

AN INTRODUCTION TO
JEWISH-CHRISTIAN
RELATIONS

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo,
Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521796522

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Cambridge University Press.

First published 2010

Reprinted 2011

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Keeler, Edward, Dr.
An introduction to Jewish-Christian relations / Edward Keeler.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Judaism – Relations – Christianity – History. I. Title.
396.535 – dc22 200909871
ISBN 978-0-521-87967-7 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-79652-2 paperback

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page vi
<i>Timeline</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xix
1 Introduction	1
2 The New Testament	35
3 The writings of the church fathers	45
4 The writings of the rabbis	65
5 Biblical interpretation: Another side to the story	81
6 Medieval relations	102
7 Antisemitism and the Holocaust	124
8 Zionism and the state of Israel	147
9 Covenant, mission and dialogue	170
10 Jewish–Christian relations and the wider interfaith encounter	191
<i>Further reading</i>	212
<i>Glossary</i>	226
<i>Index</i>	236

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Medieval relations

The medieval period, which for this study is defined as between the tenth and the seventeenth centuries, was a time of violence and prejudice as Christian society became increasingly intolerant, especially from the twelfth century, not just toward Jews but toward everyone deemed deviant.

In the chapter on the church fathers we noted that Jewish rights granted by the Theodosian and Justinian Codes were progressively removed. In the medieval period this process accelerated. Legislation enabled local authorities to outlaw Judaism, close synagogues and enforce baptisms (despite some church council opposition). For example, the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 addressed a variety of political and doctrinal issues, including the position of Jews in Christendom. Some laws were renewed, such as the law forbidding Jews to appear in public during Easter, especially on Good Friday (a ruling said to prevent mocking of Christians but also perhaps partly for the Jews' own protection). Other laws were new, such as that which compelled Jews and Muslims living under Christian rule to wear distinctive dress, in order to avoid 'prohibited intercourse' (especially sexual relations).

The practice of denigrating a religious minority by requiring its members to wear distinctive clothes originated in Islam, which imposed dress restrictions on both Jews and Christians in the time of Omar II (717–20). When discriminatory dress regulations entered Christian canon law in 1215, it testified to a society in which it was assumed that the category to which every individual belonged (nobles, serfs, clergy, etc.) should be identifiable by dress. Restrictions on Jewish dress continued for many hundreds of years and, although they had been removed throughout most of Europe by the eighteenth century, the Nazis restored dress restrictions against Jews during the Holocaust.

The medieval period witnessed significant anti-Jewish violence, and during the First Crusade in 1096, despite some protection offered by local bishops, between 5,000 and 10,000 Jews perished. From the twelfth

century, accusations against Jews escalated, including charges of Jewish ritual murder of Christian children, host desecration and causing the Black Death. This was also the time of the Inquisition, the burning of thousands of Talmuds and other Jewish books, the preaching of conversionist sermons at which Jewish attendance was compulsory, and enforced public disputations.

Yet Jewish communities continued to flourish during these centuries, and hostility is only one factor among many that determined medieval Christian–Jewish relations. For all the Christian hostility and violence and the inevitable anti-Christian Jewish response, there were also outbreaks of tolerance and positive interaction between Jews and Christians (and, in the Iberian Peninsula, Muslims). Salo W. Baron (1893–1988) criticised 'thelachrymose conception of Jewish history', a view of Jewish historical experience under Christian rule as a vale of tears, of unrelieved oppression and suffering, a view fostered by the tendency of medieval Jews to write chronicles not during normal times but precisely during times of crisis, in order to memorialise the dead or to encourage the survivors.

POLITICAL: CHRISTIAN

In the medieval Christian mind, the terrifying concept of the antichrist, the satanic princely ruler and arch-enemy of Christ in the end-times, became a recurrent anti-Jewish motif. Rooted in Persian and Babylonian mythology and adapted from Jewish sources, Christian notions of the antichrist were first applied to historical enemies of the Church such as the Emperor Nero (57–68) and the Gnostics. While medieval and Reformation polemicists intermittently identified political opponents such as individual popes and emperors, Jews were constantly linked to the antichrist. Popular imagination envisaged the antichrist as a demonically conceived Jew. Medieval Christian art, drama and sermons followed suit.

The myth of blood libel (the accusation that Jews would kill a young Christian boy and use his blood in the ritual preparation of *matzah* for Passover) stems partly from perceptions of Jews as servants of the antichrist. Its origins appear in antiquity where Josephus relates that Antiochus Epiphanes (c. 175–164 BCE) was told that Jews engage in human sacrifice within the precincts of the Temple (similarly the early Latin apologist Felix Marcus Minucius (early third century CE) testifies to accusations of Christians murdering a child during a ceremony admitting new adherents into the Christian faith).

The earliest historical example of the libel is the case of William of Norwich in 1144. When the twelve-year-old boy's body was found, his uncle blamed the Jews of Norwich, but this accusation did not result in any action. It was only with the arrival in 1150 of the monk Thomas of Monmouth that the local tale became infamous. Thomas wrote an account of the life of William, of his passion and the miracles that took place around his tomb, and later around the shrine in Norwich cathedral. In the next few centuries, similar accusations arose around the country, such as in Lincoln in 1255 when a boy (known later as Little St Hugh) was supposedly imprisoned, tortured and killed by Lincoln's Jews in mocking re-enactment of the crucifixion. The blood libel led to the execution of nineteen Jews and Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1342–1400) wrote about the Lincoln blood libel charge in *The Phylis's Tale*. After 750 years, in 2005, the cathedral acknowledged Lincoln's role in perpetrating medieval anti-Jewish prejudice by hosting a unique Shabbat service for the local Jewish community when special prayers of penitence were offered.

Despite official secular and ecclesiastical investigations in the thirteenth century by Emperor Frederick II (c. 1215–50) and Pope Innocent IV (c. 1200–54) that denied any possibility that Jews used human blood, accusations continued against Jews in Europe into the twentieth century. Indeed, in the 1930s the Nazis revived the charges that Jews killed children and used their blood. Today, similar accusations are occasionally repeated in the Middle East, wrapped in anti-Zionist garb.

In medieval art, anti-Jewish prejudice was pervasive. Jews were depicted as associates of Satan and the antichrist, shown with a sow, either sucking on her teats or performing other obscene acts. They had pointed chins, forked beards, distorted facial features (such as hooked noses) or physical deformities, and wore peculiar or foreign-looking costume such as peaked-shaped hats (*judenhats*) or yellow badges of identification. Jews as Christ-murderers and as mockers, torturers or executioners were also frequently shown in representations of the Passion.

As already mentioned, medieval Christian artists fashioned female figures called Ecclesia and Synagoga to represent Christianity's relationship to Judaism. The figures of triumphant Ecclesia and defeated Synagoga symbolised the Christian claim that Judaism was obsolete. Depictions present the proud Ecclesia standing erect in contrast to the bowed, blindfolded figure of the defeated yet dignified Synagoga (e.g., the thirteenth-century stone figures in the cathedrals of Strasbourg and Notre Dame, Paris). Like Leah of the weak eyes (Gen. 29:17), Synagoga was blind, failing to recognise the light of Christ; her crown had fallen and her

staff broken, while Ecclesia was the younger and beautiful sister, Rachel. In the Later Middle Ages Synagoga becomes a more contemptible and commonly found figure in anti-Jewish Christian art, sometimes portrayed in the clutch of a devil who rides on her neck and forces her to turn away from Christ.

Another common form of medieval Christian anti-Jewish polemic can be found in the growth and popularity of disputations, a form of discourse where one party refutes the validity of the other in order to invalidate the foundation of the other's faith. While disputation literature can be seen in the earlier writings of the church fathers (e.g., Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*) as well as the rabbis (whose writing also witness disputation with pagans and *minim*), the medieval period marked the development of public disputations. Gatherings in Paris (1240), Barcelona (1265) and Tortosa (1413–14), for example, took the form of trials in front of an audience of nobility and clergy. Christian participants were often baptised Jews who argued that passages in the Talmud were blasphemous to Christianity and were stumbling blocks to Jewish conversion. They also attempted to prove the truth of Christianity out of rabbinic writings (especially the *Zohar*), as Raymond Martin (c. 1220–83), for example, does in his *Pugio Fidei*. Jews who participated in these disputations in defence of the Jewish communities included Nahmanides (1194–1270) and Joseph Albo (1380–1430).

Although disputation literature declined towards the end of the medieval period, it continued to be written during the Reformation and Renaissance and through to the eighteenth century. The 1769 exchange between Moses Mendelssohn and Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801), about the extension of civil rights to Jews, is one example.

One consequence of the medieval public disputation was the condemnation of the Talmud. In 1216 Nicholas Donin (first half of thirteenth century) presented to Pope Gregory IX (c. 1227–41) a list of charges against the Talmud, most seriously that it contained blasphemous statements about Jesus and was filled with expressions of hostility against Gentiles. The Pope ordered that copies of the Talmud be seized and examined. King Louis IX of France (c. 1236–70) complied; at Paris in 1240, following a public disputation, twenty-four wagonloads of rabbinic commentaries were burned in Paris. This was not an isolated incident: similar attacks continued for many centuries. The Dominican Johannes Pfefferkorn (1469–1522), also a baptised Jew, led early sixteenth-century attacks, instigating throughout Italy the seizure and burning of all copies of the Talmud in 1559.

The Franciscans and the Dominicans were specially trained for controversy with Jews and Muslims, studying Hebrew, Arabic and rabbinic commentaries. Many delivered conversionist sermons, such as Abner of Burgos (c. 1270–1340). Banned as Alfonso of Valladolid, he called for Jewish conversion, attacked the Talmud, and urged anti-Jewish measures, including conversions peckling and segregation of Jews from Christians. Sometimes expulsions followed the disputation. Two major waves of expulsions took place at the end of the thirteenth and the end of the fifteenth centuries. The expulsion of all Jews from England in 1290 was unusual at this point in its completeness. Edward I (1239–1307), King of England (1272–1307), initially used Jews as a source of funds, particularly for his Crusades and to support the *Domus Conversorum* (House of Conversion), a home in London for Jews who converted to Christianity, which had originally been established by Henry III in 1253 and was not abolished until 1591. When Jews did not convert *en masse*, and their financial contribution to the throne became limited through fiscal exploitation, Edward expelled the entire community. Although he cited Jewish usury as a central reason for expelling them, religious motives were also apparent: the expulsion decrees insist on the offense caused to Christians by the presence in their midst of those who denied Christ. Some rulers, such as the French kings in 1306, expelled Jews only to readmit them later. Several other Christian rulers took advantage of expulsions to welcome Jews into their lands, as happened in Italy (Naples and Rome) and in Poland, where Jews suffered fewer restrictions than elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, the period from the fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century was known as a Golden Age, resulting in flourishing art and culture.

Usury was a major issue in the medieval period. Differentiating themselves from both Jewish and Roman practice, the taking of interest beyond the principle of the loan was prohibited by the church fathers. The Third Lateran Council of 1179 ordered the excommunication of usurers and the annulment of wills that dispensed usurious gains. This position clashed dramatically with the realities of urban growth and commercialisation of the European economy from around 950. It also existed in tension with the interests of secular rulers who licensed interest taking by setting regional rates of interest and licensing specific groups to undertake moneylending and pawnbroking. It is in these late medieval centuries that Jews were simultaneously excluded from many occupations and encouraged to engage in financial services. Although moneylending at interest was a widespread and necessary economic reality, it became a byword for Jewish evil, and for the harm that Jews intended to inflict on Christians.

ANTI-JEWISH VIOLENCE AND THE CRUSADES

Unlike the patristic period which witnessed sporadic incidents of violence between Christians and Jews, the medieval period was marked with lengthy periods of sustained Christian violence against Jews. The Black Death, which ravaged the European population from 1347 to 1351, worsened the suffering and decimation of Jewish communities at the hands of Christians. The epidemic, which killed at least a third of the European population, hit the densely settled urban communities – where most Jews lived – particularly badly. Rumours began to circulate about a Jewish plot to poison wells and cause the plague. Pope Clement VI (c. 1342–53) attempted to quash these accusations and encouraged urban authorities to protect Jews by issuing a papal bull stating, 'Let no Christian dare to wound or kill these Jews or to seize their property. Like *hæretici*, this was an official doctrine of toleration, the rules of which were that Jews should be protected while living a life of dispersion, subjugation and inferiority that reflected their reproach status in God's sight. But it was much more tolerant and tolerant than the Church's policy toward pagans or their own Christian heretics.

Nevertheless, in hundreds of cities massacres of whole communities resulted, especially in the Rhineland – Frankfurt, Mainz and Cologne – but also further east, notably in Prague.

However, it was the Crusades (eleventh–sixteenth centuries) which became the byword for medieval fanaticism and violence against Jews and Muslims. The first of these holy wars was preached by Pope Urban II (r. 1088–99) in 1095 as an armed pilgrimage to the East to free Jerusalem from the Saracens. The Second and Third Crusades were expeditions aimed to re-establish the successes of the first in the Holy Land. Other Crusades were aimed at conquering pagan lands, as for example from the middle of the twelfth century in the Baltic. Crusader preaching concentrated on whipping up Christian emotions against unbaptised or deviant forms of Christian belief.

Urban's call resulted in the gathering of princely armies as well as irregular bands of crusaders, whose departure for the Holy Land in 1096 preceded that of the official crusaders. On their land route through Germany they encountered prosperous Jewish communities in cities like Speyer, Worms, Mainz, Cologne and Trier. In all these cities the bishops concerted tried to prevent anti-Jewish violence. Not only were they anxious to uphold public order in their cities, they were committed to maintaining official church policy which did not permit Jews to be attacked or forcibly converted. In Speyer casualties stayed low, but many Jews died in Worms and Mainz and

in the villages outside Cologne to which the archbishop had sent them for safety. Others were forcibly baptised or died by their own hands as martyrs sacrificing God's holy name (*Yiddish: Ha-Shem*) rather than undergoing baptism. The princely armies did not persecute Jews in Europe.

Contemporary Hebrew accounts chronicled a powerful story of self-immolation, although some scholars question to what extent such acts of martyrdom took place. Nevertheless, martyrdom entered Jewish folklore during this period and David Blumental (b. 1988) has argued that it remains pivotal to Jewish-Christian relations. The Crusades offered examples to follow which were commemorated in Jewish liturgy, and among Christians they aroused puzzlement and even denunciation of Jews as child-killers. The Hebrew narratives of the 1096 massacres, which were written within about a fifty years of the events, graphically depict the ritual slaughter of whole Jewish families. Although there is much scholarly debate about the historical reliability of these sources, corroboration from the Latin sources would suggest that many Jews died in this way. Similarly, there is disagreement about whether, when Jerusalem fell to the crusaders in 1099, numerous Jews were killed alongside Muslims; recent work has suggested that wholesale slaughter of Jews did not occur.

Extensive loss of Jewish life was prevented by individual Christian leaders such as Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) during the Second Crusade in 1146 when he stopped anti-Jewish preaching, demanding that Christians adhere to traditional church policy protecting Jews. Although he argued against inflicting physical harm on Jews, Bernard's sermons and mystical writings reveal standard anti-Jewish motifs that were well established in Christian tradition; he emphasised Jewish cannibal, the inability of Jews to exercise proper reason, and their stubborn disbelief.

In the Third Crusade, the Jews of York were massacred in 1190 in Clifford's Tower, while King Richard I (c. 1189–99) was absent from England organising his own departure for the Holy Land. As far as later Crusades are concerned, major violence against Jews was usually stemmed by those in authority.

What explains anti-Jewish violence by crusaders? One scholar of the period, Anna Sapi-Abulafia (b. 1972), suggests that crusading preaching, calling upon Christians to re-take the Holy Land and take vengeance on Muslims, easily spilled over into the desire to avenge the death of Jesus on those who were judged to be guilty of the crucifixion. Crusaders wondered why they should seek out Muslims in the Holy Land when there were Jews at home. In addition, the reality of crusading meant that large armies needed to get hold of provisions along the way. It is likely that crusaders felt

it only right that Jews should in this way help finance the Crusades. The idea that Jews should suffer financially on behalf of crusading endeavours intensified partly because, by the end of the twelfth century, Jews had become important players in providing crusading loans. After the massacre of Jews in Clifford's Tower, the evidence held in York Minister of debts to Jews was destroyed.

The Crusades have had a continuing impact on Jewish-Christian relations. Even the word 'crusade' conjures up for Jews (and Muslims) the image of unjust religious persecution. When US President George Bush called for a 'crusade' against terrorism after the 9/11 suicide bombing in 2001, he was taken aback by the controversy that followed on account of his choice of words.

POLEMIC: JEWISH

Because of the one-sided nature of the relationship between Christians and Jews, it is to be expected that Jewish polemic was less common and far more nuanced. As we saw in the last chapter, references to Christianity in the Talmud are few, yet there are passages in classical Jewish texts, including the Talmud, that depict a violent picture: rabbinic descriptions of the messianic age as one of catastrophic blood-letting for the Gentiles or their subjugation to Jewish rule (*Yerusha Rabbari*, Piska 96); a Talmudic dictum that a non-Jew who studies Torah is liable to the death penalty (31T. *Sabbidath* 99a); Kabbalistic teachings that the Gentile nations of the world are to be identified with the cosmic forces of evil, their souls derived from demonic powers (e.g., Zohar 1:121a–b, 111:7b–73a).

As for explicit anti-Christian polemic, there certainly existed Jewish tracks against Christians such as *Talmei Yehu*, a parody of the Gospels ascribed from the tenth century but probably originating in the sixth century. After the rise of Islam we find examples of anti-Christian texts such as *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* (probably ninth century) which contains the tale of the miraculous birth and prophecy of the ancient writer Ben Sira, intended as a parody of the life of Jesus. The lewdness of some aspects is apparent as is the attempt to discredit the virgin birth. Jewish polemical literature appears to have mostly developed in Islamic lands, and its language was Arabic, reflecting the influence of Arabic polemical literature. Where we have Hebrew texts, such as a Gemara fragment (GNA, n.s. 50, fol. 9), they sometimes reflect an Arabic original. The earliest medieval polemicist was Dawid ben Marwan al-Muqammas (ninth century), a Jew who converted to Christianity and, upon returning to Judaism, wrote

two polemical works against Christianity. In his theological study *Libytha Masada* he included anti-Christian material. In the tenth century, Sa'adia Gaon (882–942) also included anti-Christian arguments in his writings but without composing a separate treatise.

The influence of Islam in writings on Christianity can be found among Jewish philosophers such as Maimonides who lived his entire life in Muslim countries. He insisted that, unlike Islam, Christianity was a false religion. He subsequently the Talmudic laws severely regulating Jewish idolatry, which Gentiles applied to contemporary Christians. Later Jewish thinkers tried to modify this view. At the conclusion of his *Code of Jewish Law* (*Mishneh Torah*), discussing Jewish meiotic terms, Maimonides argues that Jews only imagined he was the Messiah, but, instead of improving the lot of the Jewish people, made it incomparably worse. On the other hand, Maimonides argued that Christianity along with Islam, probably spread the knowledge of God and Scripture throughout the world, thereby preparing the way for the true Messiah. Maimonides' statement that 'The poems of the Gentle nations have a share in the world to come' (*Code, Laws of Kings* 8:12) has been frequently cited by modern Jews as evidence of Jewish inclusiveness, sometimes even used in the Christian doctrine *non injuria esse ecclesiam* (outside the Church there is no salvation), although it is not certain whether Maimonides could have so called Christians in his definition of the plout of the Gentle nations. The Yemane philosopher Neman (bn Eapion) (d. c. 1164), went further and asserted the authenticity of the prophecy of Malachi, and revealed in the Qur'an, and at least the possibility that there are additional divine revelations. He sends a prophet to every people according to their language.

One subject that led to virulent Jewish criticism was a belief which had become central to Christian theology by the early Middle Ages, that Christ was born of a virgin, who was intact at the time of his conception and remained so after his birth. Jewish polemical texts suggested that the concept of virginity masked Mary's adulterous pregnancy. *Tikkun Yelenu* (the Jewish prayer book) called Mary's pregnancy *Yelenu*, Jewish rejection of virgin birth also formed part of the denial of the incarnation.

One of the most popular polemical works in the medieval period was the *Book of Yemayim*, probably written by a Christian priest who had converted to Judaism. It rejected the idea that God would have dwelt in a womb in the fifth of months. 'Conceivably in medieval Christian polemical writings, such as the writings of Odo of Cambray (c. 1100), rejection of the virgin birth was impetus to Jewish invectives. The popularity of these

texts ensured that Jewish anti-Christian polemic was a tradition that was to have a long history.

We should also consider whether there was Jewish violence against Christians, in response to Christian violence against Jews. For the most part, of course, medieval Jews were simply not in a position to harm their Christian neighbours, and the frequent charges of ritual murder of Christian children remain in the realm of fantasy and projection. Yet there are references to occasional incidents of Jewish-inspired violence; for example, contemporary Christian documents accuse Jews of supporting the Persians against Christian armies in their invasion of Byzantine territory, including Palestine (and Jerusalem) in the seventh century.

According to the Jerusalem monk Antiochus Strategos, once the Persian army had breached Jerusalem's fortifications in 614, Jewish rebels joined the Persians in the sack of Jerusalem and the Persian commander, Shahbazz, recognised their assistance by giving them the opportunity to massacre surviving Christians, who were hiding out in caverns. They offered the Christians an opportunity to save their lives by denying Christ and becoming Jews but they refused, preferring to die for Christ's sake rather than to live in godlessness. According to Antiochus' account, Jews killed the Christians and demolished with their own hands [...] such of the holy churches as were left standing. Is it inconceivable, whether because of temperament or tradition, that Jews could ever have been the killers and Christians the martyrs?

POSITIVE INTERACTION

Not all the interaction between Christians and Jews was confrontational, as demonstrated by numerous Jewish and Christian writings that show signs of interdependence. For example, the Christian teaching that Scripture had four different senses – usually called 'historical' (the actual events), 'typological' (moral instruction), 'allegorical' (doctrinal linked with a non-literal reading), and 'anagogical' (teaching about the mystical spiritual realm) – was well established by the twelfth century. In Jewish thought, an analogous conception of four senses – *pasbal* (simple meaning), *remez* (philosophical allegory), *derush* (homiletical application), and *nod* (mystical symbol) – crystallised late in the thirteenth century, undoubtedly influenced by the Christian teaching.

Other examples of Christian influence can be seen in the commentary of the Jewish medieval scholar Nahmanides. Similarly, the Spanish exegete Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508) had a broad knowledge of Christian

exegetical literature and was influenced by the commentaries of the Franciscan Alfonso Torrado (c. 1400–38). Jewish commentators also copied Christian literary structures, dividing the biblical text into small sections of paragraphs and verses, even though the text was traditionally divided differently.

The Hasidei Ashkenaz, a Jewish pietistic group in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Germany, is another example of the influence of contemporary Christianity on Judaism. The *hasidim* adopted what they considered to be praiseworthy Christian pietistic practices, such as exposure to cold and flagellation as forms of penance/penitence, like their Christian counterparts. Earthly love became for them an allegory for the love of God, with the ideal being a monastic absence of passion.

For their part, some medieval Christian scholars argued that greater attention should be given to the 'historical' meaning of the text and unified Hebrew with Jews (perhaps contributing to the Jewish tendency at this time to distinguish between the homiletical interpretation and the simple meaning of the biblical text). Michael Siper (1946–2009) has identified contact between scholars, notably in the biblical commentaries of the School of St. Victor in the twelfth century, which are filled with references to Jewish interpretations, not for polemical but for purely intellectual purposes. These contacts are derived from both textual interaction and oral conversation.

The Victorine scholars took rabbinic tradition seriously and Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1142), who established the Victorine tradition of literal interpretation and historical study of Scripture, was inspired in part by Rashi's commentaries were meant for the ordinary educated Jew but they soon became known to Christians, such as Hugh, who rather like Rashi set himself the task of rehabilitating the literal sense of Scripture. Hugh knew Hebrew and frequently cited Jewish sources, including the commentary of Rashi's grandson, Rashbam (c. 1080/–1108). Andrey of St. Victor (d. 1173) entered into conversations with Jews and recorded their understanding of biblical words and phrases in his own commentaries, including passages in the Talmud and midrash. Although he elicited Jewish explanations that asserted the eschatological restoration of Jews, he juxtaposed Christian and Jewish interpretation frequently and sympathetically, and his exegesis marks a significant advance in the development of Christian biblical interpretation based on Hebrew and Jewish sources. Comments about Christian interpretations appear both explicitly and implicitly in the writings of Rashi. The commentary on Psalm has several 'answers to the Christians' (*Tshuvot L'Yisrinim*), and in the introduction to

the Song of Songs Rashi emphasises that Israel will endure 'exile after exile' and that God still loves them deeply. As well as the Victorines, Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–1349) quotes the commentaries of Rashi throughout his comprehensive *Expositio prophetarum* on the Hebrew Bible and, through him, Rashi became an important source for Luther's exegesis.

As well as interaction between Jewish and Christian commentators, both Judaism and Christianity faced similar philosophical difficulties. They found anthropomorphism, for example, equally problematic, which led to interesting interaction between scholars such as Maimonides and the Dominican scholar Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–74). Both argued that biblical metaphors capture the human experience of God, not how God is in God's self. Furthermore, God is timeless (literally, there is no question in God) and therefore immutable (there is no change in God). Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* was translated into Latin and was familiar to Aquinas, who refers to Rashi. Moses the Egyptian with respect, as well as Maimonides, Aquinas read works by Jewish thinkers such as Avicenna (c. 1000–4–1070).

Xc, like other scholastics, Aquinas held ambiguous attitudes towards Jews and Judaism. For example, although he discouraged some anti-Jewish measures and opposed undue fiscal harshness towards Jews (such as the removal of children from parents as contrary to Natural Law), in *Summa contra gentes* he created an encyclopedic manual for missionaries against Muslims and Jews. He also supported imposing the Jewish badge, upheld coerced conversions, and proposed substituting manual labour for nonrepentance.

This ambiguity is also found in the writings of the French philosopher Peter Abelard (1079–1142), who regarded Judaism as philosophically and spiritually inferior to Christianity, yet expressed compassion for Jewish suffering. Abelard had personal contact with Jews, knew some Hebrew and argued that nuts should learn Hebrew. In his work *Dialagum inter philosophum, iudeum et christianum*, his fictionalised Jew emphasised with Jewish oppression and envisaged a biblically promised blissful future, but Abelard also believed that the miniature of Jewish law burdened Jews, distancing them from genuine love of God.

Greater sensitivity to Jews and Judaism can be found among some Christian rulers. Henry IV (1050–1106), Holy Roman Emperor and King of Germany (1056–1106), allowed baptised Jews to revert to Judaism after the massacres and forced conversions of the First Crusade in 1096, and asked the Bishop of Speyer to shelter survivors of the massacre. His ruling clashed with canon law which, notwithstanding its position against

in the synagogue by making comparison with the commendable behaviour of Christian congregants.

Look what happens when a congregation [of Jews] gathers to hear words of Torah from a sage. Some enter reagas upon the spot at the others' often concise and pertinent remarks. They are so moved by the sage's words that they are chartered of women standing behind the synagogue. If he should reproach them because of their behaviour, they continue to sin, behaving corruptly, abominably. This is the opposite of the Christians. When their men and women gather to hear a preacher, they stand together in absolute silence, marveling at his rebuke. Not one of them dares as he pours out his words upon them. They await him as they do the rain, eager for the waters of his counsel. We have not learned properly from those around us. (Quoted by Sapientin in George W. E. Nickelsburg and George W. E. Nickelsburg, *From Prophecy to Prophecy: Reconstructing the Last Days of Second Temple Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

SPAIN AND THE INQUISITION

In Spain in the early Middle Ages (from the tenth to the twelfth century), under Muslim rule there was a period of *Convivencia* (literally 'living together'), a term that describes the relatively easy coexistence of Jews, Christians and Muslims which allowed for sharing of concepts and common intellectual ideas about, for example, the nature of God and the purpose of creation. It is important not to idealise this relationship: non-Muslims were *dhimmi*, subject to restrictions such as heavier taxation; on the other hand, there was no attempt to insist on the full rigour of these restrictions and this period has commonly been called the 'Golden Age'.

Solomon Ibn Gabirol (c. 1020–c. 1075) was known in Arabic as Shalāmayān Ibn Yahya Ibn Gabirol, and in Latin as Avicenna. His philosophical and poetical writings were widely esteemed and medieval Christian readers generally assumed him to be a Muslim. Another important Jewish figure at this time was Judah ha-Levi, who was born in Tudela (Spain) and died in Egypt on his way to the Land of Israel. He was one of the most important Hebrew poets and philosophers of the Middle Ages whose most well-known work, *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, consists of a fictitious conversation between the King of the Khazars and representatives of Aristotelianism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The Khazars were a powerful state in Eastern Europe between the seventh and the tenth centuries, the rulers of which converted to Judaism. The *Kuzari* enables ha-Levi to demonstrate the superiority of Judaism as a prophetically mediated religion over other religions, in

particular Christianity and Islam, to which he nevertheless grants a place as *preparatio messianica* because they contain authentic Jewish elements.

Jewish and Christian life began to change for the worse in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries when Moroccan Berbers who had little experience of religious minorities began to rule. Many Jews and Christians migrated to Christian controlled areas of Spain – but these also became more intolerant. Jews were forced to listen to conversionist preaching and ecclesiastical legislation of the early Middle Ages was revived to exclude Jews from office. Ramon Llull (1232–1315/16) was a prolific author of conversionist tracts in Catalan and Latin, aimed at Jews (and Muslims); but, unusually at a time when preaching campaigns had become increasingly ardent, he insisted on the need to show respect to his interlocutors.

Some Jews remained at court, such as Isaac Abravanel, but they became the object of bitter criticism. The age of *Convivencia* was dealt its death blow not by the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 but by the massacres of 1391, which resulted in mass conversions and the increased marginalisation of those Jews who remained; Islam, too, was suppressed and Spain rejoined in its special reputation as the most Catholic of monarchies.

Hasdai Crescas (c. 1340–1410) represented the Jewish community at the court of the Kings of Aragon, and was considered one of the king's *familiares*, or close advisers. Crescas tried to rebuild the Jewish communities of Catalonia after 1391, but his success was limited. He defended Judaism in several books and aimed to refute Christian thinkers on their own terms by arguing that their positions were incoherent and would lead to self-contradiction if properly understood. Crescas presented Christianity as a faith opposed to reason, and his writings reveal considerable knowledge of Arab scholars such as al-Ghazzali (1058–1111) and Ibn Rushd (Iverroes) (1126–98).

Public disputations also took place in Spain, the most famous of which involved Nahmanides and the Dominican convert Paul the Christian (thirteenth century, sometimes called Pablo Cristian). Nahmanides was summoned by James I (1208–76), with whom he apparently had a warm relationship, to defend Judaism against the argument that the Messiah had already come. The disputation of 1263, held in the king's presence, is recorded in both the writings of Nahmanides and in a Christian version (which, perhaps not surprisingly, awards victory to Paul). What was distinctive was Paul's attempt to use the Talmud to demonstrate that the Messiah had come. Nahmanides argued that he was not obliged to believe as literal truth the aggadic material in the Talmud, but Paul mocked this

position. Neither side 'won', in the sense that the king could not possibly declare that a Jew had been victorious.

The aim of the disputation had been to discredit Jewish belief and it marked a new intensification of attempts at the conversion of Jews in which attacks on the Talmud became increasingly intense, following the mass burning of the Talmud by Louis IX in France. After the disputation, Nahmanides was treated courteously by James I but the king made it plain that he would do well to leave Spain. In 1267 Nahmanides travelled to the Holy Land and became Rabbi of Acco.

Reymond Martini assisted Paul the Christian in the disputation and his anti-Jewish writings were utilised by later medieval polemicists and were also cited by Luther. Martini was well versed in Hebrew, and served as a censor to examine Jewish books for anti-Christian passages. His work *Pugio Fidei* ('The Dagger of Faith', c. 1280) cites quotations from rabbinic sources and although polemical nevertheless provides the only evidence of some rabbinic texts that were not otherwise preserved.

Around this time, the Inquisition (the 'Holy Office of the Inquisition') began, initially against heretical groups in southern France; it was to last off and on until the nineteenth century. In its beginnings it was not primarily concerned with Jews and Judaism *per se*, but it took particular interest from the 1391 riots onwards when Jews, known as the *conversos*, converted to Christianity, either by choice or under duress. These converted Jews and their offspring were a cause of suspicion and the Church wanted to ensure that their conversions were genuine.

Although there were also many Muslim *conversos*, by the mid-sixteenth century they were predominantly Jewish as a new wave of conversos was created by the expulsion in 1492. The term *converso* was used to distinguish recently converted Jews from 'Old Christians' – Christians by birth/blood with no Jewish affiliation. The *conversos* faced two major difficulties: the Inquisition, which relentlessly pursued anyone who might be deemed a false convert, and popular opinion which increasingly marginalised those with Jewish blood, leading to their exclusion from universities and high offices, on what can only be described as racial grounds.

The *conversos* are sometimes confused with the Marranos (literally 'twins' or one who damages Christian faith), which is a derogatory term. 'Marrano' refers to those Jews who converted to Christianity but continued to observe certain Jewish rituals (e.g. lighting of candles on Shabbat) and practices (e.g. keeping kosher). Another term used for this phenomenon is 'Crypto-Judaism', because of the underground or covert nature of the Jewish practice. Since they could not practice openly, Marranos are known

to have developed elaborate ways of maintaining Shabbat and the Jewish holidays. They were a target of the Inquisitors' investigation because the crime they were committing, apostasy, was considered by the Church to be worse than the sin of unbelief.

A problem for the Inquisition was the line of demarcation between *conversos* and the non-converted Jews. Although for the most part the Inquisition went after relapsing *conversos*, they also went after non-converted Jews because of the threat they posed to the *conversos* and their relapsing back into Judaism.

Solomon Molcho (c. 1500–32) is an example of a Portuguese Marrano, who was baptised by the name Diego Pires but subsequently returned to Judaism and was burned at the stake during the Inquisition. He led an unusual life because he was befriended by Pope Clement VII (r. 1523–49) who was convinced by his prophecies, many of which came true. In 1532, he preached the coming of the Messiah among Jews and Christians and travelled with David Reveni (1497–1538) who claimed to be representative of the ten lost tribes of Israel. The Emperor Charles V (r. 1519–58) was less impressed and delivered them both to the Inquisition.

Breaking with the policies of previous Iberian rulers, Ferdinand the Catholic (1452–1516) and his cousin Isabella decreed the expulsion of all confessing Jews from their lands following their conquest of the last Muslim kingdom in Granada in 1492. The decree was seen as part of the recovery of Spain's Christian identity, and the king and queen hoped that many Jews would convert rather than depart, as many did. Ferdinand anticipated all of the revenues they produced, did not expel the Muslims from Valencia and Aragon, even though Isabella thoroughly suppressed Islam in Castile. These expulsions represent the denouement of a lengthy process of the marginalisation of Jews, which had begun a century earlier, in 1391.

THE REFORMATION AND CHRISTIAN HEBRAISM

Initiated by Martin Luther, the Reformation was one of the greatest revolutions in the history of Western thought, breaking the religious monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church. Unsurprisingly, Luther's writings about Jews perpetuated the medieval view of Jews as God's enemy. They should not be seen as separate from his denunciations of the pope, false Christians and Muslims – all of whom he saw as the devil's legions. For Luther, Jews were unique deniers of Christ.

The older Luther's views cannot legitimately be divorced from the younger Luther's, though his later words were much more brutal. His

1523 work, *That Jew Christ Was Born a Jew*, chastised the Church for its treatment of Jews and then expressed hope for the conversion of some Jews under a new approach. Luther argued:

If we wish to help them, we must practice on them not the papal law but rather the Christian law of love and accept them in a friendly fashion, allowing them to work and make a living, so that they gain the reason and the opportunity to be with and among us to see and to hear our Christian teaching and life.

After a call for increased contact and tolerance, he concludes: 'here I will let the matter rest for the present, until I see what I have accomplished'.

This conclusion clarifies the aim of the treatise – it was a missionary epistle, aimed at Lutheran missionaries who sought to convert Jews. Luther was just starting to experience the incredible success of the early years of the Reformation and believed himself to be an instrument of God, destined to reveal the purified gospel. He believed that time was needed for the renewed gospel to do its work, and he called for patience and tolerance.

Using the Jew as a stick with which to beat the Catholic Church, in the same tract he wrote that if I had been a Jew and had seen such doings and blockades govern and teach the Christian faith, I would have become a hog rather than a Christian.

For Luther himself, when the anticipated conversion of the Jews did not materialise and the Judaising tendencies of a number of reforming sects became more apparent, he became increasingly frustrated. He wrote a trilogy of anti-Jewish works, the most infamous being *On the Jews and Their Lies*. In this treatise of 1543 he called for forcible conversions and advised rulers to confiscate rabbinical texts, forbid the rabbis to teach and burn down synagogues along with Jews' homes. The older Luther was bitterly disappointed and indignant at how incompletely the newly cleansed gospel was received by Jews. Each opponent – Christian as well as Jew – was regarded as a manifestation of the devil. For Luther, as for virtually all others at the time, truth allowed no room for tolerance. He saw the evangelical proclamation of faith as the last chance for misguided Jews and Christians alike, since God was working in the Reformation to eradicate all from the antichrist. The best strategy seemed to be that which Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain and Emmanuel I of Portugal had done less than fifty years previously – say goodbye to Jews for ever.

Pethaps because of this criticism of the Roman Catholic Church, Joel von Rohstern (c. 1480–1530), leader of German Jews during the Reformation, initially showed sympathy to Luther and the early Reformers. However, within a few years he increasingly oriented his politics towards support

of the Catholic emperor rather than the Protestant aristocracy, describing Luther with a play on words, *Jo-athan*, which means impure.

Compared with Luther, Calvin was more moderate, stressing the unity of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, the one covenant initiated by Abraham and permanently upheld by God, and the continuing importance of the Law for Christians. Calvin insisted Christians must learn from Jews in order to understand the Hebrew Bible. Through the Law people learned to know the will of God, were restrained from unacceptable behaviour and became aware of sin and their need for God's redemption.

Calvin was one of the very few voices speaking against supersessionism, the doctrine that the Church replaced the Jewish people as heir of the covenant. He stressed that the entire Reformation confession, *sola gratia* (by mercy alone), was rooted in God's covenant with Abraham and in promises to share Israel's blessing with all people. At times Calvin used 'Israelite' to mean both Jews and Gentiles elected by God as the remnant to be saved. In *Ad questiones et obiecta Iudeis cuiusdam Regemio* ('Response to Questions and Objections of a Certain Jew', c. 1577) he produced a sympathetic dialogue with a Jew, possibly based on meetings with Joel von Rohstern. Naturally the document affirmed the triumphant church position given that Calvin could not see Judaism as a viable alternative since only Christ is the sole means of salvation. Yet Calvin was more tolerant of Jews (and Muslims) than Christian heretics although he still maintained many of the traditional *Alebrum Iudeorum* views, such as the opinion that their sufferings are caused by the sin of rejecting Christ.

If the Reformation marked the end of the monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church, the Renaissance marked the beginning of the closure of the Middle Ages. It was an era in which the ancient world was rediscovered, as expressed in the humanist battle cry *ad fontes* (back to the original sources), which was reflected in the Christian theologians' rejection of scholasticism and the development of Hebrew scholarship. Initially, Christian Hebraists received instruction privately from Jewish teachers and began to take a serious interest in post-biblical Jewish literature.

The Renaissance saw the flowering of Christian Kabbalah in figures such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) and his disciple Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), who believed that the Kabbalah confirmed Christian truth. His appreciation of post-biblical Jewish literature emerged in a bitter controversy with the Dominicans which raged for almost a decade. The Emperor Maximilian (1459–1519), at the instigation of the Dominicans, had ordered that all Hebrew books considered inimical to the Christian faith should be burned. Reuchlin came to the defence of Jewish literature.

His success in this 'battle of the books' was a victory for Jews and Christian humanists alike.

The missionary orders also regarded knowledge of Hebrew as essential. If Jews were to be won for Christ, their religious texts had to be understood and their interpretation of certain biblical passages refuted. Nicholas of Lyra, whose knowledge of Hebrew and of the work of Jewish exegesis such as Rashi is indispensable, is credited with securing a place for the traditional Jewish exegesis in Christian thought. His *Postilla super prophetas*, a running commentary on the entire Bible, was widely used and emphasised the literal meaning of the text, grounded in the study of philology, grammar and history. Despite his extensive use of the Talmud, Rashi's biblical literature and rabbinic commentaries, his work is filled with anti-Jewish polemic.

In the Renaissance, Hebrew gained recognition as one of the historic languages of the West. By 1546 chairs of Hebrew had been established in the major European universities. Pico and Reuchlin stood at the forefront of this movement. Luther, though antagonistic to rabbinic exegesis, had a high regard for the Hebrew language and recognised its importance for understanding Scripture. Calvinist scholars became some of the leading Christian Hebraists and Christian Hebraism became a weapon in the disputes between Protestants and Catholics.

A Hebrew printing press was founded in Amsterdam in 1616 and the founder's son, Menasseh ben Israel (1604–72) appealed to Oliver Cromwell in 1655 for the right of Jews to return to England. Cromwell gave the London Marano Company informal permission to establish a synagogue and a cemetery.

Cromwell (Lord Protector 1653–8) convened a conference in London to decide the issue. Those favouring readmission included millenarianists who argued that the messianic age would dawn once Jews were scattered to the four corners of the world, which increased envy to England. Cromwell himself was probably also influenced by the practical needs of the new Commonwealth and anticipated Jewish merchants playing an important economic role. Others, mainly clergy, opposed readmission. When the conference failed to deliver a positive response, Cromwell dissolved it. Three months later a group of 40 persons living in London and posing as Catholics openly pressed their Jewish identity and petitioned Cromwell to allow them to establish a synagogue and every. In giving his consent through a decision by the Council of State, Cromwell became the person most responsible for the readmission of Jews to England in 1656 following their expulsion in 1290. Menasseh ben Israel,

however, died believing he had failed, as his proposal for a formal recall was not accepted. However, his efforts led to a *de facto* toleration of Jews living openly on British soil for the first time in over 350 years. In 2006, Queen Elizabeth II hosted a celebration at Buckingham Palace, marking three and a half centuries of Jewish life in the United Kingdom.