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## JEWISH ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS IN LIGHT OF MASS CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY

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The final one hundred years of Jewish life on the Iberian Peninsula, beginning with anti-Jewish rioting and murders in 1391 and concluding with the expulsion of 1492, was a period of intense interreligious conflict and tension. During this century, Christians made exceptional efforts at converting Jews, using a variety of tactics, including threats of murder, roving missionaries, public disputations, and literary persuasion. Indeed, many Jews did convert to Christianity at this time, either willingly or under duress. In the wake of the edict of expulsion, large numbers of Jews chose conversion over exile from their Iberian homes.<sup>1</sup>

This century was marked as well by the composition of numerous Jewish anti-Christian polemical treatises. Even before 1391, a number of Jewish polemicists had written against Christianity, but after 1391, the pace of such production increased greatly. The Jewish authors of these treatises were addressing not only Jews, who were still loyal to Judaism, but also *conversos*, since they were still considered Jews, whether their sin of conversion was voluntary or not.<sup>2</sup> Since the relative abundance of these polemical compositions was remarkable, it makes sense to examine the relation between these Jewish anti-Christian polemical treatises and the phenomenon of mass conversion to Christianity in an attempt to determine what impact the historical setting may have had on this literature.



First, we should enumerate which treatises will be examined. The pre-1391 authors are as follows:

1. Moses ha-Kohen of Tordesillas. This late fourteenth-century writer wrote two anti-Christian polemics between 1375 and 1379: *‘Ezer ha-‘emunah* (Aid to Faith), written in Hebrew, and *‘Ezer ha-dat* (Aid to Religion), originally written in the vernacular, surviving only in Hebrew translation.<sup>3</sup>
2. Shem Tov ibn Shaprut. Ibn Shaprut (ca. 1340–after 1405), a native of Tudela, began writing *‘Even bohan* (Touchstone) in 1385 but augmented it a great deal after 1391, including responses to the apostate Abner of Burgos / Alfonso de Valladolid and a Hebrew translation of Matthew. The book was intended as an updated version of one of the most prominent medieval Jewish polemical treatises, Jacob ben Reuben’s *Milhamot ha-shem* (Wars of the Lord), written in 1170.<sup>4</sup>

The following authors wrote after 1391:

3. Profiat Duran (Isaac ben Moses ha-Levi; Christian name, Honoratus de Bonafide). Duran, mid-fourteenth century to early fifteenth century, wrote two anti-Christian treatises, despite having converted to Christianity in the wake of the 1391 riots and living outwardly as a Christian for more than two decades. One of these compositions, *‘Iggeret al tehi ka-‘avotekha* (Epistle Be Not like Your Fathers, ca. 1393), was specifically triggered by his conversion and that of the addressee of the epistle, his erstwhile friend David Bonjorn. It is a satirical letter, ostensibly praising his friend for not being “like his fathers,” since in contrast to his ancestors, he had adopted the rationally impossible beliefs of Christianity. The other one, *Kelimmat ha-goyim* (The Disgrace of the Gentiles, ca. 1397), demonstrates great erudition in Christianity, made possible perhaps by the access Duran would have had—as a nominal Christian—to Christian theological literature. Duran employs his knowledge of Christianity to argue that Jesus had no intention of founding a new religion and that present-day Christianity is a distortion of the New Testament.<sup>5</sup>

4. Hasdai ben Judah Crescas. Crescas (1340–1410/11), an innovative anti-Aristotelian and anti-Maimonidean philosopher, wrote two polemical treatises in the vernacular (probably Catalan), the originals of which are no longer extant. The philosophical polemic, *Biṭṭul 'iqqarei ha-noṣerim* (The Refutation of the Christian Principles, ca. 1398), was translated into Hebrew by Joseph ben Shem Tov in 1451, but the latter did not bother rendering the second work into Hebrew, since it was based on biblical proof texts, and Joseph felt that a sufficient number of this type of polemic already existed in Hebrew. Crescas's book consists of an analysis of ten Christian doctrines, first explaining and then refuting the assumptions that lay behind them.<sup>6</sup>
5. Joshua Lorki. Lorki, mid-fourteenth century to early fifteenth century, wrote a polemical epistle to his former teacher, Solomon Halevi, after the latter had converted to Christianity and had taken upon himself the name Pablo de Santa Maria. Lorki attempts to understand why a learned Jew like Pablo would be convinced by Christianity, refuting what he considers to be the arguments that led to Pablo's conversion. Eventually Lorki himself converted to Christianity, became Gerónimo de Santa Fe, and initiated the Disputation of Tortosa.<sup>7</sup>
6. Joseph Albo. A participant in the Disputation of Tortosa, Albo (late fourteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries) wrote a philosophical/theological work, *Sefer ha-Iqqarim* (*The Book of Principles*), which includes subtle criticism of Christianity. Albo argues that only Judaism, and not Christianity, fulfills the definition of a divine religion. A specifically anti-Christian section is found in book 3, chapter 25.<sup>8</sup>
7. Simeon ben Zemaḥ Duran. Duran (1361–1444), who emigrated from Iberia to Algeria after the 1391 riots, included anti-Christian (and anti-Muslim) passages in his *Magen 'Avot* (The Shield of the Patriarchs), a commentary on Pirkei Avot. These were published separately under the title *Keshet u-magen* (*Bow and Shield*). His son, Solomon ben Simeon Duran (ca. 1400–1467), was born in Algeria, but he also wrote an anti-Christian polemic, *Milḥemet Miṣvah* (Obligatory War), against Joshua Lorki.<sup>9</sup>
8. Hayyim Ibn Musa. This Iberian physician (ca. 1380–ca. 1460) wrote *Magen va-romah* (Shield and Sword) partly in response to the

- arguments of Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349) and partly in order to supply his fellow Jews with answers to the arguments of apostates.<sup>10</sup>
9. Joseph ben Shem Tov. In addition to his translation of Crescas's *Refutation*, this Iberian author (ca. 1400–ca. 1480) wrote a long introduction and commentary on Profiat Duran's *Epistle*, combatting what he claimed was the Christian misunderstanding that this work was written to promote Christianity.<sup>11</sup> He also wrote a short treatise entitled *Sefeiqot* (Doubts) concerning the story of Jesus.<sup>12</sup>
  10. Isaac Abarbanel. Abarbanel (1437–1508) was born in Portugal, fled to Castile after the death of his royal patron, and was exiled to Italy after the expulsion from Spain. In Italy, he wrote a “messianic trilogy” of treatises, which attacked various aspects of Christian beliefs, the most directly polemical of which was *Yeshu'ot meshiho* (The Salvations of His Messiah), a refutation of the Christological interpretations of rabbinic passages adduced by Gerónimo at the Disputation of Tortosa.<sup>13</sup>
  11. Other authors and literary works. A number of other Jewish writers included anti-Christian passages in their nonpolemical works, such as Abraham Bibago in *Derekh 'emunah* (*The Path of Faith*).<sup>14</sup> The poet Solomon Bonafed wrote a short letter to the *converso* Francesc de Sant Jordi, encouraging him to return to Judaism.<sup>15</sup> It is possible that *Hoda'at ba'al din* (The Litigator's Admission), attributed to David ha-Nasi, is also Iberian in origin.<sup>16</sup> In addition, there are two short Jewish accounts of the Disputation of Tortosa (1413–14) in Hebrew in addition to the official Latin protocol of this public disputation. Tortosa was particularly traumatic for the Jewish community, since its leadership was forced to spend more than a year and a half at the disputation while missionaries were given free rein to proselytize among the Jews.<sup>17</sup>

These works are remarkable not only for their quantity but also for some of their ostensibly innovative features. These innovations—including the use of satirical poems (Duran's *Epistle* and Bonafed), close analyses of Christian doctrines (Crescas and Duran's *Disgrace*), use of the vernacular (Crescas), and the like—indicate that Iberian Jewish authors invested heavily in the polemical enterprise during this period, both in their examination of

Christianity and in their attempts to bring original approaches to their argumentation. It would seem, therefore, that the evidence of these treatises calls into question two major conclusions I have come to in my research on polemical literature. My first conclusion is the questioning of the accepted narrative that Jewish criticism of Christianity is a function merely of Christian missionary threats in their various manifestations, whether literary, physical, or economic. I have argued that the explanation for the existence of the Jewish anti-Christian polemical genre as solely a Jewish defensive measure is in need of revision and that this explanation has its own apologetical motives.<sup>18</sup> My second conclusion has been that Jewish-Christian polemics have changed little in the nearly two thousand years of the debate.<sup>19</sup> In the following, I discuss whether the multiple Jewish anti-Christian polemical treatises produced during the final century of Jewish Iberia, with their new formats and contents, should prompt a rethinking of these two conclusions.

Let me discuss first the relationship between the Christian missionary threat and the production of Jewish anti-Christian writings. Since many Jews have been accustomed to think—or at least to state—that if members of other religions left Jews alone, then Jews would leave them alone, it follows that if Jews attacked Christian doctrines openly, it must have been in reaction to Christian provocation.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, we have many examples of Jewish anti-Christian polemic in the absence of a missionary threat, a prominent example of which comes from the Islamic world. If non-Muslims (*dhimmis*) were dissatisfied with their own religion, their only legal option was to convert to Islam; they could not change to a different *dhimmi* religion. Although we have many examples of exceptions to this rule,<sup>21</sup> there was certainly no place under Islam for an organized Christian mission to the Jews in which Christians attempted to persuade Jews, in one way or another, to become Christians. Yet the absence of such a Christian threat did not stop Jews from writing anti-Christian treatises. It was in the ninth century in Islamic countries when Jews first began to compose such works, most notably those by the first medieval Jewish philosopher, Dāwūd al-Muqammaṣ,<sup>22</sup> and the anonymous treatise that eventually was translated into Hebrew as *The Book of Nestor the Priest*.<sup>23</sup> In the tenth century, Saadia Gaon, whose literary production covered almost all fields of Jewish knowledge, included much anti-Christian material in his philosophical work *Kitāb al-ʾamānāt wal-ʾiṭiqādāt* (*The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*) and in other works.<sup>24</sup> Anti-Christian

polemic was a standard feature of the Jewish sectarian Karaite works written in Judaeo-Arabic in the tenth and eleventh centuries. As noted, these authors criticized Christianity even though there was no missionary pressure upon their communities.<sup>25</sup> Many centuries later, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian Jews wrote at least fifty-six anti-Christian treatises in Hebrew. Although at this time and place, Jews were ghettoized, they hardly constituted a major focus of intensive Christian missionary activity throughout all those territories that are part of modern-day Italy. Such a large number of anti-Christian treatises cannot be explained as merely a Jewish response to the Christian mission.<sup>26</sup> We see, therefore, that there is no necessary correlation between a perceived Christian threat and Jewish attacks on Christianity, and hence it is difficult to regard all Jewish attacks on Christianity as purely defensive.

The question arises: How can one reconcile the view that the Jewish critique of Christianity is not necessarily connected to Christian missionary pressure with the proliferation of such critiques in post-1391 Iberia? If I am correct that Jews engaged in the criticism of Christianity even without outside stimuli—such as the threat of mass conversion, economic competition, or perhaps trying to win favor with non-Christian rulers—how do I explain what looks like a strong correlation between the historical situation in Iberia and the production of polemical treatises? And the answer is thus: the lack of a *necessary* connection between a Christian threat and Jewish polemical output does not imply that such a connection *never* existed. In the thirteenth century, another period of intense Christian anti-Jewish activity (e.g., the public disputations of Paris, 1240, and Barcelona, 1263), Jews turned to literary critiques of Christianity and introduced the genre of the written polemic into the Northern European repertoire. The almost simultaneous appearance of the account of the Disputation of Paris, Joseph ben Nathan Official's *Sefer Yosef ha-meqanne* (The Book of Joseph the Zealous), the anonymous *Niṣṣahon yashan* (The Old Book of Polemic), and a few other related texts in areas that hitherto had not produced written polemics is certainly not coincidental. It would seem that, indeed, Jews were responding to Christian pressure.<sup>27</sup> The case in late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Iberia would appear to be similar: greater pressure brought about more literary activity. Thus although the medieval Jewish critique of Christianity is not necessarily tied to Christian pressure, it certainly can be. The examples of thirteenth-century

Northern Europe and fifteenth-century Iberia, when juxtaposed to ninth- and tenth-century Iraq and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italy, merely reinforce my contention that the motives for the production of Jewish polemical literature were complex and cannot be explained by one comprehensive theory. Sometimes Jewish attacks on Christianity were defensive, but often they reflected developments in Jewish theology and the need to define the differences between Judaism and Christianity.<sup>28</sup>

We should also look at the tone of the polemical works being discussed. A corollary of the theory that Jewish anti-Christian polemics are always a response to a Christian threat is the assertion that the greater the threat, the greater the acerbity of these works. The use of coarse language or vulgar argumentation against Christians has often been seen as a response to a serious provocation; presumably, otherwise Jewish authors would not have adopted such offensive language.<sup>29</sup> Yet this generalization does not hold, as an examination of the enumerated treatises demonstrates. If there were anyone who might have been expected to express anger at Christians in the wake of the 1391 riots, it would have been Hasdai Crescas, whose only son was murdered in those riots. But his work, *The Refutation*, is dry and technical, with hardly an emotion in sight (perhaps one of the reasons that some theorize that it was written with a Christian audience in mind). But Crescas is certainly not the only polemicist to be careful in his language. Shem Tov ibn Shaprut in his *Touchstone* attempted to rewrite Jacob ben Reuben's 1170 composition *Wars of the Lord*. By Shem Tov's time, this book was out of date not only because it ignored rabbinic literature but also because of the sharpness of its language, which, Shem Tov wrote, was inappropriate in his own day.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, Jewish vulgarity concerning Christianity has a long history, probably going back almost to the origins of Christianity. Thus the Jewish parody of the New Testament, *Toledot Yeshu* (The Life Story of Jesus), of uncertain date and provenance but elements of which go back to the early Christian centuries, assumes Jesus's illegitimate origins and mocks his life and death.<sup>31</sup> The aforementioned anonymous ninth-century Judaeo-Arabic composition and its Hebrew translation, *Nestor the Priest*, are particularly vulgar in their descriptions of female anatomy and the indignities of gestation, birth, and infancy, and they were written independently of any direct Christian missionary threat. In contrast, the Ashkenazi *Old Book of Polemic*, written at a time of Christian pressure on Jews, is very nasty, but this style

may simply reflect the way Ashkenazi Jews wrote and not be connected to the context of its composition.<sup>32</sup> The cutting irony of Duran's works in the 1390s may represent his personal frustrations with life as a secret Jew; however, his style may simply be a function of what rhetoric Duran's audience would have appreciated. In short, neither the existence of a Jewish critique of Christianity nor the style in which it is presented is sufficient to determine by itself the existence or the nature of a perceived Christian threat to Judaism.<sup>33</sup> Evidence from the final one hundred years of Jewish presence in Iberia does not alter this conclusion.

The second conclusion that I would like to reconsider is that the contents of the Jewish-Christian debate have been constant for nearly two thousand years. Ever since the New Testament portrayed Jews as denying the possibility that Jesus was the Messiah (e.g., Matt. 27:42: "He saved others, but he cannot save himself"), even before one could talk of Judaism and Christianity as separate religions, the basic division between Judaism and Christianity, and the contents of the debate, have been unchanging: Was Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah predicted by the prophets or was he not? The rest is commentary.

Yet if we look at the Jewish polemical works from the period under discussion, there seem to be quite a few innovations. In fact, in Joseph ben Shem Tov's taxonomy of polemical treatises, in the introduction to his commentary to Duran's *Epistle*, he cites six different Jewish tactics of argumentation (*darekhei ha-vikuah*) against Christianity: (1) biblical exegesis, (2) rabbinic exegesis, (3) attacks on Christian doctrines, (4) analysis of the contradictions between the New Testament and contemporary Christian doctrines, (5) attacks on Christian principles, and (6) comparison between Christianity and the principles of philosophy. In his discussion of these categories, Joseph writes that the first two types are represented by well-known classical polemical compositions, such as Jacob ben Reuben's *Wars of the Lord*, as an example of argumentation on the basis of biblical exegesis, and Nahmanides's account of the Disputation of Barcelona, as an example of the use of rabbinic exegesis. Exegetical arguments are those that concentrate on the correct interpretation of sacred texts, and most Jewish polemical works are based upon them. In contrast, Joseph's last four methods were apparently all new and were exemplified by more-modern works: Joshua Lorki's *Epistle*, as an attack on Christian doctrines; Duran's *Disgrace of the Gentiles*, which



points out contradictions between the New Testament and Christian doctrines; Crescas's *Refutation*, which discusses the principles of Christianity; and Duran's *Epistle*, dedicated to philosophical principles.<sup>34</sup> It would seem, then, that not only did Iberian Jews respond to the renewed Christian threat in the wake of 1391; they also innovated new polemical tactics.

I would argue, however, that these innovations in Jewish polemical works written in response to the mass conversions after 1391 are a matter of form and not content. Just as Christians began using new tactics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as public debates and references to rabbinic literature, to persuade Jews that Christianity had superseded Judaism,<sup>35</sup> Jews in late medieval Iberia looked for new tactics to argue against the Christian position. Twelfth-century Christians started defending their religion with the use of rational arguments, and thirteenth-century Christians discovered the Talmud and forced Jews to participate in public debates; late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Jews attempted to undermine the Christian arguments with learned analyses of Christian beliefs, references to Christian theological literature, use of the vernacular, and even bitter sarcasm. The strategic goals of the two sides remained the same even as these new tactics were deployed.

Looking deeper, however, we see that even those tactics that looked like Jewish innovations—from the attacks on Christian doctrines and discussion of theological and philosophical principles to the use of the vernacular and bitter sarcasm—were not so new. As noted, Duran's *Disgrace of the Gentiles* demonstrates extensive knowledge of Christian sources, and he uses these sources to argue that Christianity as he knew it was an invention not originally present in the New Testament. This argument had been used more than five hundred years earlier by Dāwūd al-Muqammaṣ, who also had lived part of his life as a Christian. Echoing what may have been the arguments of Jewish-Christians who had survived into the Islamic period, al-Muqammaṣ claimed that Christianity was the invention of Paul and not of Jesus.<sup>36</sup> Maimonides makes a similar observation in his *Epistle to Yemen*.<sup>37</sup> Thus Duran's distinction between *to'im*, "the mistaken ones" (namely, Jesus and his immediate followers), and the *maṭ'im*, "the deceivers" (namely, Paul and later Christians), has deep roots in Jewish anti-Christian polemics, even if Duran did not know the work of al-Muqammaṣ directly.

Hasdai Crescas wrote his polemics in the vernacular, and as mentioned, some scholars see this as an indication that he wrote for a Christian audience

with the intention of explaining to them why Jews did not convert. The fact that he refers to “princes and nobles” who had requested that he write the book reinforces this theory. I have argued that there are many reasons why the *Refutation* was intended for Jews and that the princes and nobles were Jews and not Christians. For instance, Crescas wrote that his work was intended as a form of worship of God, hardly appropriate for an academic treatise designed for a Christian readership. Also, in addition to the *Refutation*, he wrote one other anti-Christian treatise in the vernacular that did not survive, since no one translated it into Hebrew. If his intended audience was Christians rather than Jews, and his motivation was explanatory and not polemical, why was one treatise not sufficient for a Christian readership?<sup>38</sup> Even the use of the vernacular is no indication of an intended Christian audience. Crescas’s immediate predecessor in this tactic was Moses ha-Kohen of Tordesillas, who wrote two polemics, one in Hebrew and one in the vernacular. Moses noted explicitly that he was writing in the vernacular because there were Jews who were incapable of understanding his arguments in Hebrew. It is very possible that one of the reasons for the mass conversions in Iberia was the cultural assimilation that preceded them, in which Jews had become more comfortable with the vernacular than with Hebrew.

If we consider more closely the use of language in Jewish polemics, it would seem that, just as authors chose the type of argumentation and the tone according to the needs of the intended readership, so too was the choice of language a function of making their ideas accessible to potential readers. In Arabic-speaking countries, Jews wrote their polemics in Arabic; in the early modern period, when many Jews were more comfortable with the various vernaculars than with Hebrew, the polemicists wrote in the vernacular (Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Yiddish, and others).<sup>39</sup> In English-speaking countries today, Jewish polemicists write in English and, as might be expected, are careful not to offend the sensitivities of their Jewish readers who would not be amenable to vulgar attacks on Christianity.<sup>40</sup> The debate continues even now, especially on the internet, as a perusal of the websites of Jews for Jesus and Jews for Judaism demonstrates. In the world of polemics, therefore, the medium is definitely not the message.

Another putative innovation was the ideology of the philosophical polemicists who wrote in the shadow of late medieval Averroism. Recognizing Averroes’s criticism of religion as incapable of being substantiated by

philosophical reasoning, these Jewish polemicists had to offer more than just a collection of rational arguments; they had to place those arguments into a framework that was not vulnerable to this criticism. Their solution was to distinguish between possibly true divine religions—which may be based on *natural* impossibilities, such as the parting of the Red Sea, the plagues in Egypt, the manna, and the like—and patently false candidates for the status of divine religion, which are based on *logical* impossibilities, such as the existence of a divine trinity in which God is both three and one or incarnation in which an incorporeal God can take on flesh and become human. In this argument, unsurprisingly, Judaism is said to be a legitimate candidate for a divine religion, but Christianity is not. This is the framework in which rational arguments were used by Crescas, the two Durans, Albo, and others.<sup>41</sup> Here again, this can be seen as a case of fine-tuning argumentation to take into account the latest developments in philosophy and the sensitivities of a philosophically trained readership rather than a complete innovation. This change is similar to the Jewish transition from discussions of the Trinity in terms of the attribute theories of the Muslim followers of the Kalam to those based on Aristotelian views of the same subject. Christian theologians and polemicists also had to revise their views in light of philosophical developments, such as Scholastic defenses of transubstantiation employing Aristotelian terms like *substance* and *accident*. For Jewish polemicists, philosophical arguments are one more arrow in their quiver for fighting the wars of the Lord by trying to persuade their fellow Jews that Jesus was not the anticipated Messiah and that Christianity is a false religion.<sup>42</sup>

If one looks, therefore, at Jewish anti-Christian polemics in light of mass conversion to Christianity, it appears that Jewish thinkers in late medieval Iberia were motivated to write their compositions by a perceived Christian threat, a threat that had, indeed, succeeded in transferring Jewish loyalty from the Torah of Moses to the Gospel of Jesus. This threat led them to search for innovative arguments and tactics to provide a convincing critique of Christianity to their coreligionists. But just as some of their innovations had precedents in earlier Jewish polemical literature, so too was their message the same as that of other Jewish polemicists who did not face a Christian threat—namely, Christianity is false and Jesus was not the Messiah. If these Iberian polemicists were writing in order to prevent apostasy, then judging

by how widespread conversion was in the fifteenth century, especially among Jews who eventually chose Christianity over exile in 1492, they had limited success.

## Notes

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1. For a review of this period in Jewish history, see Baer, *History of the Jews*. An account of fifteenth-century Christian missionary literature, mostly from Iberia; anti-Jewish legislation and papal decrees; and the Jewish response is found in Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus*, 419–571. It should be noted that although it is clear that many Jews converted to Christianity, exact figures are lacking. In addition, it is well-nigh impossible to know how many of these conversions were the result of Christian violence (i.e., threats of murder and the impending expulsion) and how many were the result of true conviction on the side of the converts. A number of these sincere Jewish converts became part of the Christian mission to the Jews—see, for example, Sadik, “Between Ashkenaz and Sefarad.” Although there was Christian pressure on Iberian Muslims during this century, and eventually they too were expelled, their situation will not be considered here.
2. There are a number of ways to refer to Iberian Jewish converts to Christianity; *converso* is meant to be a neutral designation. If the polemics were addressed to *conversos* with the hope of undermining their acceptance of their new religion, they were written despite the knowledge that return to Judaism would not be possible on Iberian soil.
3. The Hebrew texts are available in Shamir, *Rabbi Moses Ha-Kohen*.
4. There is no full edition of Ibn Shaprut’s work, but it can be consulted in part in Frimer, “Critical Edition of *Eben Bohan*”; and in Frimer and Schwartz, *Hagut be-Šeil ha-‘Eimah*; Garshowitz, “Shem tov ben Isaac”; and Niclós Albarracín, *Šem Tob Ibn Šapruṭ*. An edition of Jacob ben Reuben’s book is available, edited by Judah Rosenthal. See Jacob ben Reuben, *Milḥamot ha-shem*.
5. These two works have been edited by Talmage, *Polemical Writings*. On Duran, see Kozodoy, *Secret Faith*. A partial English translation of the epistle is found in Kobler, *Letters of Jews*, 276–82. Duran may also have been the author of another short anti-Christian treatise, *Teshuvot be-‘anshei ‘aven (Answers to Evil People)*; see Niclós Albarracín, *Profiat Durán*. Kozodoy writes that this attribution is “unlikely” (*Secret Faith*, 215).
6. Lasker, *Biṭṭul ‘iqqarei ha-nošerim*; translation: Lasker, *Hasdai Crescas’ Refutation*.
7. Landau, *Apologetische Schreiben*.
8. Albo, *Sefer ha-‘ikkarim*, 3:217–45.
9. The two works were published together, first in Livorno in 1762–63 and then in Jerusalem by Makor in 1969–70. Another edition of *Keshet u-magen* is available in Murciano, “Simon ben Zemah Duran”; and the anti-Islam section was edited by Moritz Steinschneider and republished in Berlin in 1880–81.
10. Hayyim ibn Musa, *Magen va-Romah*, MS Heb. 8° 787, National Library of Israel,

- Jerusalem, copied by Adolf Posnanski and published in Jerusalem 1969–70.
11. Duran, *Iggeret 'Al Tehi Ka-'Avotekha*, MS Heb. 8° 757, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, copied by Adolf Posnanski and published in Jerusalem 1969–70.
  12. Regev, “*Sefeiqot*.”
  13. Abarbanel, *Yeshu 'ot meshi'ho*. On these compositions, see Lawee, *Isaac Abarbanel's Stance*; Lawee, “Messianism of Isaac Abarbanel.”
  14. Bibago, *Derekh 'emunah*.
  15. Talmage, “Francesc de Sant Jordi-Solomon.”
  16. Nasi, *Hoda'at Ba'al Din*. My colleague Harvey J. Hames translates it thus: “Admission of Guilt,” and it is he who believes the treatise was written in Iberia and not in Crete, where the author places the account. See Hames, “On This Rock.” Another probable fifteenth-century Iberian Jewish polemic is *Sefer Ahituv ve-Salmon*, attributed to Mattathias ben Moses ha-Yitzhari, who was a participant in the Disputation of Tortosa. See Lara Olmo, “Edición crítica.” It is unclear if the attribution is correct and when exactly this work was written.
  17. The Latin protocol was published by Pacios López, *Disputa de Tortosa*. For Hebrew accounts of Tortosa, see ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehudah*, 94–107; Halberstam, “Vikkuah Tortosa.” A Hebrew refutation of Gerónimo's accusations against the Talmud is still in manuscript, but the part that includes the accusations was published by Valle Rodríguez, “Atalaya del judaísmo hispano.” I would like to thank Yosi Yisraeli for discussing this text with me.
  18. See Lasker, “Jewish Critique of Christianity.”
  19. See, for example, the following articles I have written over the course of a number of years: Lasker, “Jewish-Christian Polemics”; Lasker, “Impact of the Crusades”; and Lasker, “Jewish Anti-Christian Polemics.”
  20. See the sources adduced in my article, Lasker, “Jewish Critique of Christianity.”
  21. The database being developed by the Center for the Study of Conversion and Interreligious Relations at Ben-Gurion University has been documenting examples of conversions to and from all three religions in the Islamic world.
  22. See Stroumsa, *Dāwūd Ibn Marwān*.
  23. Lasker and Stroumsa, *Polemic of Nestor the Priest*.
  24. Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-amānāt*. See Lasker, “Saadya Gaon on Christianity.”
  25. On Jewish polemics against Christianity in Islamic countries, see Lasker, “Jewish Critique of Christianity.”
  26. Jews were forced to hear Christian missionizing sermons in Rome from the late sixteenth until the eighteenth century, and there were some Italian Jewish converts. See, for example, Mazur, *Conversion to Catholicism*. The question remains as to whether there is a correlation between specific areas of anti-Jewish missionary activity and the Jewish polemical output. I thank Emily Michelson for discussing this issue with me. An enumeration of Hebrew anti-Christian polemics written by Italian Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is contained in a research project conducted by Károly Dániel Dobos and Gerhard Langer, who were kind enough to share this list of polemical treatises with me. See also Lasker, “Jewish Anti-Christian Polemics.”
  27. See Lasker, “Joseph ben Nathan.” The text of *Sefer Yosef ha-meqanne* is available in Judah Rosenthal's edition. The Hebrew text and an English translation of *Niṣṣaḥon yashan* are available in Berger, *Jewish-Christian Debate*.
  28. See Lasker, “Jewish Critique of Christianity,” for a discussion of some of the nondefensive motivations behind Jewish anti-Christian polemics.
  29. An attempt to correlate the tone of the polemics with the level of missionary

- pressure on Jews is offered by Trautner-Kromann, *Shield and Sword*.
30. Nicolás Albarracín, *Šem Tob Ibn Šapruť*, 7.
31. Meerson and Schäfer, *Toledot Yeshu*. Some of this mockery is reflected in certain rabbinic passages and in references contained in early Christian literature.
32. Lasker, "Joseph ben Nathan."
33. See Lasker, "Popular Polemics and Philosophical Truth"; Lasker, "Jewish Critique of Christianity."
34. Duran, *Iggeret*, 22–26.
35. Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*.
36. This is reported by the tenth-century Karaite Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī; see Chiesa and Lockwood, *Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī*, 137. For a possible Jewish-Christian connection, see Pines, "Jewish Christians."
37. See also Lerner, *Maimonides' Empires of Light*, 104.
38. As noted previously, the second treatise was not translated. See Crescas, *Refutation*, 8–10, 84; Lasker, "R. Hasdai Crescas' Polemical Activity."
39. The last major Jewish anti-Christian polemic is *Hizzuq 'Emunah* (Faith Strengthened), by the Karaite Isaac Abraham of Troki, completed around 1594. Subsequently, it was translated into Dutch, Ladino, Yiddish, German, English (by Jews), and Latin (by Christians who wished to refute it). See Walfish with Kizilov, *Bibliographia Karaitica*, 560–63.
40. A good example is Berger and Wyschogrod, *Jews and Jewish Christianity*.
41. See Lasker, "Averroistic Trends."
42. On the Jewish use of philosophy in anti-Christian polemics, see Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*.

