Miracle within a Miracle

JOHANNES REUCHLIN AND THE JEWISH BOOK CONTROVERSY

Augenspiegel

An Exhibition Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of Reuchlin’s Defense of Jewish Writings

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AND DAVID PRICE
Miracle within a Miracle

JOHANNES REUCHLIN AND THE JEWISH BOOK CONTROVERSY

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

The Rare Book & Manuscript Library
The University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign, Illinois

The Klau Library
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio

Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Museum Johannes Reuchlin
Pforzheim, Germany
Foreword

What better way to mark the anniversary of a famous book controversy than with an exhibition of books? When Johannes Reuchlin published his *Augenspiegel (Eye Glasses)* in 1511, just in time for the Frankfurt Book Fair, he knew it would cause a tremendous stir. After all, Reuchlin had decided to defend Jewish writings—and Judaism itself—against the combined forces of the emperor and the highest ecclesiastical authorities in Germany. It is remarkable, or, as Josel of Rosheim said, “miraculous,” that the Jews and Reuchlin prevailed and the books were preserved. The dramatic story of this moment in Jewish-Christian relations is retold in this exhibition through the very books that flamed the controversy.

The exhibition is an international effort involving two American libraries and two German institutions. Inspired by the 500th anniversary of the appearance of Reuchlin’s *Eye Glasses*, we have undertaken this project on two continents and at four venues. The Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati, Ohio, collaborated with the Museum Johannes Reuchlin in Pforzheim, Reuchlin’s birthplace, and with the Jewish Museum of Frankfurt, the crucial location for the historic events 500 years ago. Rare imprints from the pamphlet wars surrounding the Jewish Book Controversy are on display, as well as important works on both sides of the Renaissance humanist movement to recover ancient sources, including those written in Hebrew.

Working together, David Gilner of the HUC-JIR, Fritz Backhaus of the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt, Christoph Timm, Isabel Greschat, and Hans-Peter Becht of the city of Pforzheim, David Price and I have produced this exhibition to celebrate Johannes Reuchlin and the successful outcome of the Jewish Book Controversy. But we are also celebrating what Reuchlin stands for today, most importantly, religious tolerance, respect for books and people, and the power of knowledge to break down prejudice and build respect and understanding for cultural differences.

Special thanks go to Angela Waarla and Laura Buchholz, who took the photographs, and to Marten Stromberg, who designed the catalog. We also thank Michael Matthäus of the Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main for scholarly support. And finally, we are grateful to Ellen and Nirmal Chatterjee, who supported the printing of this catalog for the American exhibitions.

Valerie Hotchkiss
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Item IV.1, title page. Reuchlin’s Eye Glasses (1511). From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
Item IV.1, A2v. The imperial mandate requiring evaluation of the book confiscation policy, printed in Eye Glasses. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
Item IV.1, Blr. Beginning of Reuchlin’s defense of Jewish books (“Ratschlag”), printed in Eye Glasses. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
Five hundred years ago, in September 1511, a compact book entitled *Eye Glasses* appeared at the international Frankfurt Book Fair and immediately polarized Europe. The author was the universally respected scholar and jurist Johannes Reuchlin, but the subject of *Eye Glasses* was not destined to find universal acclaim: it was a comprehensive legal and theological defense of Jewish writings. The context of the publication heightened the controversy, for Reuchlin wrote the defense in order to thwart a dangerous persecution that was aiming to destroy every Jewish book in the Holy Roman Empire. After the ensuing intellectual and political storms had passed, Josel of Rosheim, the most influential Jewish leader of Renaissance Germany, described the historic intervention as a “miracle within a miracle,” remembering with unabated amazement that a Christian scholar had defended the Jews and, more astonishing, that he had prevailed.

The unprecedented defense of Judaism was a response to an unprecedented attack that began in earnest in 1509. Until then, campaigns against German Jews, though numerous and often effective, had been limited to individual territories within the empire. The goal of the 1509 persecution was to weaken and break the surviving Jewish communities in one comprehensive effort by confiscating and destroying every Jewish book except the Hebrew Bible, thereby making it impossible to practice the religion properly. This aggressive strategy, carefully formulated to be compatible with imperial law, was initially spearheaded by Johannes Pfefferkorn, a recent convert to Christianity who had been agitating against Jewish communities in Germany since 1505. By the end of 1509, the confiscation campaign was being supported by the emperor, the archbishop of Mainz, the University of Mainz, the University of Cologne, the powerful Dominican convent in Cologne, the Observant Franciscan Order, and the papal Inquisitor Jacob Hoogstraeten.

Initially, the most potent weapon against the Jews was the printing press. Before Emperor Maximilian authorized destruction of Jewish books, Pfefferkorn and the faculty of theology at Cologne published a series of stridently anti-Jewish tracts: *Mirror of the Jews* (1507), *Confession of the Jews* (1508), *How the Blind Jews Observe Their Easter* (1509), and *The Enemy of the Jews* (1509), all of which appeared simultaneously in both German and Latin editions. Counting the German originals and the Latin translations, these books went through an astounding twenty-one editions within three years. Although ostensibly published as missionary tracts, the inflammatory
pamphlets were designed to stoke the fires of Christian anti-Semitism. They assailed contemporary Judaism as a heresy (i.e., as being a perversion of biblical Judaism) that must be rooted out, and they depicted Jewish customs and prayers as intolerable blasphemies against God. Moreover, the pamphlets insisted that Jewish moneylenders were engaged in a pervasive effort to destroy Christian society. These pamphlets rapidly built the political momentum that, in August 1509, secured the decisive step from Maximilian: a mandate to confiscate and destroy the offending Jewish books.

Implementation of the new policy began in September 1509 in Frankfurt am Main, home to one of the three most prominent Jewish communities in Germany (the other two being Worms and Regensburg). Despite strong resistance from Jewish leaders, a complete confiscation in Frankfurt was carried out by April 1510, and other Rhineland communities, including Worms, also suffered confiscations in 1509 and 1510.

This action occurred at a time when all of Europe was contemplating the end of Judaism. After the expulsion of the world’s largest Jewish community from Spain in 1492 and the forced Portuguese conversion of 1497, European Judaism was tottering at the edge of the abyss. Jews had long since disappeared from England (expulsion 1290) and France (expulsion from crown territories, 1394). Expulsions had also been mandated in many individual territories across the Holy Roman Empire—Vienna (1420/21), Cologne (1424), Bavaria (1442/50), Würzburg (1453), Passau (1478), Mecklenburg (1492), Magdeburg (1493), Württemberg (1498), Nuremberg (1498–99), Ulm (1499), and Brandenburg (1510), to name but a few. During the second half of the fifteenth century, the area open to Jewish residency contracted with every passing year. Various jurisdictions in Italy, the only major homeland to western European Jewry outside of the empire in 1509, were following suit. As a result of the spread of Spanish rule, Jews were banished from Sicily in 1492 and from the Kingdom of Naples through a series of expulsions, with the strongest intensity during 1511–14, that concluded in 1541. This moment in history, which instigated the early modern exodus to Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire, marks the nadir of Jewish life in western and central Europe prior to the Holocaust.

The New Scholarship: Christian Hebrew Studies

While this curtain was falling on European Jewry, act one, scene one of a new Christian-Jewish drama began. A tiny number of Christian scholars
were starting to cultivate contacts with learned Jews for a rather different purpose—they were seeking Hebrew and Jewish scholarship, hoping to acquire new methods for theological education and research. Ultimately they would succeed, for the embrace of Hebrew in the Renaissance would invigorate Christian scholarship and lay a permanent foundation for the modern study of the Bible. This started in the 1480s, when suddenly the Renaissance ideal of returning “to the sources” of ancient culture was applied to Christianity, introducing the biblical methodology that would include the recovery of Hebrew Scriptures and would soon undergird the Protestant reform movements. Despite explicit repudiations of Judaism, this development amounted to implicit acknowledgment by Christians that Jewish tradition and learning possessed value for them. A few Christians, virtually for the first time in the history of their religion, expressed enthusiasm for Jewish studies.

By 1506, a watershed in the history of Christian scholarship, Johannes Reuchlin had learned enough from leading Jewish scholars to publish the first Hebrew grammar and dictionary written for Christians, his *Rudiments of Hebrew*. No less an authority than the modern Jewish historian Gershom Scholem aptly described him as “the first scholar of Judaism, its language and its world, especially the Cabala ... the man who, nearly five centuries ago, brought to life the discipline of Jewish studies in Europe.” Reuchlin’s grammar was the first step in a sweeping movement. In the 1510s and 1520s, scholars in the leading centers of humanist culture—Florence, Venice, and, above all, Rome—promoted Hebrew scholarship as one of the great promises for a renewal of Christianity. In the 1520s, the inchoate Protestant movement decisively embraced Hebrew philology, and, by the 1530s, Hebrew studies were firmly established at universities throughout western Europe.

**Dispute over Jewish Books**

The worlds of academia and anti-Jewish agitation were not separate realms in medieval and early modern Europe. Soon after the publication of his Hebrew grammar, the father of Christian Hebrew studies found himself at the center of the anti-Jewish maelstrom, when Emperor Maximilian declared a moratorium on the book confiscation in a mandate of 23 May 1510. In no way connected to Reuchlin’s intervention, this initial suspension of the campaign resulted from tough negotiations between the emperor, the
Item III.3, title page. Pfefferkorn’s *Magnifying Glass* (1511), the first volley in the Reuchlin-Pfefferkorn pamphlet war. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
archbishop of Mainz, the city of Frankfurt, and the Jewish community of Frankfurt. Nonetheless, as a prelude to resuming the pogrom, the emperor issued a new mandate on 6 July 1510 that required legal and theological evaluations of the confiscation policy from four universities and three individual scholars, including Reuchlin. While all the other experts submitted enthusiastic endorsements for implementing the new policy, to everyone’s astonishment, Reuchlin argued against Maximilian’s tactic, forcefully contending that the book confiscation did not accord with imperial law and was not justified on religious or theological grounds. He carefully elaborated this defense in an extensive legal analysis he sent the emperor in October 1510 and, then, published in 1511, under extreme provocation, as the centerpiece of *Eye Glasses*. Although his conclusion stood alone among the seven evaluations, Reuchlin’s defense was so powerfully argued that it effectively stymied the new and dangerously potent method of persecution. As far as we know, all the books were returned to their Jewish owners and, despite determined efforts, the strategy was never again attempted in early modern Germany.

Nonetheless, *Eye Glasses* plunged Christian Europe into a wrenching controversy. The acrimony originated in the massive efforts undertaken to refute Reuchlin’s defense in order to secure imperial permission to restart the campaign against Jewish culture. Although a confidential brief, once Reuchlin’s recommendation had been submitted, Pfefferkorn, Hoogstraeten, and the archbishop of Mainz had access to it. All interested parties immediately realized that because of Reuchlin’s stature and the comprehensiveness of his analysis, his recommendation posed a substantial impediment to any resumption of the confiscations. Apparently even before the report was forwarded to the emperor, the archbishop of Mainz arranged for a commission, led by the Carthusian Gregor Reisch, to condemn Reuchlin’s views as “scandalous.” For his part, Johannes Pfefferkorn reached for his customary weapons—pen and paper—and attempted to obliterate Reuchlin’s legal argument in *Magnifying Glass*, a scorching invective that was released for distribution at the Frankfurt Book Fair in spring 1511. As indicated on the title page, *Magnifying Glass* attacked both the Jews and “several Christians” who defended them. In fact, this was the book that initiated the Reuchlin Affair, for it was only in response to *Magnifying Glass* that Reuchlin decided to publish his defense of Jewish books for all the world to read.

Prefiguring the inquisition’s heresy charges, Pfefferkorn assailed the argumentation of Reuchlin’s defense with an impressive apparatus of legal
and ecclesiastical authorities. The bulk of Pfefferkorn's poisonous rhetoric, however, is not directed at Reuchlin, for, as Pfefferkorn said in 1512, "I did not publish Magnifying Glass against him but against the Jews." In this new diatribe against Judaism, he portrays contemporary Jews not only as blasphemers and heretics, but also as murderous enemies of Christians. Most dangerously, Pfefferkorn conjures up the deadly specter of blood libel and host desecration cases. The pamphlet cites four recent cases of host desecration, along with breaking news about a major incident, the Berlin host desecration travesty of 1510. The Berlin case resulted in the execution of thirty-eight Jewish victims as well as the banishment of all Jews from Brandenburg. Pfefferkorn's endorsement of these terrible judicial hoaxes is unusual—other prominent converts who became anti-Jewish campaigners did not malign their former brethren with such patently false—and deadly—accusations. Many Christian authorities knew that these witch hunts were illegitimate. Popes and emperors routinely forbade their prosecution—often to little avail with local authorities. The Brandenburg convictions would even be rescinded in 1539 and Jews would be able to resettle there. But Pfefferkorn chose to exploit these myths in order to dramatize his contention that Jews are dangerous and nefarious enemies of Christianity and to denounce Reuchlin for claiming that the Jews could be a benign presence in Christian society.

Moreover, since the campaign to destroy Jewish writings remained his goal, Pfefferkorn meticulously repeated the specific allegation used in his previous tracts. In particular, he offered a direct rebuttal to Reuchlin's philological defense of Jewish prayers, insisting, on the strength of further quotations from Hebrew writings, that Jews blaspheme Christianity. Now he presents twenty articles against the Talmud, contending that his sampling of Talmudic perversions of Judaism was sufficient to warrant eradication of the book. Magnifying Glass also reveals the close collaboration between Pfefferkorn and the Cologne theologians. The tract was dedicated to Professor Arnold van Tongern and deploys the same arguments the faculty would make later in their attacks on Reuchlin. When citing canon law against Reuchlin, Pfefferkorn explicitly says that theologians provided him with all the references.

Inquisitor Jacob Hoogstraeten and the University of Cologne soon brought forward formal charges of heresy, alleging on the basis of forty-three statements that Reuchlin's Eye Glasses was “impermissibly favorable to Jews.” In 1512, these charges were published under the authorship of
Professor Tongern as part of the effort to discredit Reuchlin, and, while the heresy trial was wending its way through ecclesiastical courts, the University of Cologne also raised the stakes for academia by securing formal condemnations of Reuchlin’s *Eye Glasses* from other major theological faculties across Europe, including Paris and Louvain.

By 1513, the controversy was being discussed everywhere in Europe in part because it implicated the champion of the new Renaissance humanist methodology for biblical studies and in part because eradication of European Jewry was then such a burning issue. Many authorities tried to influence the outcome of the case, one way or the other—the emperor (Maximilian I), the future emperor (Charles V), the current pope (Leo X), a future pope (Adrian VI), two kings of France (Louis XII and Francis I), other princes, secular and ecclesiastical, some fifty cities in the Holy Roman Empire, university faculties, professors and scholars all over the Continent and even in England. The resulting trials, which persisted until Pope Leo X handed down a final ruling in 1520, reveal some of the most unstable fault lines in European intellectual culture, some of which would shift violently as the century progressed. Reuchlin’s writings and the chain reaction they touched off mark the first time in European history that some Christians undertook an academic study of Judaism and its history.

Initially, Reuchlin’s opponents were motivated by their resolve to annihilate Judaism but soon some began to express additional concerns about where Renaissance humanism might lead—not only to increased toleration of Jews but also to new approaches to Christian theology, and perhaps even to a different conceptualization of Christianity. On the other hand, Reuchlin’s path-breaking research in Hebrew elicited admiration from many enthusiasts of the humanist movement. The ability to associate his position on Jewish writings with humanist scholarship, specifically to the process of Christianity returning to its Bible in the original languages, immediately mustered an elite cohort of supporters for his cause. This configuration not only created a public forum for debate on the proper Christian attitude toward Judaism but also led to a major confrontation between scholasticism and humanism. Together, these two conflicts made up the Reuchlin Affair.

*Eye Glasses*

In *Eye Glasses*, Reuchlin based much of his argument on civil law, especially on his contention that Jews residing in the empire were not serfs or slaves
but rather fellow citizens (”concives”): “We and they are fellow citizens of
one and the same Roman Empire.” Although he did not intend this as an
assertion that, over all, Christians and Jews had equal legal rights, it did
mean that, as fellow citizens, Jews were protected from state seizure of
their property.5

Reuchlin’s “concives” argument immediately encountered a torrent of
opposition. Many theologians, such as Duns Scotus, had held the view that
Jews fell under the category of slaves and were therefore excluded from
many basic rights of citizens. The jurist Ulrich Zasius, perhaps the most in-
fluenctial German legal scholar of the early sixteenth century, had even used
the concept of Jewish servitude as a basis for arguing, in a notorious case,
that Jewish children could be taken legally from their parents by force and
baptized. Reuchlin vehemently rejected the legality of coercive baptism in
Eye Glasses and elsewhere.

But even on these issues, it is important to observe Reuchlin’s deeper re-
liance on ecclesiastical law codes. Referring specifically to passages in the
Decretales of Pope Gregory IX, Reuchlin wrote, “Therefore, we are ordered
in ecclesiastical law, in Sicut Judaeis, not to take their belongings from the
Jews, whether money or something of monetary value.”6 Indeed, basic prop-
erty rights had been enshrined in the foundational medieval law governing
Christian-Jewish relations: the Sicut Judaeis, often called the Constitution for
the Jews, a papal bull first issued in the 1120s but harking back to policies
formulated by Pope Gregory the Great (590-604). When he composed the
defense in 1510, Reuchlin had not yet read Hoogstraten’s evaluation and
was unaware of his plan to convene a new inquisition against Jewish books
in the empire. According to his own account, Reuchlin was motivated by
a desire to stop Maximilian, not the church, from an illegal and destruc-
tive blunder. Apparently, however, Reuchlin could already envision the
campaign as a matter headed for ecclesiastical adjudication. Moreover, the
specific questions in Maximilian’s request for evaluation—such as, would
destruction of the Jewish books benefit Christianity?—suggested that the
ultimate legal authority would be ecclesiastical. Consequently, Reuchlin’s
analysis often sounds like a preemptive defense against putative inquisi-
tional charges in addition to being a legal memorandum prepared for the
Holy Roman emperor.

Even if under both civil and ecclesiastical law the Jews enjoyed the right
to own such things as religious books, those books would still be subject to
seizure and destruction by the state, if they were heretical, blasphemous, or libelous. Reuchlin addressed this as the most serious legal question. And, to his mind, the answer hinged on an accurate analysis of the evidence—the Jewish books themselves.

In the end, Reuchlin’s assessment of Jewish literature was a devastating blow to the campaign to destroy Jewish books. This was the prime reason that so many authorities attacked him with such fury and resolve. After compressing a comprehensive review of Jewish writing to pamphlet size, Reuchlin authoritatively pronounced Jewish books innocent of all charges of blasphemy and heresy, with the exception of two minor books that, according to Reuchlin, were taboo among Jews anyway. Moreover, Reuchlin pursued the secondary goal of narrating a theological history in which Christianity acknowledged benefits from Jewish writings.

Representing Jews and Judaism

Overall, when assessing Reuchlin’s thought, it is important to note that he never departed from the then orthodox principle that Christianity was the one true form of religion; thus, in his eyes, Judaism could never be fully equal to Christianity. Nonetheless, his writings on Judaism evince, over time, a growing willingness to affirm elements and examples of Jewish theology and piety. This was a gradual development, but one that we can detect as Reuchlin expressed successively higher levels of appreciation as he wrote *Rudiments of Hebrew* (1506), *Eye Glasses* (1511), and *Art of the Kabbalah* (1517).

Reuchlin did not formulate a theology or philosophy of toleration, but he did defend Jewish life in two effective ways: he meticulously asserted the legal rights of Jews and the legality of Jewish writings, and, more distinctively, he created a new Christian discourse that represented Jews and Judaism favorably, thereby not only invoking a concept of justice for Jews (in accord with his general principle that “injustice is a monstrosity”) but also encouraging Christians to develop respect for the beleaguered minority and its religious heritage. In his 1517 *Art of the Kabbalah* (a book dedicated to Pope Leo X), a Christian scholar proclaims a rabbi “our glory,” expressing admiration for the Jew’s piety and learning. Indeed, the writer Max Brod, literary executor for the estate of Franz Kafka, characterized *Art of the Kabbalah* as “a work in which he dared to say more and more substantial things to benefit the persecuted Jews and
their disdained and misunderstood intellectual champions than in all of his earlier works combined.” In a book of 1519 (on the ancient Christian exegete Athanasius), Reuchlin repeatedly cited the Jewish philosopher Maimonides as the most significant theological authority on such fundamental topics as the nature of God and the relationship of the soul to God. The elevation of Jewish scholarship was a purely academic judgment but it ultimately fostered Reuchlin’s creation of a new discourse of Christian admiration of the Jewish tradition and individual Jews. In Eye Glasses, Reuchlin had the temerity to criticize the misguided prayer for the “perfidious Jews” in the Good Friday liturgy with the assertion that no people observe their religion as faithfully as do the Jews. In 1513, he went so far as to proclaim: “I know my enemies have been vexed because I said the Jews are our fellow citizens. Now I want them to rage even more in anger ... because I am saying that the Jews are our brothers.” When, in 1514, he published a letter that addressed his first Hebrew teacher, Rabbi Jacob ben Jehiel Loans, as “My Lord, dear master Jacob, my companion, and my good friend, ... with deep longing I wish to see your blessed face to delight in the radiance of your bright countenance by hearing your most pure doctrine,” Reuchlin was redefining the boundaries for Christian representation of Jews and Judaism, and defiantly so since he was already embroiled in the heresy trial. He included the letter to Loans in an anthology that featured correspondence with such eminent Christian scholars as Erasmus, Willibald Pirckheimer, Giles of Viterbo, and Aldo Manuzio. After this letter appeared, Johannes Pfefferkorn attacked it as yet another intolerable example of Reuchlin’s favorable treatment of Jews and Judaism. Despite that and despite the travails of the ongoing heresy trial, Reuchlin republished the letter with a Latin translation in 1519.

The Verdicts

The trials of Reuchlin elicited many defenses and attacks and also resulted in two preliminary verdicts. A 1514 episcopal court in Speyer pronounced Reuchlin innocent of all charges of having “favor[ed]” Jews and, in an unprecedented ruling, assessed the papal inquisition (in the person of Jacob Hoogstraeten) for the defendant’s court costs. An appeals court at the Roman Curia reached a similar verdict in 1516. Nonetheless, on 23 June 1520, just eight days after signing the first thundering condemnation of
Acta Judiciorum inter
F. Jacobum Hochstraten Inquisito
rem Coloniae et Iohannem
nem Reuchlini, LL. Doc.
ex Registro publico,
aeumento et sigil
lato.

AD LECTOREM
Vitis hic liber est studentibus in iure canonico e eluili in
quo uidem praecipiam in materia inquisitionis, citationis,
recusationis, appellationis, libelli accusatorii, libelli defensori
nalis. Contumaciunem, sententiam, executionem, inhibitionem
mandat de superoseendo, et nota Turpiliam.

[Handwritten notes]

Item V.4, title page. Reuchlin’s account of the trials (1518). From the University of Illinois.
Martin Luther, Leo X issued a verdict against Reuchlin. In the aftermath of Luther’s *Ninety-five Theses* (1517), the Vatican was simply no longer in a position to allow challenges against inquisitional forces in Germany to go forward. Indeed, in April 1521, at the beginning of the Diet of Worms (where Luther would be condemned by the estates of the empire), Pfefferkorn wrote: “Yes, Reuchlin, if the Pope had done this to you eight years ago, Martin Luther and your disciples ... would not have dared to wish or contemplate what they are now publicly pursuing to the detriment of the Christian faith. Of all this, you alone are the spark and the enabler, to drive the holy church into error and superstition.” Reuchlin, however, ultimately repudiated Luther’s movement and remained a Catholic until his death on 30 June 1522.

Despite the papal condemnation, a permanent foundation had been laid for Christian Hebrew studies. We can assume that Reuchlin was not the only Christian of his generation who admired his Jewish books and acquaintances, but he was the first to represent Jewish theology and Jews themselves with a measure of benevolence, sometimes even unqualified admiration, in public discourse. When it came to a few Jewish thinkers, his opponents’ accusations, though bitterly formulated, that he valued Jewish authorities more than the doctors of the church were not entirely specious. Major Jewish scholars such as David Kimhi, Rashi, Joseph Gikatilla, and, above all, Moses Maimonides impressed him at a very deep level. It is not astonishing that he acknowledged the importance of Talmudic and medieval Jewish scholarship—even Luther consulted Jewish scholarship for his Old Testament exegesis—but it is striking that he so openly registered agreement with the wisdom and piety of the Jewish authors he studied. Yet, once again, Reuchlin would have considered his attitude nothing more (and nothing less) than a reasonable and just academic judgment of the works themselves.

Reuchlin would not be the only Christian scholar to defend Jews and Judaism against injustice. One of his students, Andreas Osiander, the leading reformer of Nuremberg, diligently continued his studies of Hebrew and Jewish writings as part of his ministry and, in 1529, emulated his teacher by composing an academic refutation of the pernicious accusations that Jews used the blood of murdered Christians in their rituals. But Osiander’s theological rejection of the blood libel innuendo, grounded in knowledge of Jewish practices, provoked an unusually strident objection from another of Reuchlin’s students, the Catholic theologian Johannes Eck. In this
clash between two Reuchlin followers, we can plainly see that Christian Hebraists in the aftermath of Reuchlin would not by any means develop a uniformly favorable attitude toward Judaism, even if by the beginning of the seventeenth century a detectable “philosemitism” existed among some Christian scholars. Several of Reuchlin’s supporters, including a few of the most influential theologians on all sides of the confessional divides, would advocate using political force and, in the case of Luther, violence to end the practice of Judaism in Germany. Like Pfefferkorn and Hoogstraeten, they assailed Judaism not only as a defective faith but also as a menace to Christian society that had to be eliminated by political means, no matter how inhumane.

Although a “miracle within a miracle” to a Renaissance rabbi, Johannes Reuchlin can be understood in historical terms as the beginning of a significant development: Christians acquiring accurate knowledge of Judaism and its history. Reuchlin was arguably the first Christian to read ancient and medieval Jewish texts with primarily scholarly rather than polemical interests. Over time, Jewish books and Jewish teachers equipped him with the knowledge, and ultimately inspired him with the conviction, to explain and defend the integrity of the Jewish tradition to his Christian world.
Item I.1, 10r. Peter Schwarz’s anti-Jewish tract, *Star of the Messiah* (1475), the earliest example of Hebrew printing in Germany. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
Exhibition items

I. THE NEW WEAPON: PRINTING ANTI-SEMITISM

I.1

Peter Schwarz. *Star of the Messiah [Contra perfidos Judaeos de conditionibus veri Messiae]*. Esslingen: Konrad Fyner, 1475.

Peter Schwarz (1434–1483) was a German Dominican who managed to learn Hebrew for use in his missionary campaigns against Jewish communities in the Holy Roman Empire. He published two extensive anti-Jewish polemics that advocated destruction of the Talmud as a blasphemous and heretical work. Though focused sharply on ending Judaism, his books also explained Hebrew vocalization and printed a few Jewish Bible passages and prayers in the original Hebrew. This is the first attempt to print Hebrew in Germany.

I.2


Johannes Pfefferkorn (ca. 1469-1521) converted to Christianity in 1505 and became an active anti-Jewish agitator. His mission had support from many sources, including the Franciscan and Dominican orders as well as the University of Cologne and several German princes. His pamphlets quoted (and distorted) authentic Jewish texts in order to stir Christian passions against toleration of Jewish communities in their midst. This, his first pamphlet, claims that Jewish books contain “hideous lies against Christ and Mary” and urges princes “to take the books from them and leave them nothing but the text of the Holy Scriptures.”

Pfefferkorn’s tracts were published simultaneously in separate German and Latin editions. *Mirror of the Jews* was first published in German (*Der Joeden Spiegel* [Cologne: Johannes Landen, 1507]). The item on display is the first edition of the Latin version.
Item I.3, B2r. Johannes Pfefferkorn’s *Confession of the Jews* (1508) with a woodcut depicting rituals of atonement. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
Item I.4, title page. *How the Blind Jews Celebrate Their Easter* includes polemical descriptions of Passover and also the threat to prosecute Jews for heresy. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
I.3


In *Confession of the Jews* (which first appeared in February 1508), Pfefferkorn scornfully describes Jewish holidays, especially various rituals of atonement associated with Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, in order “to hold up the Jews to ridicule.” Pfefferkorn also emphasizes the accusation that Jewish prayers foment hatred of Christianity, especially *Avinu Malkenu* (“Our Father, Our King”), which is recited during the interval from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur: “the curse you have just heard [i.e., an imprecation in *Avinu Malkenu* against enemies of Israel] is especially against us and no one else. Therefore it is my sincere advice according to my slight understanding that such books of curses should be taken from them.”

I.4

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *How the Blind Jews Celebrate Their Easter* [*In disem buchlein vindet ler ain entlichenn furtrag wie die blinden Juden yr Ostern halten*]. Augsburg: Erhard Öglein, 1509.

Pfefferkorn’s tracts were so inflammatory that Johannes Reuchlin claimed the author should be prosecuted for inciting civil unrest. This pamphlet, as indicated by the title page, insisted that Jews should no longer be tolerated because they had become “heretics of the Old and New Testament.” Pfefferkorn also repeats his mantra that Christian authorities should outlaw Jewish moneylending, compel Jews to attend Christian sermons, and confiscate all Jewish books because they are “the mother of their criminality.” The final pages include an endorsement of forced baptism of Jewish children and a plea that recalcitrant Jews be driven from the empire like “criminal dogs.”

I.5

Victor Carben. *A Splendid and New Work That Shows All the Errors of the Jews* [*Opus aureum ac novum ... in quo omnes iudorum errores manifestatur*]. Cologne: Heinrich Neuß, 1509.

Victor Carben (ca. 1422-1515), formerly a rabbi, converted to Christianity in 1472 and became involved in campaigns against Jews. Like Pfefferkorn, he composed several extensive anti-Jewish polemics with support from the church and the university in Cologne. Moreover, he also published his works in Latin and
Op' aurea
nume a dociis viris dio expectatu
m qui Victoris de Carben olim iudaeis mox, praeceps faceret
in quo oes iudeos errores manifestans qui hanc nobis
ignoti fuerer. Declaring etiam hoc operat oes iudeos mores
quos circa quosque opera exercere constanter antandum
uid qui mandata est exerceri un tecum et eum prout

Drewini Gratii baronii artium professoris in praenendo
non habere pulcherrimis operis epigrapho laudantur.

Pros nova sed graminibus quis gradus corturno
Er simul heros glotticandae pede.
Huc procerent oes numeris cantare periti
Adeter pegasei turba verenda estur.
Altera plecta ferat nobis barbaro Apollo
Hortis fit modo gloria partu lyce.
Altera plecta ferat claris deus ipsa poeta
De pulser quern lae me rebonante chelyn.
Hic genus infelix solymoz 7 prssima poeta
Hortus tainnoe nata dana fluit.

Vincentur tante lugens spectacula pugne
Hortem in umbroso rustico turba lacu.

Vincentur t quae palle sub imagine virbus
Palladio lectus conscidentem miser.
Tantâ lemmot uans doce certamine palmâ
Victor 7 a magno nomine nomen habet.

Vix opibus cimentis vic toto vendit auro
Quo capitur solistis religiotione bonos
item II.1, i3r. Reuchlin’s letter to his Hebrew teacher, Jacob ben Jehiel Loans. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
German editions to reach both academic and popular audiences. In a formal recommendation (now lost), he strongly endorsed Emperor Maximilian’s proposal to destroy all Jewish books except the Hebrew Bible.

II. THE NEW SCHOLARSHIP: CHRISTIAN HEBREW STUDIES

II.1

Johannes Reuchlin. *Letter to Jacob ben Jehiel Loans, from The Letters of Famous Men [Clarorum virorum epistolae latinae graecae & hebraicae variis temporibus missae ad Ioannem Reuchlin Phorcensem II. Doctorem]*.

Tübingen: Thomas Anshelm, 1514.

In 1492-93, Johannes Reuchlin undertook an intensive study of Hebrew under Rabbi Jacob ben Jehiel Loans, a learned physician at the Innsbruck court of Emperor Friedrich III. Reuchlin was so successful (and his accomplishment so distinctive) that the emperor honored him with the presentation of a sumptuous Hebrew Bible manuscript from the twelfth century. This letter is an excellent example of Reuchlin’s development of a discourse of respect for Jews, Judaism, and Jewish learning. Although charged with being “impermissibly favorable to Judaism,” Reuchlin published the letter in 1514, the midst of his heresy trial: “My dear master Jacob, … with deep longing I wish to see your blessed face to delight in the radiance of your bright countenance by hearing your most pure doctrine.”

II.2

Johannes Reuchlin. *The Rudiments of Hebrew [Principium libri Ioannis Reuchlin ... de rudimentis hebraicis]*.

Pforzheim: Thomas Anshelm, 1506.

In 1498-99, as ambassador of the Palatinate, Reuchlin also studied Hebrew under the renowned Jewish scholar Obadiah Sforno in Rome. With the intensive instruction from Loans and Sforno, as well as his own efforts, Reuchlin was able to publish the first Hebrew grammar and lexicon for Christians. The book, written in Latin, is based heavily on the medieval Jewish grammar of Moses Kimhi and the famous Hebrew dictionary, the *Book of Roots*, by David Kimhi. A notable feature of the lexicon is the frequent correction of Jerome’s Vulgate translation of the Bible.
Item II.2, 556-557. Reuchlin declines a Hebrew noun in his *Rudiments of Hebrew* (1506), using a Latin paradigm. From the University of Illinois.

DE DECLINATIONE

omnis Judaicorum nominii inftectio per folos numeros fit singuliarem et pluraliam, non autem per calis. Nulli igitur obliqui uidendis nisi quae vel articulus demonstrat, ut ex uiritute fermonis oratio lecita requirit. Et quia de articulis plene tractabimus infra de promine, rami quantum ad ostendendam declinationem necesse fuerit, eum hic solius obiter enumeramus. Sunt autem unde sectae Nomi

natiu articolus nos est opus. Sequi est generium datuus accusatius et ablatius. Nam uocatius imitat nominativum, hic tam in singulari quae in plurali numero loci habent. Declinavit ergo singula nominis p. inflexionem terminatium a numero singulare ad numerum pluralis cuiusque sint generis. Ex ej intelligis duas tantum hebræis esse declinationes. Prima est secundum formam masculinorū, quae nominatio singulare flecit in nominativo pluralis simpliciter addendo im. ut. Secundum est declinatio secundum formam femininorū, quae a nominatio in singulari in hevel than cius patha utem cense definire, ut alieni unde cuiusque femininis generis flecitur in nominatium pluralis. Folum mutando hevel than in oth. ut. De prima declinacione prius est docendum, quod comprehendis fieri nequit quam per exempla.

IN NUMERO SINGULARI.

tertia in erat vir
II.3

Johannes Reuchlin. *Miracle-Making Word* [*De verbo mirifico*].
Basel: Johannes Amerbach, 1494.

Reuchlin’s first major publication was this tract on Jewish Kabbalah, an interest inspired by the Florentine humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. *Miracle Making Word* indicates Reuchlin’s goal of “Christianizing” Jewish mysticism. In this work, for example, he claims that the ineffable tetragrammaton of God’s name (YHVH) has become effable and efficacious in the new form of Jesus’s name (YHSVH). This early work is notable for claiming the prime importance of the Hebrew language but also explicit in its rejections of Judaism.

II.4

Johannes Reuchlin. *Art of the Kabbalah* [*Ioannis Reuchlin Phorcensis ll. doc. de arte cabalistica libri tres Leoni X. dicati*].
Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1517.

This is a major work of Christian scholarship on Judaism, one that is richly nourished by the use of several dozen Jewish sources (especially, the Zohar and works by Joseph Gikatilla). Reuchlin presents a tremendous amount of recondite and technical matters of Kabbalah (for example, Kabbalistic emanations of God as well as Kabbalistic methods of biblical interpretation), but, most importantly he portrays Jewish piety and Jewish mysticism as exemplary for Christians. Max Brod claimed that in this work Reuchlin “dared to say more and more substantial things to benefit the persecuted Jews and their disdained and misunderstood intellectual champions than in all of his earlier books combined.”

II.5

Johannes Reuchlin. *Accents and Orthography of Hebrew* [*De accentibus et orthographia linguae hebraicae*].
Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1518.

This is a comprehensive study of Hebrew accentuation (and vocalization). An important subtext in this work is Reuchlin’s determination to sanction Christian use of Jewish authorities. He continues to give lavish credit to Jewish scholarship:
Item II.4, title page. Reuchlin’s *Art of the Kabbalah* (1517), showing the author’s coat of arms. From the University of Illinois.
“I have written all of this according to the teachings of the Jews in the way in which they have analyzed this material in their grammatical and musical books.” Once again, a major source was the medieval grammarian David Kimhi.

This book marks the first time Hebrew was printed with musical notation (here used to indicate cantillation).

III. The Imperial Mandate To Destroy Jewish Books

III.1

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *The Enemy of the Jews* [*Hostis iudeorum*].
Cologne: Heinrich Neuß, 1509.

The last pamphlet to appear before the confiscations began was Pfefferkorn’s *The Enemy of the Jews*, a harsh diatribe against alleged Jewish blasphemy and hostility to Christian society. Pfefferkorn argues that Jews will never be converted and must therefore be driven out of Christian societies. Moreover, he claims that Jewish books are full of heresy and blasphemy and must be destroyed. The pamphlet is notable for carefully printing two Jewish prayers in Hebrew, with roman transliteration of the Hebrew and German translation, all of which is presented as evidence of Jewish hostility to Christianity.

III.2

*The Imperial Confiscation Mandate, as printed in Johannes Pfefferkorn’s Defense against the ... Letters of Obscure Men* [*Defensio Joannis Pepericorni contra famosas et criminales obscurorum virorum epistolas*].
Cologne: Heinrich Neuß, 1516.

With strong support from German Franciscans as well as Duchess Kunigunde of Bavaria, the emperor’s sister, Pfefferkorn persuaded Emperor Maximilian to authorize confiscation and destruction of Jewish books. The first mandate, issued on 19 August 1509, has survived in several slightly different versions. In response to political challenges, Maximilian issued a second confiscation mandate (dated 10 November 1509) that gave overall authority for the action to the archbishop of Mainz. The mandates were implemented in Frankfurt am Main and other Rhineland communities until the emperor suspended the action (in a mandate of 23 May 1510) pending a review.
Item II.5, x2r. Reuchlin’s Accents and Orthography of Hebrew (1518), the earliest example of Hebrew printed with musical notation. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
III.3

Johannes Pfefferkorn. Magnifying Glass [Handt Spiegel].
Mainz: Johannes Schöffer, 1511.

From the moment Reuchlin submitted his recommendation against confiscation of Jewish books, Pfefferkorn and the anti-Jewish campaign had access to it. This work, Magnifying Glass (Handt Spiegel), was the first response to Reuchlin’s objections as well as a pernicious escalation of the assault on Jewish culture. In Magnifying Glass, Jews now appear not only as corrosive usurers and despicable blasphemers but also as bloodthirsty murderers of Christians. This work unleashed a new and dangerous wave of public anti-Jewish agitation that sought to restart the book confiscations.

Magnifying Glass appeared in early spring 1511 and immediately became the hottest item at the Frankfurt Book Fair that April. Reuchlin managed to publish his rebuttal (Eye Glasses) in time for distribution at the autumn book fair, September 1511, in Frankfurt. Thus began the international debate and pamphlet war.

Illustrated on page 12.

IV. Johannes Reuchlin’s Defense of Jewish Books

IV.1

Johannes Reuchlin. Eye Glasses [Doctor Johannsen Reuchlins ... Augenspiegel].
Tübingen: Thomas Anshelm, 1511.

The Eye Glasses, though also a response to Pfefferkorn’s Magnifying Glass, publishes Reuchlin’s comprehensive (forty-two page) defense of Jewish writings against the confiscation persecution. It features technical arguments based on Roman and ecclesiastical law as well as theological (and biblically based) expostulations that Christians should tolerate Jews and their writings. Reuchlin insists that Jewish learning and theology are crucial for the vitality of Christianity, and he defends Jewish writings against the charges of blasphemy and heresy. In the end, Reuchlin’s academic assessment of Jewish literature was devastating to the campaign. This was the prime reason that Hoogstraeten, Tongern, Pfefferkorn and others immediately attacked him with such fury and resolve.

Illustrated on pages 6-8.
IV.2

Johannes Reuchlin. Defense [Defensio Joannis Reuchlin Phorcensis II. doctoris contra calumniatores suos Colonienses].
Tübingen: Thomas Anshelm, 1513.

Reuchlin published this as a response to Professor Arnold van Tongern’s Articles, the first formal list of articles of heresy drawn up against his Eye Glasses. It features strident invective against the professors of theology at Cologne (whom he calls “devilogians”) and Johannes Pfefferkorn (who is an “ignorant butcher,” “heretic,” and “half-Jew”), but it is also a serious rebuke against the anti-Jewish campaign: “With these pamphlets from Cologne they are propagating the contention everywhere that the Jews are no longer Jews, but rather heretics and our enemies.” He was so bold as to write: “I know my enemies have been vexed because I said that the Jews are our fellow citizens. Now I want them to rage even more, and I hope their guts burst, because I am saying that the Jews are our brothers.”

IV.3

Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1519.

Reuchlin published the Letters of Illustrious Men in 1514 to illustrate his leading position in the Renaissance humanist movement. The work also features some of his correspondence with Jewish scholars and elicited further charges of heresy (excessively favorably attitudes toward Jews) from Johannes Pfefferkorn.

The second edition adds significant material that documents Reuchlin’s close ties to the Vatican, including endorsements from cardinals who had pronounced him innocent of heresy in 1516. One letter quotes Pope Leo X saying “I will not allow that man to suffer any harm.” The second edition also includes a 1518 letter of support from Martin Luther.
Item IV.3, C3v. The second edition of the Letters of Illustrious Men includes an enthusiastic letter of support for Reuchlin from Martin Luther. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
Item V.1, title page. Arnold van Tongern’s articles of heresy, charging Reuchlin for being “impermissibly favorable to Jews and Judaism” (1512). From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
V. HERESY TRIAL AND DEBATE: “IMPERMISSIBLY FAVORABLE TO JEWS”?

V.1

Arnold van Tongern. Articles Suspected of Being Excessively Favorable to the Jews [Articul
ev propositiones de iudaico favore nimis suspecte ex libello theutonico domini Ioannis Reuchlin
... extracte]. Cologne: Quentel, 1512.

Arnold van Tongern (ca. 1468/70-1540) was a respected professor of scholastic
theology at the University of Cologne. The dedicatee of Pfefferkorn’s Magnifying
Glass, Tongern wrote and published this first set of articles against Reuchlin’s de-
fense of Jewish writings. He claimed that Reuchlin’s writings were “impermiss-
sibly favorable to Jews and Judaism” and contained some forty-three heretical or
erroneous statements, which he duly listed. As condemnatory as Tongern’s Articles
may have been of Reuchlin, the most significant aspect of their ultimate publica-
tion is the professor’s general assault against Judaism. He repeated all the insinu-
ations against the Talmud and Jewish prayers. Moreover, he insisted that Jews
poisoned wells, desecrated the Christian Eucharist, and ritually murdered Chris-
tian children, issues that had nothing to do with Reuchlin’s defense. While these
vile innuendos marred Christian-Jewish relations in the late Middle Ages, it was
unusual for an academic authority to propagate them.

V.2

Jacob Hoogstraeten. Destruction of the Kabbalah [Destructio cabale, seu cabalistice perfidie
ab Ioanne Reuchlin Capniune tampridem in lucem edite]. Cologne: Quentel, 1519.

Jacob Hoogstraeten (ca. 1460-1527) was professor of theology, prior of the
Cologne Dominican convent, papal inquisitor for the province of Teutonia, and Jo-
hannes Reuchlin’s most determined prosecutor. He brought several cases against
Reuchlin in Germany and personally prosecuted the effort against him in Rome
from 1514 until 1518. This tract, which is an extensive critique of Reuchlin’s Art
of the Kabbalah, challenges the new humanist methodology of biblical philology.
At one point, Hoogstraeten also threatens inquisitional proceedings against Eras-
mus’s new edition of the Bible (1516, etc.).
Estructio Ca-
baleaeu Cabaistice persidie ah
Ioanne Reuchlin Capnione iampridem in lucem
edite. Sæcstissimo dno nostro Leoni pape decimo
per Reuerendii patrem Iacobu Hochstraten, ar-
tu & sacre Theologie Professor eximii, & here
tice praitatis, per Colonion, Maguti, Reuereii
provincias Inquisitoræ æquissimu, vigilantissimu-
æ, ad totius ecclesiæ honore reserenter dedicata.

Opus nouæ.
Anno a natali christianæ. M.CCCCC.XIX.
V.2

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *Fire Glass* [Abzotraiben und aus zuleschen eines vngegrunten laster buechleyn mit namen Augenspiegell ... Dar gegen ich meyn vnschult allen menschen gruntaich tzu vernemen vnd tzu vercleren in desez gegenwyrdigen buechgelgyn genant Brantspiegell gethan hab].

Cologne: Herman Gutschaiff, 1512.

This response to Reuchlin’s *Eye Glasses* is one of Pfefferkorn’s most venomous pamphlets. It lists some thirty-four errors in *Eye Glasses*, excoriates Reuchlin’s Hebrew scholarship, and alleges Jews have bribed and corrupted their defender. It also calls for an immediate end of Judaism in the empire (even urging forced baptism of Jewish children). The pamphlet reveals that Pfefferkorn’s strategy was to focus first on the destruction of the three most important Jewish communities in Germany: Frankfurt, Worms, and Regensburg.

V.3

*The Letters of Obscure Men* [Epistolae obscurorum virorum]. First edition of second part. Publisher and place of publication unknown, 1517.

Ranked among the classics of humoristic literature, *The Letters of Obscure Men* made a mockery of Reuchlin’s opponents (especially Pfefferkorn, Hoogstraeten, Tongern, and another Cologne professor, Ortwin Gratius). The fake letters of the “obscure men” describe their various sexual escapades, drunken and gluttonous entertainments, absurd disputations on theological issues, and petty squabbles with humanist professors throughout the empire. Despite the coarse, slap-stick humor, many serious issues appear, such as clerical discipline, humanist studies, scholastic theology, and speculative philosophy. By far the most frequently reprinted tract from the Reuchlin Affair, *The Letters of Obscure Men* illustrates the tendency in Germany after 1514 to focus on the issue of humanism versus scholasticism in addition to the campaign against Judaism.

Publication of such brazen lampoons of a papal inquisitor and professors of theology carried extreme peril, making it necessary to print the work anonymously and preserve strict secrecy about its authorship. We now know that it was the work of three men, Crotus Rubeanus, Ulrich von Hutten, and Hermann Busch. The second part, on exhibition, features Hutten’s acerbic contributions.
Item V.3, title page. The Letters of Obscure Men (1517), the first edition of part two. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
V.4

Acts of the Trials [Acta iudiciorum].
Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1518.

Likely edited by Reuchlin himself or one of his supporters, the Acts of the Trials is an early history of the Reuchlin Affair that faithfully quotes many official documents from the trial, including prosecutorial statements against Reuchlin. It is of extreme value for any reconstruction of the Reuchlin trials. The work records Reuchlin’s success in preliminary trials in Speyer (1514) and at the Roman Curia (1516). The work ends with a premature celebration of Reuchlin’s victory: “Finally, ... (Hoogstraeten) departed from the Roman curia, where he had personally labored for four years with various methods to invalidate the Speyer trial, and he returned to Cologne with empty hands. The Speyer judgment still remains in force and will remain so forever.”

Illustrated on page 19.

V.5

Johannes Pfefferkorn. An Impassioned Protest [Ayn mitleydliche claeg yber alle claeg].
Cologne: Servas Kruffter, 1521.

Despite Reuchlin’s many victories, Eye Glasses was finally condemned by Leo X on 23 June 1520: “The named book, Eye Glasses, was and is scandalous and offensive to the pious ears of Christians and is excessively favorable to the impious Jews and moreover it must be removed from circulation and from the hands of Christians and its use must be inhibited, etc.” The pope almost certainly made this decision in order to bolster the authority of the church in Germany as it faced the major threat of Luther’s movement.

In this book, the last publication in the Reuchlin Affair, Pfefferkorn calls for a civil trial of Reuchlin at the Diet of Worms and for the public execution of Reuchlin as a heretic. Although Reuchlin, too, had called for a civil trial, it did not take place and he was not condemned and executed. He died in Stuttgart on 30 June 1522.

V.6

Martin Luther. Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen.
Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1543.

In the aftermath of Reuchlin, many scholars continued the study of Hebrew and Jewish scholarship. Some would adopt relatively favorable positions on the status
of Judaism, but many would not. Martin Luther was a supporter of Reuchlin and also an early example of a biblical scholar who learned Hebrew from Reuchlin’s grammar. Nonetheless, during the 1530s and 1540s, he advocated violent destruction of Jewish books and communities in several of his publications, including his notorious *On the Jews and Their Lies*. Horrified by the violence of Luther’s anti-Semitism, the Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger wrote: “If today that famous hero Reuchlin were to return to life, he would declare that Tongern, Hoogstraeten, and Pfefferkorn had returned to life in this one person, Luther.”

Item V.6, title page. Martin Luther’s anti-Semitic tract, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543). From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).
Notes


7 See Reuchlin, *Defensio* (1513), in *Sämtliche Werke* 4/1:342.

8 See Johannes Reuchlin, *De arte cabalistica* (Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1517), fol. O7v.


10 Johannes Reuchlin, trans., *Liber S. Athanasii de variis quaestionibus* (Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1519), esp. fol. 13v and 11r. Reuchlin quoted Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed* some ten times (in Hebrew with Latin translation) in his annotations to this text he attributed to Athanasius.


14 The letter was reprinted in Latin and Hebrew in *Illustrium virorum epistolae*, ed. Johannes Reuchlin (Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1519), fol. mlv.

For further reading


II.5, colophon. Device of Reuchlin’s printer, Thomas Anselm, showing Reuchlin’s expansion of the tetragrammaton into Jesus’ name. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).