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FEELING JEWISH

Emotions, identity, and the Jews' inverted Christmas*

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Because a Jew or Jewish heart is so devilishly hard, hard as wood, stone, iron, it cannot be moved in any way.

Martin Luther¹

Emotions, religion, and identity

In a small book written in the wake of the Second World War, *The Teaching of Contempt*, the French historian Jules Isaac, whose wife and daughter were murdered at Auschwitz, examined the role of traditional Christian anti-Judaism in the spread of modern anti-Semitism.² Beyond the specific and dramatic events Isaac was striving to understand, the book raised an important and recurring question: what is the role of religion in the internalization of prejudice, of feelings of exclusion and hostility, of deeply seated (conscious or unconscious) antagonizing emotions? Emotions have long held a special place in ancient and modern theories of religion, be it as part of a discourse identifying fear and terror as the primeval source of religion, or in the more theologically oriented attempts to define religion itself as an emotional experience.³ The work of historians of emotions, however, focusing on the social and cultural construction of emotions in a variety of contexts, allows us to frame the question from a different perspective.

Historians never have access to the emotional experience of an individual, group, or society, but only to emotions as they are discursively framed within

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what Barbara Rosenwein has termed an ‘emotional community’. Rosenwein describes emotional communities as ‘groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value—or devalue—the same or related emotions’, noting that ‘[n]o one is born knowing appropriate modes of expression, or whether to imagine emotions as internal or external, or whether to privilege or disregard an emotion. These things make up the “feeling rules” that societies impart’.⁴

Rosenwein’s work seeks to engage in a deep history of early medieval culture by identifying precisely such emotional communities and tracing their evolution over time. I will here venture to suggest a slightly different approach. My objective is not to consider how certain emotions are valued, expressed, or withheld in a given context, and thus outline an emotional community; but rather, how individuals, groups, and societies are bound together by the feelings they nurture towards others. In other words, I am interested in the way the social construction of emotions shapes specific notions of identity and alterity.⁵ As argued by Sara Ahmed, ‘knowing how we feel about the other, is what aligns us with a collective, which paradoxically “takes shape” only as an effect of such alignment’.⁶ Among scholars of religion, Bruce Lincoln has explored how mythical narratives can foster feelings of inclusion and exclusion and mobilize specific emotions in a given discursive context.⁷ Myths undoubtedly codify identities, but what is remarkable in Lincoln’s analysis is precisely the notion that identity itself is a matter of *feeling*—a process through which individuals as much as the groups to which they belong are brought to coalesce or split at the level of emotions. Such an approach could of course be applied to other materials in order to evaluate how religious groups are bound by similar emotional mechanisms of identification, or conversely of estrangement and alienation, by feelings of inclusion and exclusion. This would also help illuminate what might be called ‘the teaching of contempt’, the way we learn to feel about others, and alas too often are brought to share a visceral, deeply emotional abjection of the other. In what follows, I will try to explore the question of emotion, religion, and identity by looking at Jewish–Christian polemics in the late medieval and early modern periods.

The Jews’ hidden transcript

Jews and Christians may be described as members of co-existing—sometimes intersecting—yet irreducibly distinct, emotional communities, split as much over theological questions as over feelings and emotions, in particular with regard to one another. But the history of Jewish–Christian relations also reflects how asymmetries of power impact the history of emotions: Jews living in a Christian world in the Middle Ages and early modern period were obviously not free to express how they felt about Christians in the same way that Christians could express how they felt about Jews. And indeed, the Christian discourse on Jews and more particularly on Jewish emotions—‘I hate him for he is a Christian’, as the Jew Shylock famously declares in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*—served

both to justify how Christians felt about Jews and the social and political subjection of Jews in western Christendom.

There is undeniably a dialectical relationship between the animosity of Jews and Christians as reflected in their respective polemical literature and logics of exclusion, but its impact and consequences can only be described as dramatically uneven. In certain contexts, Jews could presumably allow themselves to be bold in defending their identity and asserting their view of Christianity. More often, however, the matter required a certain amount of discretion. Jews living in western Christendom undoubtedly developed and integrated a number of cultural strategies aimed at preserving their faith and way of life in the face of Christian enmity and missionary pressure—including fierce anti-Christian polemics. Yet they were always at the risk of being accused of blasphemy and thus at risk of inflaming anti-Jewish violence. Jews ‘could not afford to offer the partial admission that deep within its structures, their culture contained strategies of internal resistance to the religious narrative of Christian society ... [They] had no choice but to conceal these strategies’.⁸ Such strategies were of course not only textual, but also emotional, rooted in the Jews’ ‘hidden transcript’—to borrow James C. Scott’s words—part of a culture and discourse that could only be expressed in hiding, ‘behind the back’ of power holders.⁹ According to Scott, such hidden transcripts are in fact inherent to every situation of social and political subordination, enabling minority cultures to cope with their subordination and assert their own identity and social space within the broader social world, all the while resisting and challenging the dominant discourse. In some cases, the Jews’ hidden transcript doubtless took quite vituperative forms. Israel J. Yuval thus pointed to the anti-Christian element of the liturgy and eschatology of medieval Ashkenazi Jews.¹⁰ In other cases, it could be formulated in more subtle ways, for instance in the form of Jewish parodies of Christian discourse and rituals, inconspicuously embedded in Jewish works of art or literature or specific religious practices.¹¹ Undoubtedly, one of the most prominent instance of such a hidden transcript is provided by the narrative known as *Toledot Yeshu* (the Life of Jesus)—a widely popular narrative among medieval and early modern Jews.¹²

Toledot Yeshu, often described as an anti-Gospel or a parody of the gospels, turns the foundational story of Christianity into a ludicrous farce. The work presents Jesus as a disgruntled student of the rabbis who turned to heresy and magic after his shameful origins were uncovered—namely, that his mother conceived him in adultery. Wishing to be worshipped as a god, he gathers a crowd of gullible followers by performing would-be miracles with the help of God’s magical name (the Tetragrammaton), which he has stolen from the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple. After a series of twists and turns worthy of a fantasy novel (including an aerial battle with Judas Iscariot), he is eventually captured by the rabbis and sentenced to death as one who has incited his people to idolatry.

Toledot Yeshu offers a blatant attack on the Christian myth and on the central tenets of Christianity. The narrative has of course no part in the normative

corpus of rabbinic Judaism, yet it bears strong normative overtones and was in fact recognized as an important historical source by Jewish scribes and scholars.¹³ Such a narrative understandably became a privileged medium for expressing Jewish self-confidence and venting anti-Christian feelings—*inter alia* through mockery and laughter. James C. Scott in fact emphasized the powerful emotional valence of the hidden transcript; indeed, *Toledot Yeshu* had a formidable emotional impact in certain contexts—both for Christian readers, who insisted that this was a story one ‘could neither tell nor hear without crying’, and for Jews, for whom the story, which they likely knew from childhood, could trigger spontaneous responses and reactions when confronted with Christian rites and practices.¹⁴

However concealed, the Jews’ hidden transcript did come to the attention of Christians. Late medieval and early modern texts concerned with Jews and Judaism are thus obsessed with Jewish blasphemies against Christians and Christianity. Christian converts from Judaism played a central role in that context as cultural intermediaries, seeking to gain recognition and authority within their adoptive community by revealing the ‘secrets’ of the Jews, the anti-Christian element concealed in Jewish books or rituals. Unsurprisingly, *Toledot Yeshu*—perhaps one of the less well-kept secrets of the Jews—thus became a recurring topic of Christian discussion in the late Middle Ages and early modern period, a blatant example of Jewish blasphemy. Much of our knowledge concerning the place and role of *Toledot Yeshu* among late medieval and early modern Jews relies on Christian sources and is thus tied to Christian perceptions of Judaism as a blasphemous religion driven by the Jews’ senseless obstinacy and implacable hatred of Christianity—that is, it is clearly tied to a Christian discourse on Jewish emotions. Yet these discussions, when read against the grain, may also shed light on strategies of cultural resistance and their emotional underpinnings, by medieval and early modern Jews, and on the way Jews may indeed have learned to *feel* Jewish.

Thomas Ebendorfer on *Toledot Yeshu*

In the mid-fifteenth century, the Viennese cleric Thomas Ebendorfer (1388–1464) was the first Christian scholar to undertake a full Latin translation of *Toledot Yeshu*.¹⁵ He claimed to have translated the book with the help of a Christian convert from Judaism, to make both the hatred (*odium*) of the Jews and the mercy of God evident to all. Ebendorfer’s translation of the work is a key testimony to its circulation in late medieval Europe—a context for which we in fact possess no Hebrew (or Aramaic) manuscript evidence.¹⁶ Of course, *Toledot Yeshu* was not totally unknown to Christian scholars prior to Ebendorfer. Earlier anti-Jewish polemicists had already referred to this blasphemous booklet, attributing Jesus’ miracles to his use of the Tetragrammaton or mocking his birth from a virgin.¹⁷ Ebendorfer, however, was not quoting from an earlier source, but reading directly from a Hebrew manuscript of *Toledot Yeshu*. The

text he provides, covering twenty folios, closely corresponds to the Strasbourg version of the narrative, which was the most widely circulated version in the late Middle Ages, yet for which the earliest surviving Hebrew manuscript does not predate the seventeenth or eighteenth century.¹⁸ The exact date of Ebendorfer's translation is unknown, but it is likely that *Toledot Yeshu* first came into his hands as a result of the destruction of the Jewish community of Vienna in 1421, when following an accusation of host desecration more than 200 Jews were burned at the stake while the rest of the community was either expelled or converted by force.¹⁹ The Jews' possessions were sold for the benefit of Duke Albrecht V; the stones of the synagogue were used to expand the University; while two scholars—Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl and Peter of Pulkau—were tasked by the faculty of theology to buy some of the Hebrew books resulting from the spoils.²⁰ While many of the Hebrew manuscripts confiscated in that context were thus preserved, others were simply dismembered and used as material for bookbindings.²¹ Ruth Mazo Karras observed that the binding of a Latin manuscript copied in Vienna in 1432 by a student at the theological faculty even contains a page taken from a manuscript of *Toledot Yeshu*.²² In 1421, Ebendorfer himself was teaching at the faculty of arts, while pursuing his studies in the faculty of theology, recording Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl and Peter of Pulkau as his teachers.²³ It is thus very likely that he had access to the Jewish books acquired for the university by his masters, including, so it seems, a manuscript of *Toledot Yeshu*.

What interests me here is not so much the text of *Toledot Yeshu* produced by Ebendorfer. Rather, I am interested in Ebendorfer's comments on the work. These may, as suggested, shed some light on its status, role, and place among its Jewish audiences, and more particularly, on the emotions associated with the narrative. Ebendorfer indeed prefaced his translation of *Toledot Yeshu* with a noteworthy introduction, explaining his interest in the work in the following terms:

Having been greatly troubled (by this question) for many years, I started to wonder why this miserable people of the Jews remained so obstinate and blind with regard to its own Scriptures and—a source of even greater amazement—why they rage with such hatred (*odium*) against Christ, our Lord, and Mary, his chaste mother, the perpetual virgin, and why they pile up so many silly insults against her, some of which I knew quite well. And although I gathered some of these from their writings and chatter, I came to understand that there is a secret little book which they read and study with great care and in which they inculcate their children almost from the cradle. And on the very day and night of the most holy nativity of our Lord and Saviour, they set up public gatherings and recite in turn and with great attention the blasphemies contained in this book, so as to further inflame the youth and adults to blaspheme against Christ and his followers and to strengthen the hearts of the simple in the perfidy of the Jews; and [also]

in as much as possible, to distance their children of both sexes from faith in Christ, which they consider, this orthodox faith, not to be truthful, but rather a matter of foolishness worthy of scorn and opprobrium. This is why they say, with much audacity although only in hiding, that according to what they learn from their rabbis, his disciples are unworthy of living, and further assert—O unbearable thing to say!—that our Saviour, being the worst of all Jews ever, was rightly condemned to an eternal punishment at the bottom of hell, in a boiling tank full of human excrements, because he dared oppose the Law of Moses, as they say mendaciously.²⁴

Ebendorfer thus claimed that *Toledot Yeshu* played a central role in maintaining the Jews in their anti-Christian obstinacy, describing the work as an epitome of the Jewish blasphemies by which Jewish children of both sexes were distanced from faith in Christ and raised in the hatred of Christ. His reference to *Toledot Yeshu* in this regard was entirely original, although he relied on a time-honoured tradition among late medieval scholars, who connected the Jews' abhorrence of Christians and Christianity to their blasphemous books (conspicuously the Talmud), and insisted on the role of Jewish rituals in imparting anti-Christian sentiments to Jewish children.

The teachings of the rabbis

Already in the twelfth century, the Abbot of Cluny Peter the Venerable emphasized that the Jews need to cast aside their blasphemous books in which they 'laboured to obfuscate heavenly instruction'.²⁵ Yielding to the heretical teachings of the rabbis, the Jews had strayed from the Law of Moses. In the late Middle Ages, the Talmud thus came to epitomize the Jews' obstinacy and foolish rejection of Christianity.²⁶ Envisaged as a fundamentally anti-Christian work, filled with blasphemies and lies, the Talmud was said to have no other aim than to impress hatred and scorn of Christianity in the hearts of Jewish children and divert them from faith in Christ. In the wake of the trial and burning of the Talmud in Paris in 1242, Pope Innocent IV proclaimed that the work had rightly been condemned because this 'large book ... far exceeding the text of the Bible in size, and filled with manifest blasphemies against God and his Christ and the blessed Virgin, [and other] convoluted tales, erroneous insults, and unheard-of foolishness' was used by the Jews to

teach and bring up their children and make them thoroughly estranged from the teaching of the Law and the prophets, fearing that they be converted to the faith and return humbly to their Redeemer, since the truth that is found in the same Law and prophets clearly offers proof of the only-begotten Son of God who would come in the flesh.²⁷

Honorius IV, in a letter to the archbishop of Canterbury written just a few years before the Jews' expulsion from England, would have much harsher words, describing the Talmud as a 'deadly doctrine' that Jewish children study from their early years, 'so that they might consume its venomous substance'.²⁸

The Jewish liturgy also came under scrutiny in this context. Medieval authors claimed that Jewish prayers were aimed at imparting Jews, and in particular Jewish children, with an implacable hatred of Christians and Christianity. The charge, which was also first raised in the context of the Paris trial, became widely disseminated through anti-Jewish sermons or through polemical works listing the lies and blasphemies found in the books of the Jews.²⁹ In the early fourteenth century, the influential Franciscan scholar Nicholas of Lyra suggested that one of the main reasons for the Jews' obstinacy was precisely that 'from the cradle they have been nurtured in the hatred of Christ; and they curse Christians and Christianity daily in their synagogues'.³⁰ Nicholas turned to Aristotelian conceptions of the *habitus* to explain why these anti-Christian curses rendered the Jews impervious to the Christian message: 'For indeed those things to which men are accustomed from childhood are so-to-speak converted into nature, and thus, when they are contrary to the truth, they divert the judgment of the intellect'.³¹ Such discussions also largely framed later debates on the Jews' unwillingness to accept the Christian faith. Nicholas' work was thus used by subsequent theologians and missionaries seeking to reverse the Jews' anti-Christian feelings.³² Heinrich of Langenstein, one of the founders of the University of Vienna, for instance, invited the Jews to remove the blind rage (*ira*) and rancour (*rancor*) harboured by their ancestors against Jesus and rather meditate on his holy deeds, so as to be *moved* towards the faith in Christ.³³ Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl echoed these themes in his own sermons on the messiahship of Christ, delivered in Vienna in 1421 to an audience that seems to have also included Jews who had recently converted to Christianity—in all likelihood under duress.³⁴ Such questions were very much in the air when Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl's student, Thomas Ebendorfer, composed his own treatise on the errors and lies of the Jews and undertook to translate a Hebrew manuscript of *Toledot Yeshu*.

Anti-Christian rituals and the body of Christ

Ebendorfer clearly echoed Nicholas of Lyra when he noted that the Jews inculcate their children into the hatred of Christianity 'almost from the cradle'.³⁵ Like Nicholas, he was interested in the very mechanisms by which Jews internalized anti-Christian feelings and thus endured in their obstinacy. Where Ebendorfer departed from his predecessor, however, was precisely in the idea that the Jews' resistance was not so much fostered by the Talmud or their daily liturgy but by this secret 'little book' (*codicellum*) he was translating; a book he claimed was itself the object of a specific ritual. His description of the Jews' inverted Christmas as a rite meant to foster anti-Christian sentiments

among Jews, and especially Jewish children, was indeed an innovation in anti-Jewish polemics.

In the thirteenth century, Ramon Martí had already cited *Toledot Yeshu* and suggested that Christian holidays could be an occasion for mockery by Jews. Thus, when Jesus falls to the ground following his aerial battle with Judas Iscariot, Martí's text states: 'that wicked one [i.e. Jesus] broke his forearm, and this event the Christians lament each year before their Pascha'.³⁶ The text Ebendorfer translated offers a similar reading, although adding that Judas Iscariot also defiled Jesus through sexual intercourse:

[Judas] dishonourably had male-male intercourse with him until he ejaculated and thus both were sullied and fell to ground. This is the deed for which Christians—*nosczerim*—weep on His night of *gesach*,³⁷ that is, of arrogance, or *pesach*, which is Easter, and thus testify to Judas' shameful act.³⁸

The Strasbourg text of *Toledot Yeshu* (the closest Hebrew parallel to those of Martí and Ebendorfer) only mentions that Judas urinated on Jesus and that 'on account of this story, they [the Christians] weep on their night', which the first editor of the text, Samuel Krauss, understood to be a playful reference to Christmas (*Weihnachten/Weinennachten*).³⁹ In his prologue, however, Ebendorfer himself sought to connect the narrative to Christmas rather than Easter. Moreover, he focused not on Christian practices but on Jewish ones, placing the work as we have seen at the heart of a Jewish ritual enacting its blasphemous content. In other words, Ebendorfer presented *Toledot Yeshu* as the foundational text-book of the Jews' inverted Christmas, furthermore insisting on the emotional potency of the narrative. Reading *Toledot Yeshu*, he claimed, was a way to 'inflamm[e] Jewish children in their rage against Christ and 'strengthen the hearts of the simple ones in the perfidy of the Jews'. He mentioned not only the hatred of the Jews, but also their scorn and contempt for Christianity ('a matter of foolishness worthy of scorn and opprobrium'), and perhaps pointed also to the Jews' disgust at the very figure of Christ—if this is how we are to understand his reference to Jesus' afterworldly punishment in a tank of boiling excrements.

Scholars have suggested reading the Talmudic passage Ebendorfer was likely referring to when mentioning that Jesus was condemned to sit in a tank full of boiling excrements (*b. Gittin* 57a) as a polemic against the Eucharist.⁴⁰ This passage, it must be noted, only seldom appears as such in the *Toledot* texts. As a matter of fact, it does not appear in the *Toledot* text Ebendorfer went on to translate.⁴¹ Many versions nonetheless provide hints of a similar scatological reading of Jesus and the Eucharist.⁴² The so-called Slavic texts thus explicitly claim that when Jesus was defeated by Judas, he fell to the ground and 'lay ugly in excrement like a filthy pig in vomit (and) excrement'.⁴³ When his body was retrieved and paraded through the streets, young people put excrement in his

mouth. One text even adds: 'and in memory of those things, the monks distribute disgusting bread'—an obvious reference to the Eucharist.⁴⁴ These are essentially later witnesses, but the argument that Christians eat and hence also defecate the body of Christ was in fact often voiced (rather sarcastically) by medieval Jewish polemicists, expressing both their disdain for the Christian notion of transubstantiation and their disgust for Christian Eucharistic rituals.⁴⁵ Scatological language was of course not limited to Jewish polemicists and appears as a widely shared polemical strategy in medieval sources. Christian authors turned to similar tropes and often associated Jews with filthy animals, corrupting diseases, haemorrhoidal blood-spill and menstruation, or other sources of impurity.⁴⁶ Alexandra Cuffel has pointed to the importance of this 'rhetoric of disgust' in medieval religious polemics, as a way to instil horror and revulsion and enforce social boundaries. As she writes: 'Describing one's opponent and his or her religion as disgusting and polluted' differs from other polemical strategies (such as subtle theological argumentation), 'by evoking a gut-wrenching emotional antipathy that is closely linked to a variety of other feelings: fear, contempt, hatred'.⁴⁷ This strategy is particularly evident in Jewish discussions of the incarnation, presented as an utterly irrational idea, but also described in graphic terms meant to inspire revulsion, underlining the impure aspect of the motherly womb, where the child Jesus would have felt the movements of his mother's bowels and be defiled by her faeces, urine, and blood.⁴⁸ One thirteenth-century Jewish polemicist from France insisted that Jesus was in fact born from filth.⁴⁹ These tropes need not derive from *Toledot Yeshu*, but they certainly find expression in the *Toledot* tradition, where the account of Jesus' conception highlights his filthy origins, stressing that he was conceived while his mother was menstruating and that he is thus a 'bastard and the child of an impure woman' (*mamzer u-ben ha-niddah*).

The Jews' inverted Christmas

The afterlife of Ebendorfer's *Falsitates Judaeorum*, if there was one, is difficult to trace. Only two manuscripts of the work survive, and it is never mentioned by later authors. Yet his assertion that *Toledot Yeshu* was read on the night of Christmas as part of a Jewish anti-Christian ritual does resurface in a number of later sources, most conspicuously in the works of Christian converts from Judaism writing in the German territories in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The existence of Jewish traditions related to Christmas, it must be noted, is also independently attested in a number of later Jewish sources. Halakhic discussions thus refer to various customs carried out by (some) Ashkenazi Jews on the night of Christmas, including sexual abstinence, eating garlic, merry-making or playing cards until late in the night, and refraining from studying the Torah.⁵⁰ The origins of these customs have long puzzled scholars of Judaism, yet it is clear that they relate to the common belief that the night of Christmas represents a highly dangerous time, in which Jews need to defend themselves against evil

supernatural forces. Some cabbalistic authors for instance insist that the powers of the *sitra ahra* or 'other side' (i.e. evil) are exalted on that night and that Jews should seek to weaken its powers.⁵¹ Other sources associate the evil force at work on the night of Christmas more explicitly with Jesus. Rebecca Scharbach-Wollenberg cites the ethnographic data collected by Yiddish folklorists in the interwar period, where various explanations for the Jews' Christmas traditions are recorded.⁵² These testify to the popular belief that Jesus sought to return to earth on Christmas Eve in order to taunt the Jews and that refraining from studying the Torah, for instance, prevents him from doing so. Some informants suggest that the revenant Jesus could fly around on Christmas Eve, and if Jews are not cautious, he will 'hide in a holy book and won't come out', insisting that he too was once a great scholar—motifs that are obviously reminiscent of *Toledot Yeshu*.⁵³ The scatological overtones of these stories are also clear. One informant thus relates that '[w]henever he [Jesus] comes across an open holy book, he defecates on it in hatred and disgust'.⁵⁴

The earliest evidence for these Jewish Christmas traditions, however, comes from the works of early modern converts from Judaism, which seem to reflect at least in part actual anti-Christian rites and traditions among contemporary Jews and may well shed light on their emotional underpinnings. The early sixteenth century witnessed a revival of Christian anti-Jewish polemics, particularly in the German-speaking lands, which by then had become one of the last refuges for Jews in the Western European world. The printing press offered a new medium for the dissemination of anti-Jewish themes and ideas, but also contributed to the emergence of a new genre of anti-Jewish literature, marked by a novel ethnographic interest in the beliefs and customs of contemporary Jews.⁵⁵ Christian converts from Judaism, claiming to offer an "insider" perspective on Jewish life and customs first hand, played a central role in this context.⁵⁶ While indeed witnessing to a new interest in living Jews, such ethnographies of Jews and Judaism did not entirely break from earlier polemics against the Talmud and Jewish literature. Jewish blasphemy very much remained a matter of anxiety, along with other hostile activities attributed to Jews. Yet to the textual material inherited from medieval anti-Jewish polemics was now added the converts' direct knowledge of the Jews' hidden transcript. A number of converts point to the Jewish traditions associated with Christmas, and they emphasize the role of *Toledot Yeshu*.

Early modern variations

One of the earliest converts from Judaism to appear on the stage as a prominent anti-Jewish polemicist in the early modern period is Johannes Pfefferkorn, whose campaign against Jewish books and lengthy conflict with the Humanist scholar Johannes Reuchlin are well known.⁵⁷ To a large extent, Pfefferkorn recycled materials drawn from earlier anti-Jewish polemics, repeating age-old accusations against the Talmud and the Jews' blasphemous

writings. In 1510, however, Emperor Maximilian I granted him the right to confiscate the 'worthless' books of the Jews, 'fabricated and designed to scorn, ridicule, and eradicate the Christian faith'.⁵⁸ Several hundred books were indeed confiscated in Worms and Frankfurt, but the campaign was eventually put to a halt following protest by the archbishop of Mainz, who insisted that Pfefferkorn's actions infringed on his authority. A commission was charged with examining the matter and deciding whether further confiscations should be ordered.⁵⁹ Among the scholars consulted in that context, only Reuchlin argued against the confiscation and destruction of Jewish books. Reuchlin proposed that Jewish books should not be condemned indiscriminately and that only works that slandered Christianity should be an object of reproach. Reuchlin named two such books, *Sefer Nizzahon* and *Toledot Yeshe*, adding that the Jews themselves regarded these as apocryphal and had taken measures to ban them.⁶⁰

In his *Hand Mirror*, published in 1511, Pfefferkorn replied to Reuchlin, refuting the latter's claim. Regarding *Toledot Yeshe* in particular, he noted:

The other book about which Dr Reuchlin writes, which is supposedly forbidden and banned among the Jews, is called and named *Tholdos Jescho*, and contains such huge mockeries and slurs against the birth of Christ, that I almost dare not write about it and expose it.

This book, he added, 'is commonly read and preached [among Jews]', and more particularly 'on the night of Christmas'. Indeed, wrote Pfefferkorn:

[The Jews] believe and maintain that the lord Jesus, punished by God because of his apostasy and false teaching, has to wander in all pits of excrement or latrines throughout the world that same night. Thus, did I learn and believe unthinkingly from my youth on. When it was Christmas Eve I urinated outside the privy because of worry and fear of the hanged Jesus, for he was acting in a filthy way that night.⁶¹

In other words, Pfefferkorn not only insisted that *Toledot Yeshe* circulated among Jews, but he also noted again the didactic function of the narrative, which he connected to Jewish traditions pertaining to Christmas (and associated scatological discourse) and to the fostering of deeply engrained feelings of disgust and fear among Jewish children. The trustfulness of such an account is of course a matter of debate. For Reuchlin, such accusations were to be dismissed and Pfefferkorn was guilty of spreading hatred among unlearned people.⁶² Yet, as we have seen, even if Pfefferkorn was here using the evidence as part of an anti-Jewish discourse on Jewish blasphemy and hatred of Christianity, he was clearly aware, like Ebendorfer before him, of the ritual and emotional framework within which the Jews' hidden transcript was indeed expressed and transmitted.

Jesus the bogeyman

Similar accounts to that provided by Pfefferkorn (and Ebendorfer before him) would be often repeated by later converts from Judaism turned anti-Jewish polemicists. A case, for instance, is that of Ernst Ferdinand Hess, whose *Juden Geissel* was published no less than ten times between 1598 and 1608.⁶³ Hess referred to the blasphemies uttered by the Jews on the night of Christmas:

hearing the bells ringing, you utter these awful and terrible blasphemous words: At this time the *mamzer* crawls through all *moschovim*! That is, now the whore's son must walk through all the sewers and latrines... Thereby you instil in your small children and all the house staff such a great fright, that they will not go out to the latrines on that night even if they need to very badly.⁶⁴

Quoting Hess in his *Entdecktes Judenthum* (written 1700), the ill-famed Christian Hebraist Johann Eisenmenger claimed to have himself witnessed how little Jewish children refused to go to the privies on their own on Christmas night for fear of Jesus.⁶⁵ Hess asserted that he had heard the story of Jesus as a child and that it was read from a 'secret' book called '*doldos Jeschu*, that is, on the birth of Jesus'.

In the early seventeenth century, another convert from Judaism, Samuel Friederich Brenz, recalling the names of abuse the Jews use for Jesus, reported that they also read his story from a book entitled *Maase Thola* (Story of the Hanged One), another popular title of *Toledot Yeshu*, which he claimed was not printed but written only in cursive script. The Jews read this book in their homes, Brenz noted, with great secrecy on the night of Christmas.⁶⁶ Another convert, Dietrich Schwab, wrote the following on Jewish practices at Christmas:

[The Jews] are also not permitted to study or pray during the time of Christmas, which they call *Nittel*, that is, the festival of the hanged one. The reason for this is that they believe that on this night Christ is in terrible anguish, and thus he has no rest or respite. Rather, they do nothing but curse and blaspheme Christ.⁶⁷

Schwab then went on to discuss the lies the Jews tell concerning the miracles Jesus performed and the way he was put to death, his body trampled on and thrown in the latrines, where he was to crawl eternally.

The motif was echoed by Christian polemicists such as Eisenmenger, of course, and the Lutheran pastor Georg Nigrinus (Schwartz), who claimed that *Toledot Yeshu* was so blasphemous that even 'baptized Jews say that they are embarrassed to reveal the blasphemies found in this book'.⁶⁸ Yet Nigrinus repeated their claim that Jews gather to read *Toledot Yeshu* on the night of Christmas and teach their children that Jesus led his people astray and was thus

condemned to haunt the sewers eternally. Thus, wrote Nigrinus, 'they entertain their children in the fear of that Name, like we teach our children to fear the bogeyman'.

Assessing how independent and reliable these sources are is clearly a matter of discussion. Yet the fact that the same motifs also appear in Jewish sources suggests that these authors may indeed have based their arguments on some form of ethnographic knowledge.⁶⁹ As such, they may well teach us something about the ways anti-Christian feelings were internalized among late medieval and early modern Jews. The tropes and customs at which these authors pointed would have become central components of a Jewish anti-Christian culture, impressing upon Jews, consciously or unconsciously, specific sentiments of inclusion and exclusion, of identity and alterity. These sentiments would have helped Jews to withstand the influence of Christianity. However, the specific times and places when these tropes and customs became part of such a culture remain somewhat obscure.

Marc Shapiro and Rebecca Scharbach have suggested that the Jewish traditions associated with Christmas truly became popular in the Ashkenazi world in the early modern age, but these undoubtedly took shape in earlier times, as both Ebendorfer and Pfefferkorn evince. Scharbach also observes that these traditions bear witness to the deep inter-connections between Jewish and Christian cultures in the late medieval and early modern periods. She suggests that the various Jewish beliefs and customs associated with Christmas emerged in relation to the Christian traditions that developed in central Europe in the late middle ages, which they mirror and partly appropriate. Indeed, for Christians as well as Jews, Christmas could appear a dangerous time, in which revenants, witches, and other frightening spirits were active and threatened to harm the community. The return of these demonic forces could moreover be staged, particularly in German-speaking lands, in the context of Christmas pageants in which masked actors roamed the streets, ringing bells and terrifying children. The Christmas season was therefore also a time for particular customs and rituals aimed at protecting the community from these demonic forces. Keeping a vigil, for instance, and eating, drinking, and singing all night could counter the power of the dead by creating 'spaces that belong unambiguously to the living—spaces filled to bursting with walking bodies, light, noise and celebration'.⁷⁰

The parallel customs attested in the Jewish world highlight the shared anxieties of Christians and Jews around the Christmas season, the partial overlap of the two emotional communities. They also underline the symbolic inversions at work in that context, as the Christian tradition and imagery inevitably came to be adapted 'in a way that expresses the particular sensibilities and fears of (its) adoptive (Jewish) community'.⁷¹ For Jews, it was Jesus—himself a magician condemned to suffer the torments of hell—who embodied the bogeyman meant to inspire fear among children. The Jewish story of Jesus, and the various feelings associated with the narrative, understandably played an important role in this context. In a way, the inverted Christian narrative of *Toledot Yeshu* laid the ground for the Jews' inverted Christmas.

The Jews' 'catechism': concluding remarks

There is something quite startling in the notion that as Christians celebrated the birth of Christ on the night of Christmas, Jews read *Toledot Yeshu* to their children, as a way of instructing them in the knowledge of Christianity and doubtless inspiring the way they should feel about Christianity, its history, beliefs, rituals, and institutions. Learning to be a Jew was in a way also learning *not* to be a Christian. Moreover, I would argue that learning to *feel* Jewish also meant learning how to *feel* towards Christians. The Jews' hidden transcript and the range of anti-Christian sentiments to which it gave way—ranging from amusement to contempt—could only infuriate its Christian readers and be interpreted as an outrageous act of insubordination towards the Christian order, a proof of the Jews' blind obstinacy and hatred. Martin Luther, in his late anti-Jewish pamphlets, relayed the accusations and claims put forward by Christian converts from Judaism and pointed to *Toledot Yeshu* as the epitome of Jewish blasphemy, a Jewish 'catechism ... inspired by sheer hatred and spite, solely for the purpose of bitterly poisoning the minds of their poor youth and the simple Jews against the person of our Lord, lest they adhere to his doctrine (which they cannot refute)'.⁷² If the Jews endured in their faith and did not convert to Christianity, as he had once hoped they would in the new era hallowed by the Reformation, it was precisely because such teachings turned them into senseless beasts. The Jews' catechism prevented them from understanding the truth of the gospel or even *feeling* the message of Christ by corrupting their hearts. 'The Jewish heart', he noted, was thus 'as hard as stone and iron and cannot be moved by any means'.

While locating the history of *Toledot Yeshu* within the framework of a Christian discourse on the Jews' anti-Christian emotions, I have also sought to look at the other side of the mirror, namely, at the ways in which Jewish hearts were in fact moved by this powerful and emotional story, albeit not in the direction hoped for by Christians. Undeniably, the narrative opens a window onto the emotional strategies through which Jews sought to subvert the Christian story and assert their identity in a Christian world. But the story, and furthermore its collective and repeated performance, also contributed to nurturing the Jews' feeling of exclusion from the Christian narrative and inclusion in a Jewish one. It invited me to explore how Jews integrated shared emotional norms within the Christian world and were thus made into an emotional community of their own. In other words, while *Toledot Yeshu* allowed medieval and early modern Jews to vent and express their emotions, it also contributed to their very making as Jews. For Christians, by contrast, the story was a paradigmatic example of the Jews' obstinacy and deep hatred of Christianity—feelings that both caused and justified their enduring status as a despised and subjected minority. From the vantage point of both sides, the Jewish life of Jesus served to draw the line separating the two emotional communities, Jews and Christians, reflecting their entrenched feelings of mutual distrust and exclusion as well as their inextricable connections.

Notes

- 1 Martin Luther, *Vom Schem hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi*, in *Werke*, vol. 53 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1920), 579.
- 2 Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York and Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).
- 3 See Philippe Borgeaud, *Exercices d'histoire des religions. Comparaison, rites, mythes et émotions*, ed. D. Barbu and Philippe Matthey (Leiden: Brill, 2016); J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion. Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 4 Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), here at 2 and 15, referring to Arlie R. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 76.
- 5 See also Giovanni Tarantino, "Feeling White in the Pre-Modern Western World: Beneath and Beyond," in *The Routledge History of Emotions in Europe 1100–1700*, ed. Susan Broomhall and Andrew Lynch (London; New York: Routledge, 2020), 303–19.
- 6 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 54.
- 7 Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 15–26.
- 8 Elisheva Carlebach, "Jewish Responses to Christianity in Reformation Germany," in *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 455.
- 9 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
- 10 Israel J. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 92–134.
- 11 See Marc M. Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
- 12 See now Michael Meerson and Peter Schäfer, *Toledot Yeshu: The Life Story of Jesus*, 2 vols (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).
- 13 Daniel Barbu, "The Case About Jesus: (Counter-)History and Casuistry in *Toledot Yeshu*," in *A Historical Approach to Casuistry: Norms and Exceptions in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Carlo Ginzburg and Lucio Basori (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 65–97; Daniel Barbu, "Some Remarks on the Jewish Life of Jesus (*Toledot Yeshu*) in Early Modern Europe," *Journal for Religion, Film, and Media* 5, no.1 (2018): 29–45.
- 14 The citation is taken from the letter addressed to James II of Aragon in 1305 by a Dominican friar, concerning blasphemies allegedly uttered by a Jew. See Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1929), 1:184–88 (N° 157).
- 15 See *Das jüdische Leben Jesu Toldot Jeschu: die älteste lateinische Übersetzung in den Falsitates Judeorum von Thomas Ebendorfer*, ed. Brigitta Callsen, Fritz P. Knapp, Manuela Nieser, and Martin Pryzbilski (Vienna: R. Oldenbourg, 2003). On Ebendorfer, see Alphons Lhotsky, *Thomas Ebendorfer: ein österreichischer Geschichtsschreiber, Theologe und Diplomat des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1957).
- 16 See Daniel Barbu and Yann Dahhaoui, "Un manuscrit français des *Toledot Yeshu*: le ms. lat. 12722 et l'enquête de 1429 contre les juifs de Trévoux," *Henoch. Historical and Textual Studies in Ancient and Medieval Judaism and Christianity* 40, no.2 (2018): 223–28. On Ebendorfer's text of *Toledot Yeshu*, see also Ruth Mazo Karras, "The

- Aerial Battle in the *Toledot Yeshu* and Sodomy in the Late Middle Ages,” *Medieval Encounters* 19 (2013): 493–533.
- 17 For a survey of the Christian reception of *Toledot Yeshu*, see Yaacov Deutsch, “The Second Life of the Life of Jesus: Christian Reception of *Toledot Yeshu*,” in Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson, and Yaacov Deutsch ed., *Toledot Yeshu (“The Life Story of Jesus”) Revisited: A Princeton Conference* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 283–95.
  - 18 *Toledot Yeshu*, Ms. Strasbourg, BnU 3974, fols 170r–175v, Bibliothèque Nationale Universitaire, Strasbourg. See Meerson and Schäfer, *Toledot Yeshu*, 1:166–84 (English) and, 2:82–95 (Hebrew); William Horbury, “The Strasbourg Text of the *Toledot*,” in *Toledot Yeshu ... Revisited*, 49–59; Barbu and Dahhaoui, “Un manuscrit français.”
  - 19 On the events, see the classical study by Samuel Krauss, *Die Wiener Geserah vom Jahre 1421* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1920); Michael H. Shank, “*Unless You Believe, You Shall Not Understand*,” *Logic, University and Society in Late Medieval Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 191–97; Klaus Lohrmann, *Judenrecht und Judenpolitik im mittelalterlichen Österreich* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1990), 298–309. For a discussion on the date of the *Falsitates*, see Manuela Niesner, “Einführung,” in *Das jüdische Leben Jesu Toldot Jeschu*, 25–33; Mazo Karras, “The Aerial Battle,” 497–99.
  - 20 Shank, *Unless You Believe*, 197–98. That the attack on the Jewish community was essentially a way to confiscate Jewish wealth is emphasized in Jewish sources relating the events; see Arthur Goldmann, *Das Judenbuch der Scheffstrasse zu Wien (1389–1420)* (Vienna and Leipzig: K.U.K. Hof, 1908), 112–33.
  - 21 See Shank, *Unless You Believe*, 199; Mazo Karras, “The Aerial Battle,” 498–99.
  - 22 Mazo Karras, “The Aerial Battle,” 498.
  - 23 Lhotsky, *Thomas Ebendorfer*, 11–12.
  - 24 *Das jüdische Leben Jesu Toldot Jeschu*, 36 (my translation).
  - 25 Peter the Venerable, *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews*, trans. Irvn M. Resnick (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 286–87.
  - 26 Alexander Patschovsky, “Der ‘Talmudjude’. Vom Mittelalterlichen Ursprung Eines Neuzeitlichen Themas,” in *Juden in der Christlichen Umwelt*, ed. A. Haverkamp and F.-J. Ziwes (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1992), 13–27. On the change of attitude towards Jews and Judaism in the later middle ages, see Amos Funkenstein, “Basic Types of Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Later Middle Ages,” *Viator* 2 (1971): 373–82; Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 313–89.
  - 27 Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century* (New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 250–51.
  - 28 Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews. Documents; 492–1404* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 262 (N^o 255). See also Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law*, 332.
  - 29 *The Trial of the Talmud: Paris, 1240*, ed. Robert Chazan, Jean Hoff, and John Friedman (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2012), 118–19; Gilbert Dahan, “La prière juive au regard des chrétiens au moyen âge,” *Revue des études juives* 154, no.3–4 (1995): 437–48. For sermons, see also Cohen, *Friars and the Jews*, 204 (Ramon Llull), and 239 (Giordano da Pisa). Yuval, *Two Nations*, 92–134, surveys the Jewish evidence for anti-Christian curses in the medieval context. See also the discussion in Barbu and Dahhaoui, “Un manuscrit français,” 250–51n102, with further references. On Christian discussions of the Jewish curse against the heretics, see Ruth Langer, *Cursing the Christians? A History of the Birkat Haminim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 66–101.
  - 30 Nicholas of Lyra, *Quaestio de adventu Christi* (n.p., 1309), quoted in *Biblia sacra, cum glossis, interlineari, et ordinaria, Nicolai Lyranni postilla, ac mortalitatis, Burgensis additionibus, et Thoringi replicis ...* (Venice, 1588), 6:280CD.

- 31 *Biblia sacra...*, 6:280CD. See Aristotle, *Met.* II 995a, www.loebclassics.com/view/aristotle-metaphysics/1933/pb_LCL271.95.xml. Nicholas may here be relying on Averroes' prologue to the long commentary on Physics (III). See Schmiejka Horst, "Drei Prologe im grossen Physikkommentar des Averroes?" in *Aristotelisches Erbe im arabisch-lateinischen Mittelalter: Übersetzungen, Kommentare, Interpretationen*, ed. A. Zimmermann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986), 175–89, here at 177. I thank Christophe Grellard for this observation and reference.
- 32 On the reception of the *Quaestio de adventu Christi*, see Cohen, *Friars and the Jews*, 180–85; Deena Copeland Klepper, *The Insight of Unbelievers. Nicholas of Lyra and Christian Readings of Jewish Text in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 111–17. See also Manuela Niesner, "Über die Duldung der Juden in der christlichen Gesellschaft—Eine lateinisch-deutsche *Quaestio* aus der Zeit um 1400," *Mediaevistik* 20 (2007): 185–214, with a focus on the German-speaking lands. Already in the early thirteenth century, the Austrian theologian Nicholas Vischel, who had studied in Paris before settling in the Cistercian abbey of the Holy Cross, next to Vienna, used Nicholas' work as well as the proceedings of the Paris Talmud trial in his *Contra perfidios Iudaeos*. See Severin Grill, "Nikolaus Vischel von Heiligenkreuz. Ein österreichischer Scholastiker, c.1250–1330," *Cistencienser-Chronik* 49.578 (1937): 97–108; Manuela Niesner, "Wer mit juden well disputiren". *Deutschsprachige Adversus-Judaeos-Literatur des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2005), 407–13. Note also Martin Luther, *On the Jews and their Lies* (1543), in *Werke*, 53:419, 449, 481.
- 33 See Niesner, "Wer mit juden well disputiren", 417–18.
- 34 Alois Madre, *Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl: Leben und Schriften* (Münster: Äschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), 130–33; see Schank, *Unless You Believe*, 192–94.
- 35 For Ebendorfer's statement see the quotation above at note 24, and for Nicholas of Lyra's similar claim, see note 30.
- 36 Meerson and Schäfer, *Toledot Yeshu*, 1:12.
- 37 According to the editors of Ebendorfer's text, the word *ga'awa*, (pride), should be read here.
- 38 Ebendorfer, *Das jüdische Leben Jesu*, 58. The same reading is attested by a French translation of *Toledot Yeshu* made during an investigation against Jewish books in the town of Trévoux in 1429, also on the basis of a Strasbourg-type text. See Barbu and Dahhaoui, "Un manuscrit français."
- 39 Samuel Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen* (Berlin: S. Calvary & Co., 1902), 55; for the text, see Meerson and Schäfer, *Toledot Yeshu*, 2:89 (Hebrew), 1:174 (English), with the curious suggestion that *Weihnacht* means 'night of weeping' (which it does not).
- 40 Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 82–94.
- 41 Only the late-medieval Huldreich version explicitly refers to *b. Gittin* 57a when narrating that Jesus' body was in truth buried in a sewer (*martef/latrina*), and adding that Jesus' corpse lay in 'a trench with garbage and excrement'. See Meerson and Schäfer, *Toledot Yeshu*, 1:316–18 (English), 2:248–49 (Hebrew). Jesus' afterworldly punishment is mentioned also in the colophon of a type Wagenseil manuscript, copied in Prague, 1630, after a manuscript from 1615, University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Oxford, Op. 749, fol. 103r.
- 42 For the various readings of Jesus' burial in an aqueduct or sewer, see Meerson and Schäfer, *Toledot Yeshu*, 1:101–103. Jesus is explicitly soiled with excrements in the early modern Italian versions of the narrative; see *Toledot Yeshu*, 1:251, 256 (English), 2:167, 174 (Hebrew).
- 43 *Toledot Yeshu*, 1:349 (English), 2:290 (Hebrew).
- 44 *Toledot Yeshu*, 1:363 (English), 2:303 (Hebrew).
- 45 See Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 137–39. Medieval Jewish sources also

- sometimes referred to the Host as 'polluted bread' and to churches and other Christian buildings as 'latrines'. See also Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1999), 93–103, who refers to Christian responses.
- 46 Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 97–128; Irvén M. Resnick, *Mark of Distinctions: Perception of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012).
  - 47 Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 7.
  - 48 *Gendering Disgust*, 124–31.
  - 49 *Sefer Yosef ha-Mekane*, 65, quoted in Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 130.
  - 50 See Marc Shapiro, "Torah Study on Christmas Eve," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 8 (1999): 319–53; Rebecca Scharbach, "The Ghost in the Privy: On the Origins of Nittel Nacht and Modes of Cultural Exchange," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 20, no.4 (2013): 340–71. See also Carlebach, "Jewish Responses to Christianity."
  - 51 Shapiro, "Torah Study," 12; Scharbach, "The Ghost in the Privy," 347–48.
  - 52 Jeffrey Shandler, *Jews, God and Videotape* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 191–92, quoted in Scharbach, "The Ghost in the Privy," 348–49.
  - 53 Some of the manuscripts of *Toledot Yeshu* in fact refer to the prohibition to read Scripture on Christmas; so the colophon of Ms. Princeton 28, fol. 16r.
  - 54 Shandler, *Jews, God and Videotape*, 191.
  - 55 See now also the studies gathered in 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), in particular the editors' introduction, "Jewish Life and Books under Scrutiny: Ethnography, Polemics, and Converts," 3–24.
  - 56 Deutsch lists more than sixty books describing Jewish customs and ceremonies published between 1500 and 1785. Two thirds of these were authored by converts. Yaacov Deutsch, *Judaism in Christian Eyes: Ethnographic Descriptions of Jews and Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 34–76. See also Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 170–99.
  - 57 There is an abundant literature on the Pfefferkorn-Reuchlin controversy. See recently David Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Erika Rummel, *The Case against Johann Reuchlin: Religious and Social Controversy in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). On the confiscation campaign, see also Avner Shamir, *Christian Conceptions of Jewish Books. The Pfefferkorn Affair* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2011).
  - 58 The list of books to be confiscated included *Nizzahon Vetus* and *Toledot Yeshu*. See Johannes Pfefferkorn, *Zu lob vnd Ere des aller durchlechtigsten vnd großmechtigsten Fürsten vnd herren. Herr Maximilian* (Augsburg, 1510), chap. 6. See also *Defensio Ioannis Pepericorni contra famosas et criminales obscurorum virorum epistolas* (n.p., 1516), in Eduard Böcking, *Ulrichi Hutteni equitis Operum supplementum* (Leipzig, 1864), 105; Shamir, *Christian Conceptions*, 17–35 and 37–54.
  - 59 Shamir, *Christian Conceptions*, 55–74.
  - 60 Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, *Schriften zum Bücherstreit*, 29, translated in Daniel O'Callaghan, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books in Sixteenth-Century Germany: Johannes Reuchlin's Augenspiegel* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 125–26. It must be noted that when he calls for the conversion of Jews in his 1505 "Tütsch Missive" (*Sämtliche Werke*, 4:5–12), Reuchlin himself denounced Jewish anti-Christian slanders and blasphemies, referring *inter alia* to *Sefer Nizzahon* and *Toledot Yeshu*.
  - 61 Johannes Pfefferkorn, *Handspiegel* (Mainz, 1511), 11*; Shapiro, "Torah Study," 334.

- 62 O'Callaghan, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books*, 138.
- 63 Deutsch, *Judaism in Christian Eyes*, 36n10.
- 64 Ernst Ferdinand Hess, *Juden Geissel* (Frankfurt, 1703), 181–82, quoted in Shapiro, “Torah Study,” 334–35.
- 65 Johann A. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum* (Frankfurt, 1711), 1:563–64, where he claims that he almost assisted in a public reading of *Toledot Yeschu* on the night of Christmas, but because he was present, the Jews did not carry the practice through.
- 66 Samuel F. Brenz, *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlangen-Balg*, 1st ed. (Nuremberg and Augsburg, 1614), 2. On Brenz and Zalman Zvi of Aufhausen's response (*Yudischer Theriak*, 1615), see [Zalman Zvi,] *Yudisher Theriak: An Early Modern Yiddish defense of Judaism*, trans. Morris M. Faierstein (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 2011), 48–49.
- 67 Dietrich Schwab, *Delectum Velum Mosaicum Iudaeorum nostri temporis, das ist: Jüdischer Deckmantel ...* (Mainz, 1619), 14; the passage is translated in Shapiro, “Torah Study,” 344.
- 68 Georg Nigrinus, *Juden Feind: Von den edelen Fruechten der Thalmudischer Jueden, so jetziger zeit in Teutschlande wonen ...* (n.p., 1570), chap. 2, quoted in Carlebach, “Jewish Responses to Christianity,” 454.
- 69 On Ebendorfer's Jewish informants, see Mazo Karras, “The Aerial Battle,” 499–500.
- 70 Scharbach, “The Ghost in the Privy,” 361.
- 71 Scharbach, “The Ghost in the Privy,” 365.
- 72 Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, 514; and on Luther and the Jews more broadly, see Thomas Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

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