Jews [*nouveaux juifs*] and consequently that of the papists and many other foolish

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<sup>575</sup> Tremellius to Beza, 195.

<sup>576</sup> Tremellius to Beza, 195.

things that the latter took from the former.”<sup>577</sup> Tremellius associated the new Jews and the papists (*papaulx*) and their idea of purgatory. This identification of new Jews with papists and purgatory suggests that Tremellius here is not discussing real Jews of Judaism, but metaphorical, rhetorical “Jews,” such as the monks and papists who insisted on heartless, ritual action in Christianity castigated by Erasmus (see chapter 3). *Jews* does not always mean Jews. Tremellius referred to people whom he perceived as expecting to have their sins absolved in purgatory yet did not live as Christians in their day but followed rote ritual. He most likely did not refer here to real Jews, who did not give to Catholics the idea of purgatory.

Tremellius added that he suspected that the printers left in what he had excised. “I understood from a conversation with Froben that in cutting so much out, there would be no Jew who would want to buy it, and also for that reason I stopped working, and I haven’t worked on it for a long time.”<sup>578</sup> Given his past life in Ferrara’s Jewish community, Tremellius would likely have known that Jews would not want to purchase an expurgated Talmud. The only reason Jewish printers censored them was so that inquisitors would not burn the books. Why did he stop working? Because he knew it would not sell? He decided it was not worth his while?

“There is something of worth knowing in the Talmud,” continued Tremellius, “and which also deserves praise; my annotations of the Syriac Testament and other things that I can produce demonstrate it.”<sup>579</sup> He claimed that his Syriac New Testament annotations reference the Talmud. The editors’ footnote here claimed that if Tremellius did use the Talmud, he must have done it in

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<sup>577</sup> Tremellius to Beza, 195.

<sup>578</sup> Tremellius to Beza, 195.

<sup>579</sup> Tremellius to Beza, 195.

an implicit way, because he never mentioned the Talmud as a source in his annotations.<sup>580</sup>

“When then I praise it in my preface,” which was unpublished, continued Tremellius, “I praise it only after it has been censored and even then, I do not praise it in everything, but only in certain regards that I name in the said preface,” which we do not have. At the end of the letter, he wished he had his books so that he could refute the Talmud. He wanted Odoard Biset to send him the published Talmud “to see how the Council and the Inquisitor have meddled with it, and also to see if anyone has put back in anything that I cut out, which I suspect they have done. Among other things, there were almost no passages of Scripture set forth appropriately, but almost all passages were distorted so that they served the intentions of the forgers of the said Talmud, and so that a good...”<sup>581</sup> The rest of the letter is missing. Tremellius here claimed that the inquisitors, who wanted to maintain orthodoxy and punish any heresy, *added* back in what Tremellius excised. It is almost as if Tremellius wanted to appear as more zealously anti-Jewish than the inquisitors, whom he called the new Jews and bringing back Jewish ways.

Some of Tremellius’s annotations to his Bible translations indicated his desire to appear orthodox to his Reformed Christian audience. At Genesis 1:1, for example, Tremellius did not need to, but wanted to make his Trinitarian orthodoxy clear, he glossed *Deus* as trinitarian: Tremellius wrote that *Deus* meant “one essence, three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; just as it was exhibited in the Hebrew voice.”<sup>582</sup> Tremellius evidently referred to the Hebrew word

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<sup>580</sup> Tremellius to Beza, 198, see note 15.

<sup>581</sup> Tremellius to Beza, 196.

<sup>582</sup> Immanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius, *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra, Sive Libri Canonici Priscæ Judæorum Ecclesiæ a Deo Traditi, Latini recens ex Hebræo facti, brevibusque Scholiis illustrati ab Immanuele Tremellio, & Francisco Junio* (Hanover: Andreas Wechel, 1596), 1, no. 3. Latin: “unus essentia, personæ tres, Pater, Filius, & Spiritus Sanctus: ut Hebræa voce ostenditur.”

for *Deus*, namely, *'elohim*; as Hebraists now know, the word is grammatically plural but semantically singular (e.g., at times it takes a plural verb, even when referring to the unitary God of Israel), but Tremellius may have seen it as semantically plural as well, indicating a hint to the doctrine of the Trinity. On Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man,” Tremellius explained that “it is not angels speaking...but of the three persons of the deity in undivided essence speaking among themselves, or rather the Father has declared [the words] to the Son in the undivided Spirit.”<sup>583</sup> Tremellius wanted everyone to know that he affirmed the Trinitarian reading. Tremellius interpreted the tree of life in Genesis 2:9 as Jesus himself, “who is our life,” he wrote.<sup>584</sup> These are just a few examples to show that Tremellius went out of his way in his Biblical annotations to prove his authenticity and orthodoxy in regard to the Trinity and to Christology. Tremellius needed to maintain his orthodoxy, all the more so as one of his former Heidelberg students, Matthias Vehe-Glirius, began publicly expounding anti-Trinitarianism in 1570.<sup>585</sup>

## Conclusion

Tremellius, as a Jewish–Christian convert, had a vested interest in appearing orthodox to other Christians. Tremellius’s Latin Bible annotations promulgated the trinitarian arguments of Girolamo Zanchi from his 1572 *De Tribus Elohim* (*On the Triune Elohim*). However, just appearing Reformed was not enough, for, in 1565, “the Catholic Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius

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<sup>583</sup> Tremellius and Junius, *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra*, 2, no. 62. Latin: “non Angeli dixerunt (quod Saturnilianos impiè confinxisse docet Epiphanius) sed tres personæ deitatis in unitate essentiae, dixerunt inter se: vel potius Pater dixit Filio in unitate Spiritus. Vide Socratem Ecclesiasticæ histor. libro secundo, capite decimo nono, & trigesimo.”

<sup>584</sup> Tremellius and Junius, *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra*, 3, no. 28.

<sup>585</sup> Robert Dán, *Matthias Vehe-Glirius: Life and Work of a Radical Antitrinitarian with His Collected Writings*, trans. Imre Gombos and L. S. Domonkos, *Studia Humanitatis: Publications of the Centre for Renaissance Research* 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 23.

argued anonymously that the Reformed principle of *sola scriptura* was indistinguishable from the biblicism which had led heretics to reject the doctrine of the Trinity on the grounds that it was nowhere explicitly justified in the biblical text.”<sup>586</sup> Therefore Tremellius, in order to not be stuck in the Judaizing and anti-Trinitarian side of the argument, had to advance pro-Trinitarian and pro-Christological arguments in his biblical annotations. One is hard pressed to find judaizing examples in his Biblical annotations because he wanted to appear orthodox (of course, he may not only have wanted to be appear, but also *was* orthodox). This situation reveals the precarious situation Calvinism had within the larger Christian community and the precarious situation of Tremellius participating in that precarious community.

Tremellius’s catechism, itself a hybrid book, reveals Tremellius’s hybrid nature. Is the book itself Christian or Jewish literature? Later historians have classified it as a Reformed Christian catechism.<sup>587</sup> Nineteenth-century Hebraists included it in catalogues of Jewish books, demonstrating that they, at least, it considered it Jewish literature (see epilogue). Thus, we have a religiously Christian yet linguistically and authorially Jewish text. The duality of the text reflected Tremellius’s own hybridity as a Christian Jew.<sup>588</sup> It is a Jewish-Christian book written by a Christian Jew for an imagined Jewish and Christian spiritual community.

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<sup>586</sup> Benjamin R. Merkle, “Triune Elohim: The Heidelberg Antitrinitarians and Reformed Readings of Hebrew in the Confessional Age” (PhD diss., Christ Church, Oxford, 2012), i.

<sup>587</sup> Exemplified, most recently, by its inclusion in the Post-Reformation Digital Library, <http://www.prdl.org/>, a project of the Junius Institute for Digital Reformation Research in partnership with the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI.

<sup>588</sup> Also known as Jewish Christian or a Hebrew Christian. The former is the term scholars and historians refer to the burgeoning Jewish–Christian movements of the first centuries Common Era, whereas the latter is specifically the nineteenth-century manifestation of this trans-religious phenomenon (discussed in the epilogue).



Tremellius's situation shows us the religious uncertainty of the sixteenth century, in which people had to decide which confession with which to align themselves. One could choose Catholicism, Calvinism or the broader Reformed movement, Lutheranism, or, if they wanted to be really radical, Anabaptism, anti-Trinitarianism, or spiritualism. With the religious boundaries being rewritten and standardizing their beliefs, it was possible for people to hold beliefs that the group did not consider orthodox. Tremellius was part of the Reformed tradition. He wanted to reform the church back to its mythical original glory, before the pope took power. He chose to translate the New Testament from Syriac, because he believed that the Syriac Peshitta version of the Bible held its original truths. Unlike most scholars, Tremellius believed the apostles wrote the New Testament in Syriac, not Greek, a position known as Aramaic (or Syriac) primacy. Tremellius tried to hearken back to the days of the New Testament, when the apostles, "continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."<sup>589</sup> Tremellius imagined a community or situation in which Jews continued to observe their rituals while being Christians, and in which Christians learned Hebrew from their Jewish mentors. This irenic vision hearkened back to the original unity of Jesus movement, which was a part of Judaism and not separate from it. Tremellius, who translated the original texts of the Bible from the Hebrew and Syriac languages, was interested in its origins. Therefore, as a Reformer, he looked out upon the Christianity of his day and wished to bring it back to its Jewish context. The sixteenth century, with the rise in Hebrew scholarship and focus back on rabbinic, Jewish, and ancient sources, represented a time

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<sup>589</sup> Acts 2:46, Authorized Version.

in which individuals rethought the boundaries and wished to bring Jews and Christians back together again.

The difference between Jewish converts like Pfefferkorn and Carben and Tremellius was that the latter, even though he made slighting remarks against the Jews to prove his own authenticity—like the other converts—referring to “the blasphemies of the Jews,” was that Pfefferkorn and Carben sought to systematically discredit Judaism, whereas Tremellius only tried to advance Christianity. Tremellius did not employ negative arguments against Jews and Judaism, but only positive arguments for Christianity (although his work can hardly be called an *apologia*). Tremellius was open-minded, adaptable, and did not disparage Jews or Christians of other stripes. He sought unity and wanted everyone to come to the knowledge of the truth which he believed. This figure was remarkable for his day as the first philo-semitic Jewish convert to Christianity, and an irenic Protestant. The only possible explanation for his irenicism and philo-semitism is a mixture of his open-minded upbringing, his religious formation among spiritualists and evangelicals, and his adaptability.

## CHAPTER SIX

### EPILOGUE: TREMELLIUS'S LEGACY

#### **Tremellius's Posthumous Identity**

After his death, people used Tremellius in four main ways. First, Protestants often continued to identify him as a simply a Jew, not a Jewish convert, *and* as a model defender of the Protestant faith against Catholicism. They considered his Latin translation of the New Testament a paragon of anti-Catholic scholarship. Second, Tremellius represented a philo-semitic movement that went in two directions in the seventeenth century: Political Hebraism and Judaizing, represented, respectively, by Franciscus Junius and Jean Bodin. Third, Protestants also used Tremellius as a conversion tool for Jews, which contributed to the nineteenth-century Hebrew Christian movement. Fourth, Jewish Christians in general, including nineteenth-century Hebrew Christians, held up Tremellius as a paragon of Jewish-Christian virtue and saw him as one of them. Thus, Tremellius's own ambiguity about his intentions and identity produced a myriad of Tremellian movements.

Even during his life, many people described Tremellius's primary identity as a Jew, not a convert. In 1547, the Reformed theologian Pierre Viret wrote to Guillaume Farel, requesting a job for Tremellius after his departure from Strasbourg. Viret's letter revealed that Tremellius's Jewish past prevented him from some jobs. Viret wrote:

As for Emanuel, I don't really know what I can say. There is no post for him here [in Lausanne], and even if there were, there are many good and learned men whom we ought not to neglect. And to this I should add that Jews and Italians are not well thought of in Berne. What you ask for on his behalf he has already frequently written to me about, as have others, especially Calvin. But I can't do anything other than explain how things are here.<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> Pierre Viret to Guillaume Farel, 24 November 1547, *Calvini opera*, no. 969. Quoted in Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 54.

Viret did not distinguish between Jews and Jewish converts, lumping them all together as “Jews.” Similarly, in March 1548, the Basel preacher and former professor of New Testament exegesis Oswald Myconius wrote to Reformed leader Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich that “a certain Jew, Emanuel, has been called here in order to teach Hebrew.” Myconius and Viret saw Tremellius as primarily a Jew, not a Christian. Similarly, in 1567, Thomas Harding, warden of New College and first holder of the Regius Chair of Hebrew at Oxford, told the story of the wives of Vermigli and Tremellius, referring to Tremellius as a “Iewe.” Harding wrote that

Peter Martyr the regular Chanon of S. Augustines order, who likewise yoked himself unto Dame Catherine the Nonne of Metz in Lorraine, that stale out of her cloister by night, and ranne away with an honest mans wife of Metz to Strasbourg, which honest mans wife married to Emanuel the Iewe (that afterward came to Cambridge, and there read an Hebrue lesson) her husband being alive, as he tolde me the tale him selfe with weeping eyes at Metz, as I passed toward Italie through Lorraine.<sup>591</sup>

In addition to accusing Tremellius of abetting bigamy, Harding primarily identified Tremellius as a Jew. Harding did not even mention his conversion.

After he died, many Christian authors continued to see Tremellius primarily as a Jew, rather than a Jewish convert, a Christian, or a Christian Jew. In a 1593 treatise, the Catholic scholar William Rainolds (c. 1544–1594, whose brother John contributed to the King James Bible) made reference to, in a discussing regarding the sacrament, “Emanuel Tremellius the Ievv, and Theodorus Bibliander the Suizzer, both of Caluins religion, & therefore of sufficient authoritie in this case; and ether of them better scene in the Rabbines and Ievvish ceremonies then Caluin or Beza.”<sup>592</sup> Though Rainolds acknowledged that Tremellius was a Calvinist,

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<sup>591</sup> Harding, *A Reioindre to M. Iewels Replie*, 175.

<sup>592</sup> William Rainolds, *A Treatise Conteyning the True Catholike and Apostolike Faith of the Holy Sacrifice and Sacrament Ordeyned by Christ at His Last Supper Vvith a Declaration of the Berengarian Heresie Renewed in Our Age: And an Answer to Certain Sermons Made by M. Robert Bruce Minister of Edinburgh Concerning This Matter. By VVilliam Reynolde Priest* (Antwerp: Ioachim Trognesium, 1593), 101.

Rainolds portrayed his main identification as a “Jew,” confirming that early modern society did not see believe that conversion erased Jewishness. On the previous page, Rainolds wrote that “Emanuel Tremellius the Ievv, telleth that among the Iewes it vvas a custome yerely vvhen they eate their paschal lamb, vvithal to joyne a ceremonial eating of bread.”<sup>593</sup> Rainolds understood Tremellius’s primary identity as *Jew* even after his conversion.

For some authors, this fact produced polemical materials for confessional rivalries. As Tremellius ultimately sided with the Reformed faith instead of the Catholic faith in which he was baptized, some Catholic writers used Tremellius’s Jewish identity as a weapon with which to fire shots at Protestants. In order to undermine the Protestant tradition, two Catholic writers, Remond and Ferrier, claimed that Tremellius had Judaized. The Protestant professor of Hebrew and Theology at the Academy of Sedan, Jacques Cappel (Jacobus Tillaeus, 1570 – 1624), responded to these claims:

in the year 1580, the last of July, Emanuel Tremellius made this holy Testament, [in which] he praised God for calling him from Judaism to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and gave thirty escus to our poor. He died shortly afterward. Nevertheless, Remond and Ferrier are not ashamed in saying that he returned to and died in his Judaism.<sup>594</sup>

Remond and Ferrier accused Tremellius of reverting to Judaism, which suggests that was a common claim made about Jewish converts. People believed that their essentially Jewish status remained unchanged in baptism; nothing could take away the stain of Jewishness. Cappel used Tremellius’s last will and testament to prove that he was a faithful Christian at his last breath,

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<sup>593</sup> Rainolds, *Treatise Conteyning the True Catholike and Apostolike Faith*, 100.

<sup>594</sup> Jacques Cappel, *Les Livrees de Babel, ou l’Histoire du Siège Romain, distribuee par controuerses & considerations sur ce que le Sr. Ferrier & ses compagnons ont dict de plus specieux en faueur de l’Antechrist* (Sedan: Iean Iannon, 1616), iii. “Pour exemple, lan 1580, dernier de Iuillet Emanuel Tremellius fit icy san Testament, louant Dieu de ce que du Iudaisme il 'lavoit appellé à la cognoissance de Iesus Christ, donne trente escus à nos pauures, y meure peu de iours apres, et cependant les sieurs Remond & Ferrier n’ont point de honte d’escrire qu’il est returné & peri en son Iudaisme.”

thanking God for delivering him from Judaism. His testament has not been found, so we cannot verify Cappel's assertion. Nevertheless, this situation demonstrates that competing parties used the question of Tremellius's identity to achieve their own ends.

Another source, written within eight years of Tremellius's death, demonstrated how Protestants used Tremellius's legacy to show that he ultimately sided with Protestant Christianity, as opposed to Catholicism or Judaism. In a series of apothegms, the Reformed Hebraists Johann Jakob Grynaeus (1540–1617) and Robert Howie (c. 1565 – c. 1645) quoted Tremellius as exclaiming on his death bed: “Vivat Christus, pereat Barrabas” (May Christ live and Barrabas perish!).<sup>595</sup> This anecdote maintained that Tremellius sided with Christianity over Judaism. The anecdote therefore gave validity to the Reformed faith in which Tremellius died. Unlike Jewish converts who Judaized, Tremellius was the true Jew who stayed with Christ in the Reformed faith and did not stray. To its authors and audience, this claim bolstered the validity of the Reformed faith because it showed that even a Jew realized that the Reformed faith was the true faith. However, we do not know what Tremellius's private thoughts were, nor do we know whether this anecdote was true. But for Protestants after his death, Tremellius served as a useful token of Jewish faithfulness to the Protestant tradition that supported their claims.

Still more authors into the seventeenth-century identified Tremellius primarily as a Jew. In 1681, Scottish philosopher and bishop Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715) wrote:

For one *Antonio Flaminio*, that was also suspect of *Lutheranisme*, lived with [Cardinal Pole]. *Tremellius* that learned *Jew*, who had been Baptized in his House, was also known

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<sup>595</sup> Johann Jakob Grynaeus and Robert Howie, *Apophthegmata morientium, seu, de commemorabilibus quibusdam illustrium, heroicorumque ac pietatis doctrinaeque laude florentissimorum hominum, vocibus emortalibus, commonefactio theologica, à Iohanne Iacobo Grynæo ideò proposita, ut de eadem, si Deus permiserit, sacra συζήτησις instituatur, ad d. 23. Maij: respondente Roberto Houæo, Scoto* (Basel: Sebastianum Henricpetri, 1588), 27, <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-3825>.

to incline that way: and many, who left their Monasteries, and went to *Germany*, used to stay some time with him on their way, and were well received by him.<sup>596</sup>

Although Burnet recognized that Tremellius was baptized, he conceived of his primary identity as a “Jew.” Other writers acknowledged Tremellius’s dual identity. In 1631, the English divine Edmund Reeve (d. 1660) wrote:

*Tremellius a Jew by Nation, but a Christian by profession in religion, and famous in the Church of God for his translation of the Scriptures forth of Hebrew, Chaldean and Syriacke, relateth out of Iudaicall Antiquity...*<sup>597</sup>

Here, the author clearly expressed Tremellius’s primary ethnically Jewish yet religiously Christian status. Reeve thus distinguished Tremellius from non-Christian Jews. In 1655, the Archdeacon of Totnes Francis Fullwood emphasized that Tremellius was a Jew who converted; that is, in his mind, became a Christian and was no longer a Jew. Speaking of Reginald Poole, Fullwood wrote: “For meeting in *Brabant* with *Emanuel tremellius*, requesting some favour from him, he not onely denyed him relief, but also returned him railing termes, though formerly he had been his *familiar Friend*. Yea his *Godfather* giving him his name at the *Font*, when *Tremellius* from a *Jew* first turned *Christian*.”<sup>598</sup> Fullwood emphasized Tremellius’s conversion as a complete break from Judaism to Christianity, Reeve acknowledged his dual Jewish-

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<sup>596</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England. The Second Part, of the Progress Made in It till the Settlement of It in the Beginning of Q. Elizabeth's Reign* (London: Richard Chiswell, 1681), 146. Italics original.

<sup>597</sup> Edmund Reeve, *The Christian Divinitie, Contained in the Divine Service of the Church of England Summarily, and for the Most Part in Order, According as Point on Point Dependeth, Composed; and with the Holy Scriptures Plainly and Plentifully Confirmed: Written for the Furtherance of the Peoples Understanding in the True Religion Established by Publike Authoritie, and for the Increase of Vnitie in That Godly Truth Eternall. By Edmund Reeve Bachelour in Divinitie, and Vicar of the Parish of Hayes in Middlesex* (London: Nicholas Fussell and Humphrey Mosley, 1631), 191.

<sup>598</sup> Francis Fullwood, *The Church-History of Britain from the Birth of Jesus Christ until the Year M.DC.XLVIII* (London: Iohn Williams, 1655), 14.

Christian identity, while others primarily emphasized his Jewish identity. Tremellius served as a rhetorical tool that later Protestants used to back up their own confessional and polemical points.

### **Tremellian Philo-semitism: Franciscus Junius (1545 – 1602), the Law of Moses, Political Hebraism, and Jean Bodin (1529 – 1596)**

Meanwhile, Tremellius' influence went in a rather different direction for those more familiar with his ideas. In the generation after his death, Tremellius's brand of philo-semitism went in two distinct directions. First, Franciscus Junius was apparently influenced by Tremellius's views on the Mosaic Law and applied the commands and punishments of the Mosaic Law to the Dutch state, formulating a movement known as Political Hebraism. Second, Jean Bodin continued in Tremellius's philo-semitic tradition and promoted a Judaized, philo-semitic Christianity.

Inspired by Tremellius, Junius applied the Law of Moses to the state. A generation younger than Tremellius, Junius worked with Tremellius on their conjoint Latin Bible translation from the Hebrew. Junius's may have developed ideas while working with Tremellius, even though he did not publish until thirteen years after Tremellius's death. Junius wrote *The Mosaic Polity* (*De Politiae Mosis Observatione* Leiden, 1593), as a guidebook for the "people of God," *populo Dei*. His goal was that the Dutch Republic would implement, apply, observe, and heed the Mosaic Law.<sup>599</sup> This purpose was a far cry from non-Reformed understandings of the Law. While various theologians had given opinions on different commandments of the Torah, no Christian theologian before Junius had written a treatise urging a specific political

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<sup>599</sup> Franciscus Junius, *The Mosaic Polity*, trans. Todd M. Rester, ed. Andrew M. McGinnis (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2015), xliii.



commonwealth to apply judicial laws from the Torah of Moses for the good of the political commonwealth. Junius hoped that Dutch rulers would thereby rule justly and support the conscience of the pious.<sup>600</sup> Junius advanced the theonomic view that “the magistrate in his political order assists his society in aspiring to the gate of eternal salvation, and so does the ecclesiastical minister, through the support of human society and the influence of a good magistrate.”<sup>601</sup> Junius believed that the civil order and ecclesiastical order should support the same judicial law of God. In his mind, the priest and the magistrate worked together for the good of the society by teaching God’s rules.

Junius’s ideas fully germinated as seventeenth-century Political Hebraism, whose advocates advised states to model themselves on ancient Israelite society as outlined in the Pentateuch. This idea is a particular kind of theonomy, a product distinct to the Reformed tradition. Political Hebraism was distinct from other Christian Hebraism, which used philological tools to interpret ancient texts, in that it sought to apply Jewish law to the state, the so-called Hebrew Republic, *Respublica Hebraeorum*.<sup>602</sup> However, Junius did not describe the intricate details of the Hebrew Republic or create a political system upon it—his treatise mostly provided a theoretical and theological foundation for Political Hebraism. Todd Rester and Andrew M. McGinnis described Junius’s effort as “prolegomenal” and “rudimentary” to other works of Political Hebraism.<sup>603</sup> Later Political Hebraists like Carlo Sigonio in Italy (1520–1584) took

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<sup>600</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 26.

<sup>601</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 25.

<sup>602</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, xlii.

<sup>603</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, xlvi, xlvii.

Junius's and secularized them. Sigonio the Israelite state to the ancient Rome, Athens, and Sparta.<sup>604</sup>

Junius gave a confusing view about the applicability of Mosaic Law. On one hand, Junius believed that God's law, which he equated with Mosaic law, was perfect. "Their arrangement and application are so perfect that they lack all imperfection," he wrote.<sup>605</sup> "You will find that there is nothing in these that is out of place, nothing out of order, nothing contradictory, nothing dissonant."<sup>606</sup> "Everything in them is proper and without change."<sup>607</sup> Junius's approach to the law was erudite and respectful. On the other hand, Junius tempered such glowing reviews with his actual theology that, like Beza, the ceremonial law is mutable and abolished. Junius considered moral law binding, immutable, and therefore applicable to all. Judicial and ceremonial were mutable, and therefore their situation influenced their validity, according to "the particular mode of persons, things, and circumstances."<sup>608</sup> For these laws, "the substance of these ceremonies is in Christ" and therefore their observance has passed away, "just as the sun usually dispels shadows by its arrival." Junius agreed with the scholastics that these laws are dead and

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<sup>604</sup> The literature on Political Hebraism includes: Kalman Neuman, "The Literature of the *Respublica Judaica*: Descriptions of the Ancient Israelite Polity in the Antiquarian Writings of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002); Gordon Schochet, Fania Oz-Salzberger, and Meirav Jones, eds., *Political Hebraism: Judaic Sources in Early Modern Political Thought* (Jerusalem: Shalem Press, 2008); Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Graham Hammill, *The Mosaic Constitution: Political Theology and Imagination from Machiavelli to Milton* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Translations of the primary works are in Carlo Sigonio, *The Hebrew Republic* [1582], trans. Peter Wyetzner (Jerusalem: Shalem, 2010) and Petrus Cunaeus, *The Hebrew Republic* [1617], trans. Peter Wyetzner (Jerusalem: Shalem, 2006). In 1582, he wrote *De republica Eboracum* (Latin: *De republica Hebræorum libri iv*, Andreus Welchius: Frankfurt, 1583. wrote *De republica Hebræorum libri iii* (Ludovicus Elsevier: Leiden, 1617)

<sup>605</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 7

<sup>606</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 7

<sup>607</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 8.

<sup>608</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 130.

deadly. “The judicial commands that Moses handed down are dead, that is, no longer living in such a way as to obligate; but the ceremonial laws are deadly, that is, they cannot live any longer or be observed among the living without those who observe them becoming liable to death.”<sup>609</sup> In classic Christian antinomianism, Junius believed that the commands of Moses are “dead, extinct, and eliminated from common use.”<sup>610</sup> He considered the observance of the Sabbath “the gravest sacrilege.”<sup>611</sup> He divided history into three time periods: before Christ, when “the legal ceremonies were neither deadly nor dead, but ordained for the life of the pious,” a time in which “circumcision was a living sacrament.” After Christ preached, the law was “a body dying off.” In the age of the church, the law has become a “rotting and deadly body.” Christ buried the law; now it remains “forever embalmed and buried.” It would be sinful to exhume it, lest it breathe a “deadly evil in the church of Christ.”<sup>612</sup> Such views seem to contradict his earlier statements about the Law’s perfectness. Nevertheless, Junius’s application of the judicial Laws of Moses to the state was radical when compared to non-Reformed theologians.

The second direction that Tremellius’s philo-semitism went was a nebulous, Judaizing, boundary-crossing tradition, exemplified by the Frenchman, Jean Bodin. After Tremellius died, it became even more common for individuals across Europe to cross religious boundaries. Due to the shattering of ecclesiastical authority, the increased options for conversion, and increased knowledge about other cultures from the printing press and discoveries of new worlds, people

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<sup>609</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 129.

<sup>610</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 130.

<sup>611</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 147.

<sup>612</sup> Junius, *Mosaic Polity*, 162, 163.

had more religious choice.<sup>613</sup> Tremellius's intellectual choices represented an early example of a thinker rewriting the boundaries between Judaism and Christianity, in the wake of the Renaissance and the Reformation, that others carried forth into the seventeenth century that challenged religious orthodoxy.

Bodin belonged to the next generation of thinkers in this philo-semitic stream of which Tremellius is a prime example. Bodin was sympathetic to Jews and Judaism and believed that Hebrew was the original language of the cosmos. Previous commentators had assumed that Bodin's mother was a Sephardic Jew whose family escaped the Iberian expulsions in 1492 to live in France, because of the central role Bodin gave to Salomon in the *Colloquium*, his numerous Old Testament citations, and the end of the book where he sympathized with the Iberian persecutions of Jews.<sup>614</sup> While the proposition of a Jewish mother is an intriguing question, there is no evidence either way. A true polymath, Bodin was a jurist, philosopher, historian, economist, demonologist, a philologist, and Hebraist. He served as a Carmelite friar in Angers, attended the University of Toulouse, and became a barrister (*avocat*) in the Paris Parlement, France's highest court of law. While at Toulouse, his interest in comparing legal systems encouraged him to study Hebrew law and culture.<sup>615</sup> Bodin's legal training, combined with his bent to see the universal, allowed him to find truth in all cultures, especially in the Semitic.

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<sup>613</sup> Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565–1641)*, Studies in Early Modern European History (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999) explores the common concerns people had regarding religious choice; while Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved*, explores sixteenth-century heterodox ideas in the context of the new worlds.

<sup>614</sup> Kuntz, trans., *Colloquium*, xvi.

<sup>615</sup> The Bodin Project—Aids to the Study of Jean Bodin, harvard.edu, August 14, 2018.

Bodin's views about Judaism were comparatively radical, humanistic, and even proto-Enlightenment. Bodin advanced these views in *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis* (*Colloquium of the Seven about the Sublime*, 1588).<sup>616</sup> According to scholar Paul Lawrence Rose, Bodin promoted a Judaized version of religion that rejected Christian doctrines relating to grace, original sin, justification, and redemption.<sup>617</sup> Rose did not include *Colloquium* in his study, even though many of the same features he described appear in this work. Bodin used his characters, seven *philosophes*, to convey ideas that challenged Roman Catholic orthodoxy in France. The characters Octavius, Solomon, and Toralba convey strict monotheistic ideas, while Fridericus and Curtius hold to the divinity of Jesus Christ; Coronaeus is a staunch Catholic; while Senamus conveys pluralistic ideas. Giving the nature of the unorthodox views expressed therein, Bodin likely used dialogue as a genre to express his own views in a safe manner. Bodin questioned traditional Christian doctrines of condemnation. Bodin had Solomon state that Christian theologians "falsely interpret" verses in the Torah about being cut off from the people in order "to mean eternal damnation."<sup>618</sup> This questioning of hell and damnation gives an example of the kinds of views Bodin presented in his fictional dialogue, in which he imagined a Judaized, rationalized, stripped Christianity.

Bodin's *Colloquium* advanced Jewish views by supporting Jewish Biblical arguments, claiming Judaism was the purest religion, and eliciting sympathy for Jewish persecution. First, Bodin supported Jewish arguments by disputing one of the messianic proof-texts that Christians

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<sup>616</sup> Jean Bodin, *Colloquium of the Seven about the Sublime: Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis*, trans. Marion Leathers Daniels Kuntz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

<sup>617</sup> Paul Lawrence Rose, *Bodin and the Great God of Nature: The Moral and Religious Universe of a Judaizer*, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, CLXXIX (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1980), 8.

<sup>618</sup> Bodin, *Colloquium*, 452.

have often used to argue that Jesus is God and the Messiah, namely, Psalm 110:1. This text states: “The Lord said to my lord, sit at my right hand”; in Hebrew: *Ne ’um YHWH la ’adoni shev limini ’ad-’asitha ’oyevkha hadam leragleikha*.<sup>619</sup> The first instance of what English translates as “the Lord” is the tetragrammaton, YHWH, the ineffable name of the God of the Bible revealed to Moses at Mt. Sinai. Jews pronounce YHWH as *Adonai* in order to not take the name of the Lord in vain. The second “lord” is the related *’adoni* (but note the difference from *’adonai*). In the Christian understanding, since both entities are called “lord” and are interpreted as God and Jesus, respectively, then both entities are equally divine. In Bodin’s dialogue, the character Curtius expresses the Christian view: “Christ Himself with this statement aptly refutes the unyielding stubbornness of the Jews in order to teach that the Messiah is God.”<sup>620</sup> The character Solomon corrects him that the two instances of the word translated “lord” are actually two different words, the first referring to YHWH, God; the second referring to human masters. The first word is YHWH; the second *la ’adoni*, the confusion arising because Jews pronounce YHWH wherever it appears in the *Tanakh* as *Adonai*. Solomon explains the issue, referring to specific matters of Hebrew grammar: “The word *Adonai* with [the Hebrew vowel] *kamez* is granted to the Creator, but with [the Hebrew vowel] *patach* to the created, as the grammarians have noted. But in this Psalm neither *patach* nor *kamez* is written, but only *la ’adoni*, which word is never attributed to the Creator.”<sup>621</sup> Solomon correctly underscores that the word in question (*’adoni*) never refers to divinity in the Hebrew Bible, but only human masters, even though the

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<sup>619</sup> נָאֻם יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי יָעֹב לִימִינִי עַד-אַשִׁית אֵימָךְ הָיָם לְרִגְלֶיךָ:

<sup>620</sup> Bodin, *Colloquium*, 276.

<sup>621</sup> Bodin, *Colloquium*, 277.

related word *Adonai* is a name for God in Judaism. Therefore, according to Bodin, this passage cannot be used to prove that the messiah is divine. However, Coronaeus responds: “Who could interpret or know the Psalm better than Christ Himself?” Jesus, if God in the flesh, authored the Psalm Himself. Solomon savagely responds that this is an instance in which scriptures were “ignorantly distorted into another meaning,”<sup>622</sup> implying that Christians have misread the verse. The Christian character has no response but an appeal to authority. The fact that Bodin employed this highly technical argument to show that this passage cannot convey Christ’s divinity demonstrates that Bodin obtained a great deal of Hebrew learning and suggests that he sympathized with the Jewish understanding of the passage.

Second, Bodin, through his character Toralba, claimed that Judaism was the purest of religions. Bodin had Toralba stated that “Jews seem to protect the purity of their religion with greater steadfastness” than Christians. Due to the differences in rites, Toralba argues, it is “better to embrace that most simple and most ancient and at the same time the most true religion of nature, instilled by immortal God in the minds of each man from which there was no division (I am speaking of that religion in which Abel, Enoch, Lot, Seth, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, heroes dearest to God, lived)”<sup>623</sup> Toralba contrasts the various opinions of Christendom and religion with the purest, truest, and most trustworthy religion found in the Torah and in nature. Bodin advanced pro-Jewish arguments within his narrative.

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<sup>622</sup> Bodin, *Colloquium*, 277. In the following pages, Salomon adds that the New Testament is full of errors and that the first two chapters of Luke (about the Virgin Birth) are late additions to the Gospel. Since Bodin did not refute these counter-Christian claims, it is highly unlikely that he included them only for the sake of pluralism.

<sup>623</sup> Bodin, *Colloquium*, 462.

Finally, Bodin ended his book with a summary of offenses against the Jews, leaving Christian anti-Judaism simmering in the reader's ears, further suggesting that Bodin sympathized with Jews and Judaism. Curtius describes the King Ferdinand of Aragon's expulsion of the Jews from Spain, presenting an emotionally moving view of the Jewish exile, suggesting Bodin wanted the reader to sympathize with the plight of the Jews. Curtius further recounted how a Jew questioned the significance of the cross, which resulted in a massacre of the Jews in Lisbon. "When the king learned of this affair," narrates Curtius, "he was gravely disturbed because he had forced the Jews to desert their own religion. And so he crucified the leaders of the uprising along with the preacher" who had incited the massacre.<sup>624</sup> The Christian Curtius narrated a tale in which the king of Portugal repents and avenges the Jews upon their enemies. Bodin's rhetorical strategies suggest that he shared this view that the Jews were wrongfully massacred. Solomon added to the tale of Jewish woe. He paints the doleful image that "all the Jews of Cracow in the memory of our grandfathers were killed except for the young, who were instructed in the Christian religion. They also burned the homes of those slain, and all Cracow burned in this conflagration."<sup>625</sup> Solomon's tale cannot but elicit sympathy from the reader for the Jewish victims. Fridericus responds that the opinion of Theodoric, king of the Visigoths, should be inscribed in gold, namely, "We are unable to command religion because no one can be forced to believe against his will." In the final statement of the whole dialogue, Curtius agrees and adds that the law code *Henoticon* of Emperor Jovianus is most honorable, which gathered together "the Pagans, Christians, Arians, Manichaeans, Jews, and almost two hundred sects in harmony."

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<sup>624</sup> Bodin, *Colloquium*, 470.

<sup>625</sup> Bodin, *Colloquium*, 470.



The narrative frame of the dialogue ends with Coronaeus bidding the narrator to sing “Lo, how good and pleasing it is for brothers to live in unity, arranged not in common diatonics or chromatics, but in enharmonics with a certain, more divine modulation.” Then, everyone leaves, never discusses religion again, and “each one defended his own religion with the supreme sanctity of his life.”<sup>626</sup> Thus, Bodin’s narrative leaves the reader with the plight of the Jews and the argument that all religions deserve political toleration. The metanarrative of Bodin’s dialogue is a humanist, pluralist one: all religions deserve civil toleration. Bodin extended toleration to Jews (and Muslims) and seemed at pains to portray the Jewish side, indicating that he deeply sympathized with Jews and Judaism.

Junius and Bodin represent later sixteenth-century examples of the kind of philo-semitism that Tremellius advanced. Junius’s philo-semitism expressed itself as Political Hebraism, while Bodin expressed a judaizing trend that expanded in the seventeenth century. In the seventeenth century, Judaizing expanded considerably, by thinkers like the Orientalist professor Johann Stephan Rittangel, Professor of Hebrew at Amsterdam and editor of *Sefer Yešira*. No one knew what religion Rittangel was, or if he had converted this way or that. He dressed like a rabbi and had allegedly spent twenty years in Turkey with both rabbinic and Karaite Jews.<sup>627</sup> Rittangel was one of many seventeenth-century Jewish–Christian Millenarians. According to Richard H. Popkin, many of the Millenarians in Amsterdam attended synagogue regularly.<sup>628</sup> Jews accepted these Millenarians into their homes and synagogues even though they

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<sup>626</sup> Bodin, *Colloquium*, 471.

<sup>627</sup> Richard H. Popkin, “Can One Be a True Christian and a Faithful Follower of the Law of Moses? The Answer of John Dury,” in *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Martin Mulsow and Richard H. Popkin, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, vol. 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 34.

<sup>628</sup> Popkin, “Can One Be a True Christian,” 39–40.

knew that they were Christians. Rabbi Nathan Shapira ate with Millenarians and received from them a Hebrew Gospel of Matthew.<sup>629</sup> Popkin wrote that “some of the Dutch and English millenarians seemed to have almost fused Judaism and Christianity.” Peter Serrarius, Spinoza’s patron, regularly attended synagogue and “participated in other Jewish activities. We do not know if he started adopting Jewish dietary practice. He became an ardent follow of Sabbat Zevi and died on his way to meet the new Messiah.”<sup>630</sup> Another Quaker, Samuel Fisher, described how he entered a synagogue service and interrupted it as if it was a Friends meeting. The members quieted him and invited him to their home for three or four hours. He left the Netherlands to convert the pope and sultan to Quakerism. En route, he lodged with Jews in the Rhineland and Livorno. The fact that Fisher stayed with Jews led Popkin to conclude that he had apparently converted to Judaism, because outsiders could not stay in ghettos.<sup>631</sup> The kind of religious hybridization that Tremellius exhibited became increasingly common in the seventeenth century.

### **Tremellius’s Nineteenth-Century Legacy: The London Jews’ Missionary Society**

Tremellius’s legacy in the nineteenth century simultaneously contributed to Jewish missionization and Jewish–Christian identity movements. In the early nineteenth century, a Jewish missionary society called the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews published Tremellius’s catechism in Judeo-German in order to reach the Jews of London

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<sup>629</sup> Popkin, “Can One Be a True Christian,” 41.

<sup>630</sup> Popkin, “Can One Be a True Christian,” 30.

<sup>631</sup> Popkin, “Can One Be a True Christian,” 42.

and Europe.<sup>632</sup> This was part of the larger Christian effort to missionize all parts of the globe. Jewish people were among the targets of missionaries' efforts. In the early nineteenth century, Jews who had become Christians wanted to share the gospel with their fellows Jews. Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick Frey (1771–1850) started the London Jews' Society in 1809.<sup>633</sup> It had a fourfold purpose: to declare the Messiahship of Jesus to Jews first and then to non-Jews; to teach the Church its Jewish roots; to encourage the physical restoration of the Jewish people to Eretz Israel, the land of Israel; and to encourage the burgeoning Hebrew Christian movement.<sup>634</sup> Tremellius's writings became tools in the service of Jewish missionaries.

Printing missionary texts for Jewish audiences had challenges. In the early nineteenth century, the London Jews' Society employed a printer by the name of Alexander Macintosh at Great New Street, operating 1819-1840.<sup>635</sup> Macintosh printed Tremellius's Catechism as well as the missionary reports of the Society. In the 1819 report, one of the missionaries to Eastern Europe, a Mr. Solomon, requested copies not just of Hebrew New Testaments, but also of Jewish-German Testaments. However, he wrote, "should you print *Luther's translation merely*,

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<sup>632</sup> People abbreviated it to London Jews' Society. In 1995, the Society changed its name to The Church's Ministry Among Jewish People (CMJ). It still exists today, no doubt lacking its nineteenth-century evangelistic fervor, with branches and websites in Israel and South Africa.

<sup>633</sup> David A. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology, and Polity*, Texts and Studies in Religion, Vol. 14 (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 23.

<sup>634</sup> Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, the Hebrew Christian movement altered its focus from being a group within Christianity to a version of Judaism, calling itself the Messianic Jewish movement. For a scholarly treatment of the transition from nineteenth-century Hebrew Christianity to twentieth-century Messianic Judaism, see David Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology, and Polity* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982). According to Rausch, 34, Hebrew Christianity meant Hebrews in the church identifying primarily as Christians, while Messianic Judaism was Christian Jews following Jewish practices (and identifying primarily as Jews). In 1917, when the term was coined, Hebrew Christians considered "Messianic Judaism" contemptuous, foolhardy, and doomed to failure.

<sup>635</sup> Philip A. H. Brown, *London Publishers and Printers, c. 1800-1870* (London: British Library, 1982), 120; William B. Todd, *A Directory of Printers and Others in Allied Trades: London and Vicinity, 1800-1840* (London: Printing Historical Society, 1972), 124.

with Jewish-German types, it will be of use *only in Germany*,—in Poland, the unlearned Jews, and the women, have a totally different dialect peculiar to themselves, and will in no wise be able to understand Luther’s language, which is pure German.”<sup>636</sup> Mr. Solomon thereby referred to the practice of printing German texts in Hebrew lettering, known as Judeo-German. Mr. Solomon seemed to conflate dialect and orthography: did he mean that Yiddish-speakers could not *read* a German text printed in Hebrew since it was in a different script, or that Eastern European Yiddish-speakers could not *understand* German at all? Since his target audience was Eastern European Jews, whose Yiddish had many Slavic elements, Mr. Solomon was probably correct that they would have a hard time understanding German.<sup>637</sup> In 1710, in his Yiddish adaptation of the tales of Giovanni Boccaccio (*Sheyne artlekhe geshikhtn*, Amsterdam), Yosef Maarssen explained that “it is impossible to make the Yiddish clear enough for everybody, since every country has its own Yiddish.... So I ask the benevolent reader to excuse me if the language occasionally is not elegant, since I have put it, in as much as I could, in such a way that everybody can understand.”<sup>638</sup> Due to the differences of orthography and pronunciation, printing texts for Jew was challenging.

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<sup>636</sup> *The Eleventh Report of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews: With an Appendix, Containing Extracts of Correspondence, and a List of Subscribers and Benefactors, to March 31, 1819. To Which Is Prefixed a Sermon, Preached Before the Society on May 7, 1819 at the Parish Church of St. Paul, Covent Garden*, (A. Macintosh, 1819), 35. Italics original.

<sup>637</sup> Jean Baumgarten, “Continuity and Change in Early Modern Yiddish Language and Literature,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 7, *The Early Modern World, 1500–1815* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 277, demonstrated Yiddish had at least four different dialectal pronunciations in a simple word like *koyfn fleysh*. Western Yiddish pronounced it /kafn flash/ with a long /a/; the Poland region pronounced it /koyfn fleysh/; Latvia pronounced it /keyfen fleysh/; central Europe pronounced it /kayfn flaysh/. A West Yid speaking to an East Yid might be mutually incomprehensible! That is speech, but also consider what happened before the standardization of Yiddish in the eighteenth century (Baumgarten, 279).

<sup>638</sup> Quoted in Baumgarten, “Continuity and Change,” 279.

The London Jews' Society underestimated the differences between Yiddish and German. Some of the differences between the two languages are the first person plural nominative *mir* versus German *wir*; the third person singular *hot* versus German *hat* (he has); and Yiddish *iz* versus German *ist*.<sup>639</sup> In addition to the aspect of language comprehension, Mr. Solomon implied that unlearned Poles, women, and children cannot read the script. This statement refers to a typescript of Yiddish known as *Vayber Taytsch*, “women’s Taytsch,” which was different than the Hebrew square block script and the semi-cursive Rashi script for biblical commentary (see Figures 5 and 6). Male authors printed books that they intended for women and the uneducated in this typeface, on the basis that they could not read Hebrew block script.<sup>640</sup> Despite Mr. Solomon’s recommendations, the Society published Tremellius’s catechism in Judeo-German, indicating they were hurried or did not have enough knowledge of their target population. The Society did not create a fully Yiddish book that European Jews could read, but a German book in Hebrew letters that, according to Solomon, Polish Jews, the unlearned, and women could not read. The Society printed the Catechism in 1818, before Mr. Solomon’s advice, and then in 1820, the year following his advice.

I have determined that Tremellius’s Judeo-German catechism is printed in the Vayber Taytsch script, reflecting the Society’s intention for it as a general religious tract for an

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<sup>639</sup> Nick Block, “Various Yiddish Types: Judeo-German,” *The Jewish Translator: Adventures in Jewish Translation and Jewish Genealogy*, August 3, 2014, <https://translations.nickblockphd.com/blog/language/yiddish-types-judeo-german.html>; “Judeo-German Checklist,” *Naco Hebraica Funnel Stanford University*, 2005, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120403215223/https://lib.stanford.edu/naco-hebraica-funnel/judeo-german-checklist-0>; Aya Elyada, *A Goy Who Speaks Yiddish: Christians and the Jewish Language in Early Modern Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 164.

<sup>640</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 24. Davis compared Women’s Taytsch with the French civility typeface, based on handwriting and used for story collections and educational tracts in the vernacular.

uneducated audience. First, it is certainly not the standard block script of Hebrew Bibles (Figure 4). Second, neither is it the style of biblical commentaries printed in Rashi script (Figure 5). Third, one had difficulty distinguishing letters such as *mem* and *samekh*, and *lamed* and *tsadhe*, which are clearly differentiated in block script but less so in Rashi and Vayber Taytsch. Fourth, the script was clearly a cursive typeface. All this points to the script being Vayber Taytsch, especially since it was a religious tract (not a biblical text) which would have been the type of literature printed that way.

A tension existed between how Tremellius imagined the catechism and how the London Jews' Society used it. Tremellius himself saw his catechism translation as an instructional, spiritually forming tool. He envisioned a new community within which Jews were free to follow the Torah and Christians could study Hebrew. In contrast, the intention of the London Society for the Jews in 1818–20 was to evangelize and convert Jews to the Church of England. Nearly a century later, the secretary of the society described it as a “missionary weapon.”<sup>641</sup> The German translator of the 1820 edition stated that “the truth-seeking Jew has the advantage of reading in a well-ordered system those doctrines and principles of the Christian religion that lie scattered in the Old and New Testaments.”<sup>642</sup> The foreword's author thought that reading a catechism containing both Old and New Testament quotations would induce a thoughtful Jew to convert. He acknowledged that:

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<sup>641</sup> W. T. Gidney, *The Jews and Their Evangelization* (London: Student Volunteer Missionary Union, 1899), 88. Gidney copied the paragraph on Tremellius verbatim into his *History of the London Society* (1908), 9.

<sup>642</sup> Immanuel Tremellius, רעליגיאנס-אונטערריכט אין געשפרעכען, פֿיר דאָז איינער וועהלטע פֿאלק גאטטעס [*Religions-Unterricht in Gesprächen für Auserwählte Volk Gottes*] [*Religious-Instruction in Conversation for God's Chosen People*], No. 37 German Hebrew (London: A. Macintosh, 1820), 3, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nnc1.50209943>. “Auch hat der wahrheitsuchende Jude in diesem Büchlein den Nutzen, jene Lehren und Grundsetze der Christlichen Religion, die im alten und neuen Testamente zerstreut liegen, in einem Wohlgeordneten System zu lesen.”

the most desirable and useful thing would be that the perusal of this catechism prompts him to the reading and study of the New Testament itself; when he learns the various things that are here held and interpreted for him, with the reinforced documents of Christianity and Judaism compared, and no sooner until after he undertakes a precise, unbiased inquiry into the rendering of his judgement.<sup>643</sup>

While it is certainly true that reading a book from a different religion exercises one's faculties of discernment and impartiality, the translator assumed that the Jewish reader would pick up the New Testament after reading the catechism and meditating on its contents. The Society's purpose differed from Tremellius's intention for the work.

Missionary stories published in the London Society's reports show how Jews responded to the catechism. In August 1817, while attempting to show Rabbi Joseph Ashur Leyman "the Catechism of Tremellius in Hebrew, and the New Testament of Hutter," the missionary noted that "he had not the patience to do this [i.e., read St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews], but agreed to accept a copy of the Hebrew Testament."<sup>644</sup> The missionary apparently used Tremellius's Hebrew catechism, which Rabbi Leyman did not seem eager to read. But Leyman felt more comfortable taking a New Testament. Possibly, he recognized that the catechism was an expression of confessional belief and therefore a distillation of Christian doctrine. Recognizing that a New Testament had more interpretive ambiguity than a catechism, Leyman took the former.

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<sup>643</sup> Tremellius, *Religions-Unterricht*, 3-4. "Das Wünschenswerteste und Nützlichste werde, wenn ihn die Durchlesung dieses Katechismus, zur Lesung und zum Studium des neuen Testaments selbst veranlasst; wenn er die verschiedenen Lehren, die man ihm hier vorhält und auslegt, mit die bewehrten Urkunden des Christentums und des Judentums vergliche, und nicht eher als nach genauer, unparteiischer Untersuchung zur Fällung seines Urteils schritte."

<sup>644</sup> *The Jewish Expositor, and Friend of Israel: Containing, Monthly Communications Respecting the Jews, and the Proceedings of the London Society*, vol. 3. (London: A. Macintosh, 1818), 79.

Missionaries used Tremellius's catechism in many settings. In 1819, the eleventh report of the London Jews' Society stated that "a most valuable catechism, by Tremellius, himself a converted Jew of the sixteenth century, a man of great Biblical learning, has likewise been printed at the Society's press for circulation abroad."<sup>645</sup> In July and September 1819, one Mr. Nitschke told how he went to Lublin, Poland and began handing out books to Jews. He stated that many Jews desired books, and he met a Jew whose "wisdom [did] not consist in a profound knowledge of the Talmud, but in the philosophy of Spinoza." Nitschke narrated that, "having offered to him the Catechism of Tremellius, I intreated him to search the Holy Scriptures for that true wisdom which leads to salvation."<sup>646</sup> The report did not say how the Jew responded or even if he took the catechism, or even if it was the Judeo-German or Hebrew edition. On the other side of the world, in Madras, on August 31, 1819, missionary T. Jarrett discussed how he had "for some time been engaged in reprinting the excellent Hebrew Catechism of Tremellius, which is nearly finished, and seems very suitable to follow the Gospel and address."<sup>647</sup> One wonders if the London Jews' Society did not fund the publication activities of their missionaries, or if it was cheaper for him to publish himself. In fact, the reference to reprinting the "Hebrew Catechism" implies that he literally reprinted the Hebrew 1551 or 1554 editions, rather than the 1818 Judeo-German edition.

The catechism met with slightly more success in India. In Madras, December 14, 1820, Jarrett recounted how a Jew named Moses received a Hebrew New Testament and the (Hebrew)

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<sup>645</sup> Verbatim in *Jewish Expositor* (1819), 223, and *Eleventh Report*, 38.

<sup>646</sup> *Jewish Expositor* (1820), 39

<sup>647</sup> *Jewish Expositor* (1820), 202.



catechism of Tremellius printed at Madras. Another Moses, Moses Surphaty, came to the school on April 24, 1820, and received a catechism, whereupon “he immediately began to peruse it. When he had done so, he observed that Tremellius’ reasoning was conformable to the New Testament, which he had already read.” Jarrett considered him a successful convert and a willing co-laborer in the work of the gospel. On April 26, a “white Jew” named Solomon Grindil asked the convert Mr. Sargon for a copy of Tremellius’s catechism, “which he received with great pleasure, as well as a copy of St. Matthew’s Gospel.” The report mentioned an Arabian Jew, Jehuda Abraham Gamel, who took with him to Sana a Hebrew New Testament, one copy of Tremellius’ catechism, and Hebrew tracts.<sup>648</sup> Of these eight references to Tremellius’s catechism, seven are to the original Hebrew text, and only one potentially is to the 1818 Judeo-German edition. In terms of missionary use, the Judeo-German catechism did not seem to be much employed (from our limited sample here), while the Hebrew text met with a stronger reception. Moreover, the catechism did not meet with wholesale acceptance. Of the incidences, four (all in Cochin and Madras) recounted when a Jew took the Hebrew catechism.

Remarkably, Tremellius’s catechism appears in several nineteenth-century indices of Hebrew and Jewish books, indicating that bibliographers considered it Jewish literature. Moritz Steinschneider’s *Catalogue of Hebrew books in the Bodleian* included Tremellius’s catechism in the “Index of Hebrew titles,” under the Hebrew letter *ḥet* as *Ḥinuk Behirei Yah* (“Instruction of the chosen people of Yah”)—omitting *sefer*, the Hebrew word for book—and in the main text

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<sup>648</sup> *The Religious Intelligencer for the Year Ending May, 1822, Containing the Principal Transactions of the Various Bible and Missionary Societies, with Particular Accounts of Revivals of Religion*, vol. 6 (Nathan Whiting: New-Haven, 1821), 474.

under Tremellius.<sup>649</sup> Steinschneider referenced the 1551 Hebrew edition and the 1554 Hebrew edition. Steinschneider referenced a 1590 edition (“not 1591,” he stated) in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, without the preface. The Jewish Hebraist Julius Fürst also classified it as Jewish literature. Fürst stated that there was an all-Hebrew octavo printed in Paris in 1552 and in Strasbourg in 1554. Fürst also mentioned the trilingual 1591 edition and the bilingual 1551 Paris octavo, from which, he stated, printers should reprint the catechism.<sup>650</sup> Nineteenth-century bibliographers listed Tremellius’s catechism as Jewish literature while Christians used it as a conversion tool.

Tremellius’s influence also extended to the burgeoning Hebrew Christian movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century English-speaking world in part due to the efforts of such missionizing of Jews. No longer feeling the shackles of anti-Semitism due to Emancipation, European Jews in the late nineteenth century who had converted to Christianity began reclaiming their Jewish identity. This phenomenon of Jewish identity in the Christian Church precipitated the Hebrew Christian movement. Some Jews in the Church, whether Lutherans, Catholics, or Anglicans, felt comfortable identifying as “Hebrews” and “Hebrew Christians.” They began gathering and producing literature about their cause, about the validity of identifying as Jewish within the church. They formed an intellectual and theological basis for this identity for Gentile Christians to accept.<sup>651</sup>

The first Hebrew Christians organized in 9 September 1813 in the Episcopal Jews’ Chapel in Bethnal Green, London. The Society had leased the Bishop’s Hall on the eastern side

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<sup>649</sup> M. Steinschneider, *Catalogus librorum hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana* (Berlin: 1852-1860), 2684. Tremellius’s *Sefer H̱inukh* is listed as no. 1367 in the index, page xxiii.

<sup>650</sup> Julius Fürst, *Bibliotheca Judaica* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1863), 3: 443. “Soll das Hebräischen diesem entnommen sein,” “from which the Hebrew should be taken.”

<sup>651</sup> Rausch, *Messianic Judaism*, 21–26.

of Cambridge Road in 1811, where they build the Jews' Chapel and a large complex known as Palestine Place by 1836, in order to reach out to poor Jewish immigrants of the East End of London, and thence to other colonies of the Commonwealth.<sup>652</sup> The Hebrew group called themselves *Beni Avraham*, "children of Abraham," and met for prayer every Sunday morning and Friday evening and to help Jewish converts.<sup>653</sup> The next association began in 1866 as Hebrew Christian Alliance, founded by Dr. Schwartz, minister of Trinity Chapel, Edgware Road, London, which another Hebrew Christian, Ridley Herschell, built. Schwartz hoped to maintain frequent and social intercourse among Christian Israelites by meeting together at stated periods; to encourage and care for each other; and to search the Scriptures together relating to Israel and Israel's king. The group chose as their motto the opening verse of Psalm 133, "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity."<sup>654</sup> Dr. Schwartz edited the first Jewish Christian periodical, *The Scattered Nation*, in January 1866. On 25 April 1866, Schwartz issued a circular letter to other Jewish Christians, which stated:

Dear Brother,

It has occurred to us that it would be desirable and profitable that as many Israelites who believe in Jesus as can be brought together should meet in London on the 23rd of May.

Our object is to become acquainted with one another and be built up in our holy faith. There are special ties which bind us together as descendants of Abraham and we believe that this conference for prayer and consultation might issue in a permanent union of Jewish Christian brethren in this land.

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<sup>652</sup> T F T Baker, ed., "Bethnal Green: Cambridge Heath | British History Online," in *A History of the County of Middlesex*, vol. 11, Stepney, Bethnal Green (London: Victoria County History, 1998), 112, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol11/pp109-112>; "The History of CMJ, How Did It All Begin?," *CMJ UK*, 2019, <https://www.cmj.org.uk/about/history-of-cmj>.

<sup>653</sup> Hugh J. Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity from the First to the Twentieth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1936), 153.

<sup>654</sup> Schonfield, *History of Jewish Christianity*, 153.

Dr. Schwartz recalled that eighty Jewish Christians met on that day and historically wrote, “We may boldly say that such a gathering of converted Jews exclusively had not been witnessed since the early days of the Christian Church.”<sup>655</sup> Thus the Hebrew Christian movement was born.

Tremellius’s ambiguous philo-semitism produced a myriad of movements in his name or following his legacy after his death. Tremellius held a form of philo-semitism, which, variously, led to positive Christian views of the law (Junius), judaizing versions of Christianity (Bodin), missionizing towards Jews, and Jewish–Christian identity movements. On the other hand, Protestants employed his Bible translation as the premier Protestant Latin Bible translation for two centuries and to bolster their causes, even as they could not identify him as anything but Jewish. Just like his own ambiguous and paradoxical identity, Tremellius simultaneously influenced Protestant causes, Political Hebraism and Judaizing philo-semitism in the seventeenth century, and nineteenth-century missionization and Jewish–Christian movements. Tremellius spoke, yet, in the end, he remains silent.

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<sup>655</sup> Schonfield, *History of Jewish Christianity*, 154.

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## APPENDIX

### Tables

**Table 1. Dates of Expulsions and Readmissions for European Jewry**

Country or Principality	Expulsion	Readmission/Settlement
England	1290	1655
France	1306, 1394	1789
Strasbourg	1390	1791
Heidelberg	1391	1660 (Oppenheimer family)
Cologne	1424	1798
Russia	1400s	1772
Spain	1492	2014
Lithuania	1495	1503
Portugal	1497	2013
Papal States (*except Rome, Ancona, Avignon)	1569, 1593	
Frankfurt <i>Judengasse</i>	28 September 1614	28 February 1616

**Table 2. Jewish Periodization of Rabbinic Sages**

- *Soferim*, סופרים (“scribes”), the sages from the giving of the Torah until the third century Before Common Era
- *Zugot* הזוגות (“the pairs”), pairs of sages before the Common Era, e.g., the famous Hillel and Shammai
- *Tannaim*, תנאים (singular, תנא *Tanna*, “repeater, teacher”), sages whose opinions the *Mishnah* records; 10–220 CE.
- *Amoraim*, אמוראים (“spokesmen”), sages whose opinions the *Gemara* records; 200–500 CE.
- *Savoraim*, סבוראים (“reasoners”), the sages from roughly 500–600 CE
- all of which are collectively known as *Chazal*, חז”ל;
- followed by:
- *Geonim*, גאונים (“splendor,” modern: “geniuses”), 650–1100, also given as 589–1038
- *Rishonim*, ראשונים (“first ones”), their chronological cut-off was the printing of the Jewish law codification, the *Shulkan Aruch* (“prepared table”) in 1563.
- *Aḥaronim*, אחרונים (“last ones”), 1563–present.

**Table 3. Orders and Tractates of the Mishnah**

The *sedarim* and *masechtot* of the *Mishnah* are as follows, all dealing with biblical themes:

- *Seder Zeraim*, זרעים, “order of seeds”
  - *Berakhot*, ברכות, “blessings”
  - *Peah*, פאה, gleanings of the field
  - *Demai*, דמאי, “doubtfully tithed produce”
  - *Kilayim*, כלאים, “forbidden mixtures” of seeds and animals
  - *Shevi'it*, שביעית, “sabbaths” or sabbatical years
  - *Terumot*, תרומות, “donations” or offerings given to the Levitical priests
  - *Ma'asrot*, מעשרות, “tithes”
  - *Ma'aser Sheni*, מעשר שני, “second tithe”
  - *Challah*, חלה, “loaf”
  - *'Orlah*, ערלה, “blockage of trees”
  - *Bikkurim*, ביכורים, “first fruits”
- *Seder Moed*, מועד, “order of holiday”
  - *Shabbat*, שבת, “sabbath”
  - *Eruvin*, ערובין, “mixtures”
  - *Pesahim*, פסחים, “Passovers”
  - *Shekalim*, שקלים, “portions of shekels”
  - *Yoma*, יומא, “the day,” that is, Yom Kippur
  - *Sukkah*, סוכה, “hut or booth”
  - *Beitzah*, ביצה, “egg,” referring to holiday foods
  - *Rosh Hashanah*, ראש השנה, the Jewish new year
  - *Ta'anit*, תענית, “fast days”
  - *Megillah*, מגילה, “scroll,” referring to the *Megillat Esther*, the scroll of Esther, read during the festival of Purim
  - *Mo'ed Katan*, מועד קטן, “little festival”
  - *Hagigah*, חגיגה, “festival offering”
- *Seder Nashim*, נשים, “order of women”
  - *Yevamot*, יבמות, “brothers’ widows”
  - *Ketubot*, כתובות, “marriage contracts”
  - *Nedarim*, נדרים, “vows”
  - *Nazir*, נזיר, “Nazirite”
  - *Sotah*, סוטה, “adulteress”
  - *Gittin*, גיטין, “divorces”
  - *Kiddushin*, קידושין, “betrothal”
- *Seder Nezikin*, נזיקין, “order of damages”
  - *Bava Kamma*, בבא קמא, “the first gate”
  - *Bava Metzia*, בבא מציעא, “the middle gate”
  - *Bava Batra*, בבא בתרא, “the last gate”
  - *Sanhedrin*, סנהדרין, “the Sanhedrin”
  - *Makkot*, מכות, “lashings”
  - *Shevu'ot*, שבועות, “oaths”
  - *Eduyot*, עדויות, “testimonies”
  - *Avodah Zarah*, עבודה זרה, “strange, or foreign, worship”
  - *Pirkei Avot*, פְּרָקֵי אָבוֹת, “sayings of the fathers”
  - *Horayot*, הוריות, “decisions”
- *Seder Kodashim*, קדשים, “order of holies”
  - *Zevahim*, זבחים, “sacrifices”
  - *Menahot*, מנחות, “meal offerings”
  - *Hullin*, חולין, “mundane”

- *Bekhorot*, בכורות, “firstborns”
- *Arakhin*, ערכין, “dedications”
- *Temurah*, תמורה, “substitution”
- *Keritot*, כריתות, “excisions”
- *Me'ilah*, מעילה, “sacrilege or trespass”
- *Tamid*, תמיד, “the daily offering”
- *Middot*, מדות, “measurements” of the Temple
- *Kinnim*, קינים, “nests”
- *Seder Tahorot*, טהרות, “order of purities”
  - *Kelim*, כלים, “vessels”
  - *Oholot*, אוהללות, “tents”
  - *Nega'im*, נגעים, “plagues”
  - *Parah*, פרה, red cow or red heifer
  - *Tahorot*, טהרות, “purities”
  - *Mikva'ot*, מקוואות, “ritual baths or mikveh”
  - *Niddah*, נידה, “menstruant, menstruation or separation,” niddah refers to both the condition and the woman
  - *Makhshirin*, מכשירין, “preliminary acts of preparation”
  - *Zavim*, זבים, “seminal emissions”
  - *Tevul Yom*, טבול יום, “immersed (on that) day”
  - *Yadayim*, ידיים, “hands”
  - *Oktzin*, עוקצים, “stalks”

That composes the *Mishnah*.

**Table 4. Pfefferkorn's Confiscated Books**<sup>656</sup>

Genre	Pfefferkorn's List of Wanted Books	Confiscation in Frankfurt (Synagogue)	Confiscation in Worms	Confiscation in Frankfurt (Households)
Liturgical	Tfila (Prayer)	Tfila – 81	Tfila – 79	Tfila – 125
	Maḥzor (high holy day prayerbook)	Maḥzor – 55	Maḥzor – 40	Maḥzor – 84
	Slihot (penitential poems)	Slihot – 25	Slihot – 24	Slihot – 19
<b>Total</b>		<b>161</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>228</b>
Anti-Christian Polemics	Nizzahon	Nizzahon – 0	Nizzahon – 0	
	Toldoth Yeshu	Toldoth Yeshu – 0		
Talmudic Tractates and Commentary	Bava metzia		Bava metzia – 8	Bava metzia – 3
	Bava qamma		Bava qamma – 6	Bava qamma – 1
	Bava batra		Bava batra – 6	Bava batra – 2
	Ketubbot		Ketubbot – 7	Ketubbot – 2
	Gittin		Gittin – 5	Gittin – 1
	Yevamot		Yevamot – 4	Yevamot – 1
	Shabbat		Shabbat – 5	Shabbat – 3
	Eruvin		Eruvin – 5	Eruvin – 2
	Shevu'ot		Shevu'ot – 6	Shevu'ot – 1
	Sukkah		Sukkah – 4	
	Hullin		Hullin – 6	Hullin – 1
	Niddah		Niddah – 5	Niddah – 1
	Sanhedrin		Sanhedrin – 3	Sanhedrin – 1

<sup>656</sup> Reproduced from Shamir, *Christian Conceptions of Jewish Books*, 108–11. Books in Italics are of uncertain identification. Numbers are calculations.



				Pesaḥim Perush – 1
				Berakhot – 3
				Qiddushin – 1
				Zevahim – 1
				Any Talmud – 100
				Any Perush – 27
	Tosfot		Tosfot – 34	Tosfot – 18
<b>Total</b>			<b>70+34 perush=104</b>	<b>124+54 perush=178</b>
Bible Exegesis	Rashi	Rashi ( <i>Rabisalme</i> ) – 0	Rashi ( <i>Perushim</i> ) – 4	Rashi ( <i>Rabi Shlomo</i> ) – 1
			Perush on Bible – 2	Perush on Bible – 11
			Glosses of the Bible – 7	Glosses of the Bible – 4
		<i>Moses</i> – 4		Perush Moshe – 10
				Perush Sefer Raban – 1
				Perush Maḥaril – 1
				Any Perush – 99
<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>127</b>
Halakhic Works	Minḥagim		?	Minḥagim – 3
	Mordechay Gadol		Mordechay Gadol ( <i>M. Hearuch</i> ) – 3	Mordechay Gadol ( <i>Mordechay</i> ) – 5
	Mordechay Katan	Mordechay Katan ( <i>Kizzur</i> ) – 0	Mordechay Katan ( <i>Kizzur</i> ) – 16	Mordechay Katan ( <i>Kizzur</i> ) – 19
				Dynim R. Mordechay – 3
	Maimonides	Maimonides – 0	Maimonides – 5	Maimonides – 6
	'Orah Ḥayim	'Orah Ḥayim – 0 'Arba'ah Turim – 0	'Orah Ḥayim – 7	'Orah Ḥayim – 8 Yoreh De'ah – 4 Hoshen Mishpat – 2 Even Ha'ezer – 1
	Isur Vehetter	Isur Vehetter – 0	Isur Vehetter – 10	Isur Vehetter – 3
	Baruch sche'amar	0	2	3
	Asheri	0	1	2
	Kizur Poskim	Any Poskim – 0		Any Poskim – 19
				Alfasi – 1
				Sefer Hatruma – 11
				R. Hai Gaon – 1
				Aruch (Rashba) – 1
				Or Sarua – 1
				Maḥaram – 1
				Sefer Ha'ora – 1
				Paneach Rasha – 1
				Tashbetz – 1
				Responsa – 1
<b>Total</b>			<b>44</b>	<b>98</b>
Mishnah				Nezikin – 2
				Qodashim – 1
Aggadah, Midrash				Derashot – 3
				Bereshit Rabbah – 5
				Midrash Tanḥuma – 1
				Yelamdenu Rabenu – 5
Kabbalah				Prayers with Kabbalah – 1
Philosophy/Moral				Sefer Ḥasidim – 1
				Sefer ha-Mitzvot – 1
Other		( <i>Die Esra?</i> ) – 0		
		( <i>miros?</i> ) – 0		
<b>Total</b>		<b>= 168</b>	<b>= 304</b>	<b>= 651</b>

**Table 5. The Editions of the Catechism**

<b>Calvin's French Catechism</b>	<b>1554 Tremellius Hebrew</b>	<b>1591 Tricolumn Catechism</b>	<b>1820 Judeo-German Catechism</b>
Des Articles de la Foy   De Fide	שַׁעַר הָאֱמוּנָה <i>Shear ha-emunah</i> “Gate of faith”	Chapter 1 De Fide שַׁעַר הָאֱמוּנָה Περὶ Πίστεως - On Faith pp. 8-87	Chapter 1: “Von dem Glauben.” On Faith. pp 15-44
De Lege	שַׁעַר הַמִּצְוֹת <i>She'ar ha-mitvoth</i> “Gate of the commandments”	Chapter 2 De Lege, id est Decem Præceptis Dei שַׁעַר הַמִּצְוֹת Περὶ τοῦ Νομοῦ, ἡ τοι τῶν Δεκα - the Law of God pp. 88-153	Chapter 2: “Von den Geboten.” On the Commandments. pp 45-67
De Oratione	שַׁעַר הַתְּפִלָּה <i>She'ar ha-tefila</i> “Gate of prayer”	Chapter 3 De Oratione שַׁעַר הַתְּפִלָּה Περὶ τῆς Προσκυνητικῆς - On Prayers pp. 154-206	Chapter 3: “Von dem Gebete.” On Prayers. pp 68-86
De Sacraments	שַׁעַר אוֹתוֹת הַבְּרִית <i>She'ar 'otot ha-brit</i> “Gate of the signs of the covenant”	Chapter 4 De Verbo Dei שַׁעַר אוֹתוֹת הַבְּרִית Περὶ τοῦ λόγου τοῦ Θεοῦ. - On the Word of God (the Hebrew reads “Signs of the Covenant”) pp. 206-216	Chapter 4: “Von den Bundeszeichen.” On Covenant-symbols. pp 86-107
		Hebrew continues the same section as chapter 4, while Latin and Greek have De Sacramentis. Περὶ τῶν Μυστηρίων - The Sacrament, Mystery pp. 216-267	
Prayers	הַמְּשָׁכִים בְּבוֹקֶר יְתַפְּלֵל: Prayers	Section 6 Precatio Matutina הַמְּשָׁכִים בְּבוֹקֶר יְתַפְּלֵל: Προσευχὴ Ὁρθρινος. Five Daily Prayers: pp. 266-270, 272-277, 278-283, 283-285.	Gebete. Prayers. Morning Prayer. Prayer for Education. Prayer for Meals. Prayer after Meals. An Evening Prayer. pp 108-114

# Figures

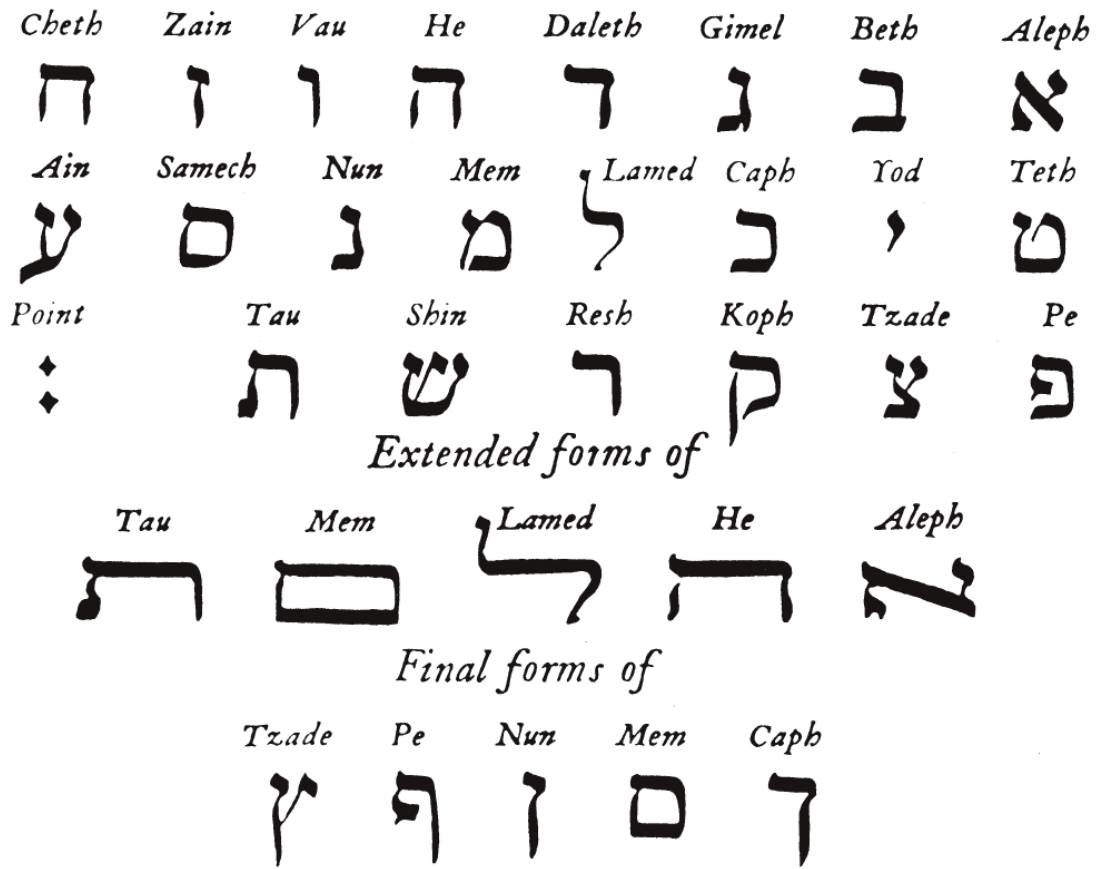


Figure 4. The Hebrew alphabet in traditional block script.

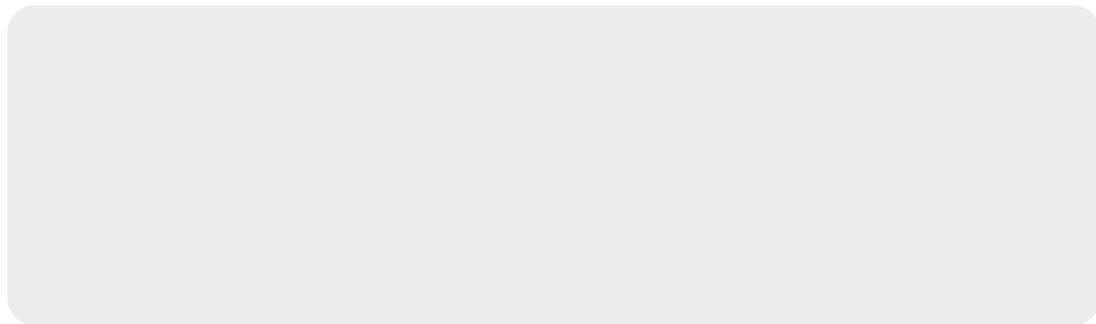


Figure 5. The Hebrew alphabet in Rashi script.



Figure 6. The title page of the 1554 Paris edition. While the title and the inscription under the picture is in block script, the printing at the bottom of the page is in Rashi script.



עֲמֻנָאֵל טְרַמֶּלְאוֹס לְכֹל  
 יוֹצְאֵי יֶרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב שְׁלוֹמְכֶם  
 יִרְבֶּה בְּמֵאֹד מְאֹד :

**רֵאיוֹתִי** אֲחֵי הַיְקָרִים אֶת הַסְּפָרִים  
 אֲשֶׁר לְבָנֵי עֲמֻנָאֵל סְדְרֵי  
 הַתְּפִלוֹת לְהַרְגִּיל הַיְלָדִים  
 לִשְׁמֹרֶת תְּפִלָּה אֶל אֲדוֹנֵי וְלַהּוֹדוֹת לוֹ עַל  
 רֹכֵב חֲסָדָיו וְהַיְנֵה תְּפִלוֹת וְתוֹדוֹת הַרְבֵּה  
 טוֹבוֹת כְּתוּבוֹת בָּהֶם רְאוּיֹת שִׁיתְּפִלֵּל  
 בָּם כָּל זֶרַע אֲבֹרָהֶם אֲךְ כִּי אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם  
 חֵלֶק אֶחָד קָטָן מְכַל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּ הַרוֹצִים  
 לַעֲבוֹד אֶת אֱלֹהֵי עֲבָאוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם  
 וְהָאָרֶץ חֲצָנִי נִעְרָתִי לְכָתוּב סֵפֶר אַחֵר  
 לָהֶם כּוֹלֵל בְּרָבִרִים מְעַטִּים לֹא סֵדֶר  
 הַתְּפִלוֹת בְּלִבָּר כִּי גַם שְׁאֵר חֲלָקֵי עֲבוֹדַת  
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ

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Figure 7. The first page of the 1554 edition, displaying Tremellius's letter to the descendants of Jacob.

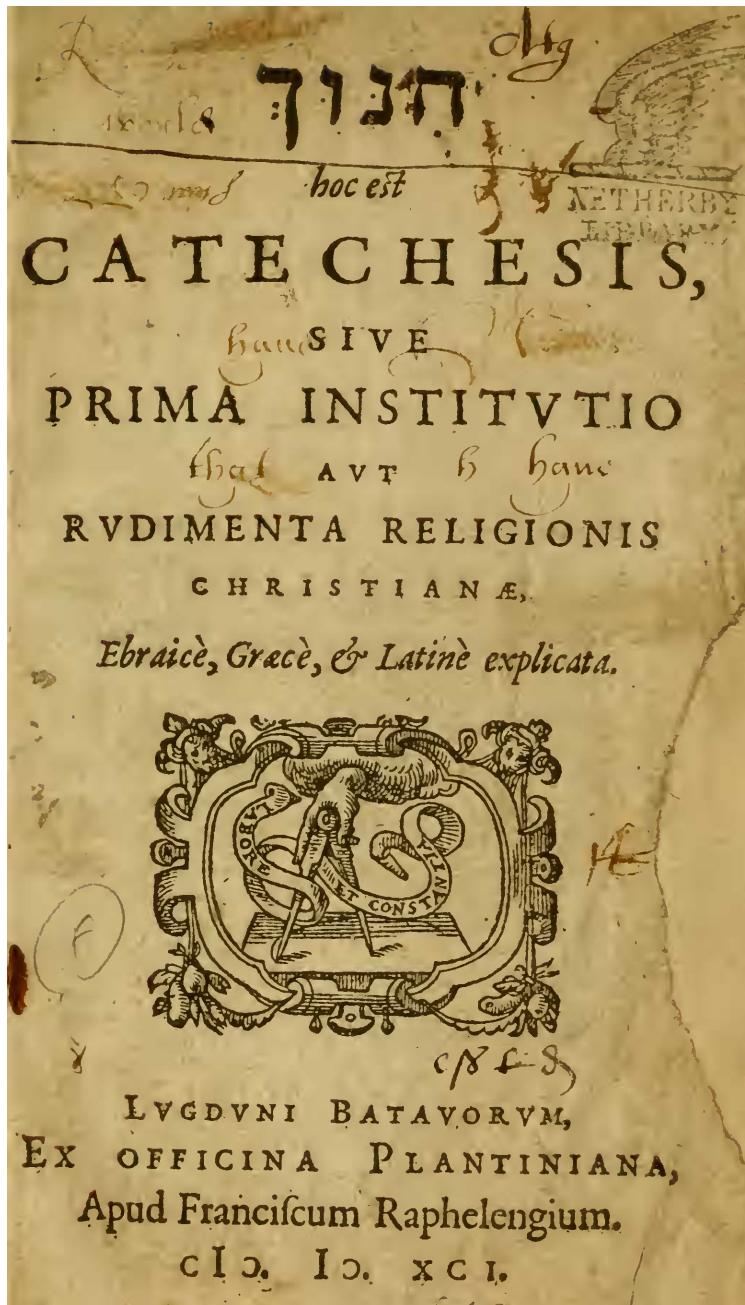


Figure 8. Title page of the 1591 Catechism, with a Hebrew title (Hinukh, “instruction”) and a Latin subtitle.

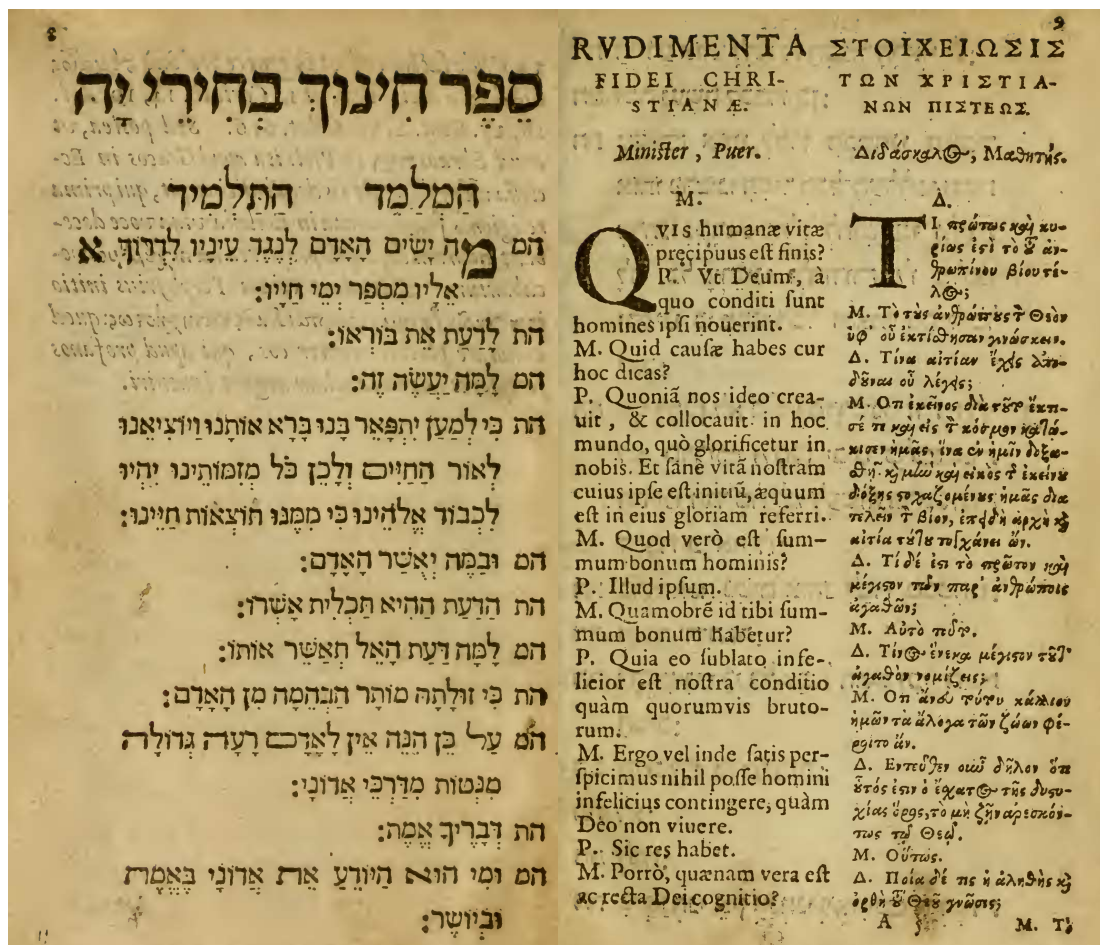


Figure 9. First text page of the 1591 catechism, with Hebrew block script, Latin, and Greek columns.



No. 37. Ger. Heb.

רעליגיאנס-אונטערריכט

אין געשפרעכען

פֿיר דאָס

אויזערוועהלטע פאלק גאטטעס :

פֿאן

עמנואל טרעמלליאוס

אויז דער טטאָרט פֿערפֿאַרעט אין איטאַליען.

דער פֿאַטער ווירד דען קינדערן דינע וואָהרהייט קונד טהון.  
יטע'י זח, יט'.

לאנדאָן : [London]

GEDRUCKT BEY A. MACINTOSH, GREAT NEW STREET.

1820.

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Figure 10. The 1820 Judeo-German Catechism. Notice the cursive script of the epigram which, although similar in form to Rashi script, is actually Vayber Taytsch.



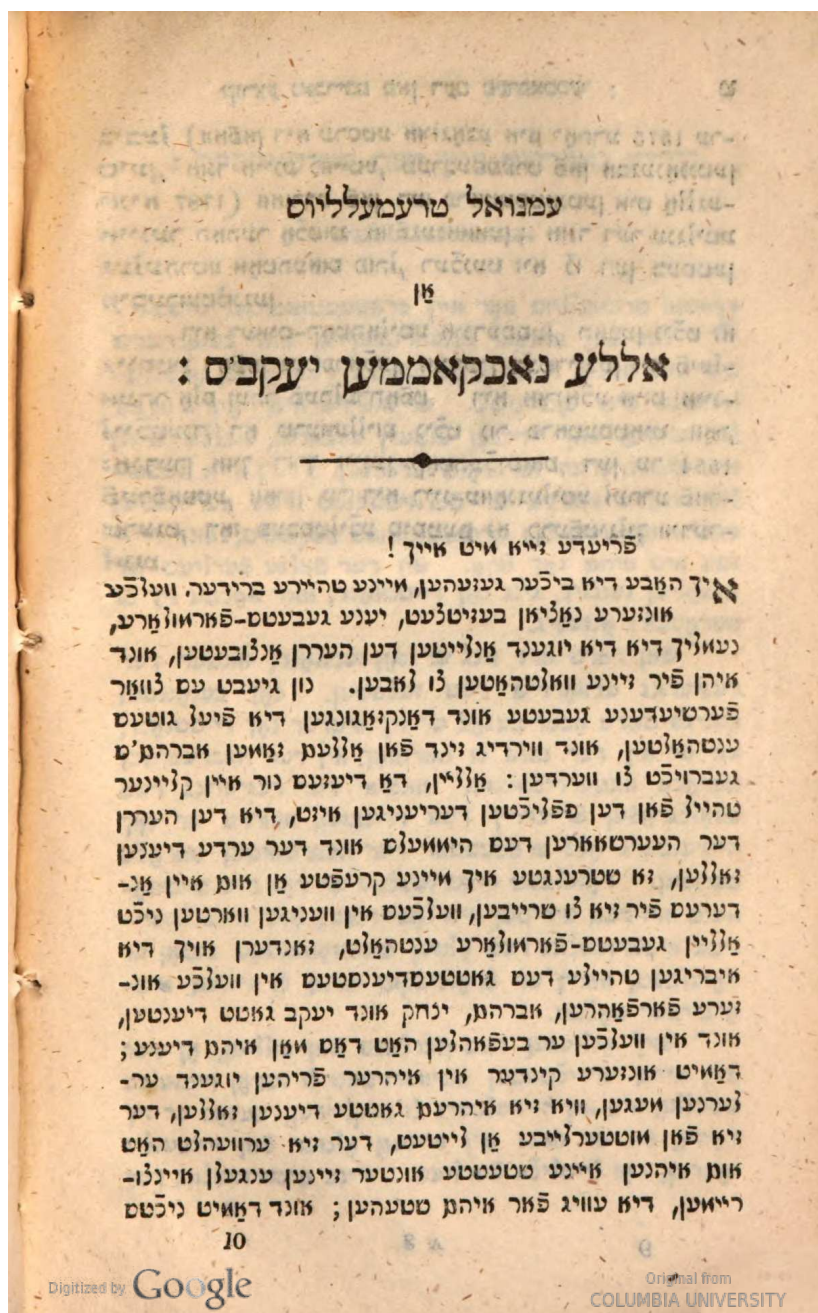


Figure 11. Page 10 of Tremellius's 1820 Religions-Unterricht. This shows his letter to the descendants of Jacob (nachkommen Jacobs). It exemplifies the Vayber-Taytsch script, which differs from both Rashi script and block script.