

Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations

A peer-reviewed e-journal of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations

Published by the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College

*Dietary Laws in Medieval Christian-Jewish Polemics: A Survey*¹

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Volume 6 (2011)

<http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr>

¹ This article was first presented at the 2011 Boston College Corcoran Chair Conference *Are Jews and Christians Living in a Post-Polemical World? Toward a Comparison of Medieval and Modern Christian-Jewish Encounters*.

As is well known, the biblical dietary laws (that is, *kashrut*) indicate the foods that Jews may or may not eat, dividing those animals that are clean from unclean. In Lv 11:3-7 and Dt 14:6-8, among the land quadrupeds only those that both ruminant and have a split hoof are “clean,” and the swine, camel, and hare are among those explicitly identified as forbidden foods. Generally, early Christians developed a consensus, however, that the dietary laws of the Jews ceased to be binding once the Old Law had been fulfilled by Jesus. In part, this conviction stems from the report in Mark’s gospel that Jesus inquired of his disciples, “Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?” (Thus He declared all foods clean).” (Mk 7: 18-19; cf. Mt 15:11, 18); in part too it is based on the experience of Peter, who was instructed by a heavenly voice to eat *any* manner of four-footed beast (Acts 10:11-15), seemingly subverting the dietary regulations. If any dietary scruple remained at all in early Christian communities, it concerned only food sacrificed to idols, animals that had been strangled, or blood (cf. Acts 15:20). Although these restrictions may have been observed in some Christian communities until as late as the fifth century, gradually they too disappear.² For medieval Christians, however, the fact that Jews continued to observe the biblical dietary laws will symbolize their carnal understanding and help to define a sense of Jewish otherness, as we shall demonstrate below.

Late antique or medieval traditions that asserted that in Paradise Adam ate no meat or that Jesus refused to eat meat and ate only fish and vegetables did not alter the basic premise that Christians are not bound by the Jews’ dietary laws.³ But it

² See Peter J. Tomson, “Jewish Food Laws in Early Christian Community Discourse,” *Semeia* 86 (1999): 193-211, citing p. 201.

³ For the claim that Jesus ate only fish and vegetables, see Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum naturale* 30.77, in *Speculum quadruplex, sive, Speculum*

is one thing for foods to be forbidden by divine command, and quite another to *elect* to avoid certain foods. In pursuit of spiritual perfection, many Christian monastic communities imposed a meatless diet, or at least a diet that excluded the flesh of quadrupedal animals. The monastic dietary regimen prescribed by the Benedictine *Rule*, moreover, was even stricter during penitential seasons in the church,⁴ while outside monastic communities laypeople too were directed by ecclesiastical ordinance to avoid meat on Fridays during Lent and on other days of observance.⁵

maius: naturale, doctrinale, morale, historiale, 4 vols. (Graz, Austria: Duaci: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt; ex officina typographica Baltazaris Belleri, 1964-1965), 2: 2274. The sole exception, Vincent maintains, was the paschal lamb that Jesus ate because of divine command. For the commonplace that before the Fall Adam ate no meat, see for example Nemesius of Emesa’s late fourth-century treatise, *Of the Nature of Man*, which was translated into Latin in both the eleventh and twelfth centuries. See *Nemesii Episcopii Premnon Physicon a N. Alfano Archiepiscopo Salerni in Latinum translatus*, 1.1, ed. Carolus Burkhard (Leipzig: B. Teubner, 1917), 12, Ins. 23-27; and *Némésius D’Émèse, De natura hominis, traduction de Burgundio de Pise*, 1.1, ed. G. Verbeke and J. R. Moncho (Corpus Latinum Commentariorum in Aristotelem Graecorum) Suppl. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 11, Ins. 64-67; cf. Ps. William of Champeaux, *Dialogus inter christianum et judaeum de fide catholica* (PL 163: 1066C); Alexander Neckam, *De naturis rerum* cap. 156, ed. Thomas Wright (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1863), 251; and Albert the Great, *Super Matthaëum*. 5.18, ed. Bernhard Schmidt, ed. Colon. 21/1 (Münster i. West.: Aschendorff, 1987), 126, Ins. 11-15. For a very recent treatment of diet in Christian tradition, see David Grumett and Rachel Muers, *Theology on the Menu: Asceticism, Meat and Christian Diet* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁴ See Benedict of Nursia, *Regula* cap. 39 and 49, ed. and trans. Adalbert de Vogüé, *Source chrétiennes* 182 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1972).

⁵ More elaborate food rules, however, are evident in some early medieval penitential texts—for example, the Carolingian *Penitential of Ps. Theodore*—illustrating potential tensions between Christian *theological* repudiation of the biblical dietary laws and practice in lay communities. For relevant selections from this text, see Rob Meens, “A Penitential Diet,” in *Medieval Christianity in Practice*, ed. Miri Rubin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 144-50.

Monastic or ecclesiastical food ordinances were treated quite differently from the dietary prohibitions in the Old Testament, however, which typically were explicated allegorically by early medieval Christian exegetes. Although the biblical dietary laws explicitly named numerous animals that were to be excluded from the diet, it was the pig—and not the camel or rock badger, for example—that occupied a central position in Jewish-Christian polemical exchanges concerning the dietary restrictions. In particular, medieval Christian theologians sought to explain as a moral instruction the biblical dietary condemnation of swine, arguing that it is meant to instruct the faithful only to avoid sinful, *pig-like behavior*, while allowing the Christian to retain pork in his diet.⁶ By contrast, the Jewish disputant in Gilbert Crispin's late eleventh-century *Disputation of a Jew and a Christian concerning the Christian Faith* insists that a figurative or allegorical meaning ascribed to the dietary restrictions does not supplant the literal: "Let us abstain from pork, because the Law commands," he says, "and let us abstain from sin if that is what pork signifies."⁷ Christians, however, received the moral instruction but repudiated the dietary restriction upon pork, often eliciting criticism from Jewish polemicists.⁸

⁶ Evagrius, *Altercatio legis inter Simoneum Judaeum et Theophilum Christianum*, 7, ed. R. Demeulenaere, CC SL 64 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1985). The text is likely from the early fifth century. On allegorical interpretation of the dietary laws in patristic tradition, see also S. Stein, "The Dietary Laws in Rabbinic and Patristic Literature," *Studia Patristica* 2 (1957): 141-54.

⁷ "Abstineamus a porco, quia lex jubet, abstineamus et ab eo si quod est quod per porcum significatur, peccato." *Disputatio Judaei cum Christiano de fide Christiana* (PL 159: 1011A).

⁸ See *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon vetus*, intro. and trans. David Berger (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 211, 270. On p. 211, par. 217, lns. 35-36, the *Nizzahon vetus* refers Isa. 65:1-4 to Christians "because no nation in the world eats swine except for you." (In a note on p. 270, Berger adds that Jacob ben Reuben, in his *Milhamot ha Shem*, as well as the text of the *Nizzahon vetus*, claims that only Christians eat pork).

Other Christian writers exploited the figurative sense of the dietary prohibitions. Thus, in a common medieval trope, Bruno of Segni (d. 1123) suggests that Christians are themselves the kosher, ruminant animals identified in the Bible because they—and not the Jews—twice "digest" the text of Scripture, locating in it the spiritual and not merely the literal sense.⁹ This allowed Christians to identify themselves with the clean animals, while at the same time compare Jews generally to unclean animals, and especially to pigs, as obstacles to holiness.¹⁰

⁹ Bruno of Segni, *Expositio in Leviticum* 11: "Ruminare quid est, nisi sanctam Scripturam diligenter investigare et cordis sensu minutissime frangere, et ad spiritualem intelligentiam diutissimevolvendo perducere? Judaei ergo neque ungulam dividunt, neque ruminant, quoniam neque utrumque Testamentum recipiunt, neque quod suscipiant ruminando spiritualiter intelligunt; litteram enim solam et integram deglutientes, nihil aliud quam litteram sapiunt." (PL 164: 414C). See also his *Expositio in Genesim* 24 (PL 164: 201D-202A). This trope, which identified "clean beasts" as Christians that accept both the Old and New Testaments in order to digest the spiritual sense, was clearly well established. See the (8th c.?) Ps. Bede, *In Pentateuchum commentarii—Leviticus*, cap. 11 (PL 91: 345B-D). The trope can be found even in Aelfric's (d. ca. 1020) Anglo-Saxon vernacular exegesis of 1 and 2 Maccabees. See Andrew P. Scheil, "Anti-Judaism in Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints*," *Anglo Saxon England* 28 (1999): 65-86, citing pp. 74-75.

¹⁰ See Albert the Great, *Super Matthaum*, cap. 7.6, ed. Cologne 21/1, ed. Bernhard Schmidt (Münster, 1987), 247, ln. 12. Here Albert identifies both Jews and heretics with dogs and pigs. The pig he describes as a monstrous animal because it straddles classifications: it has a split hoof, but does not ruminate. This hybridity seems applicable to Jews as well. Medieval Christian sources not only will compare Jews to pigs, but also commonly to dogs (another unclean animal). For example, Rudolf of Schlettstatt remarks that "Jews...are unclean and stinking and viler than dogs..." See his *Historiae Memorabiles zur Dominkanerliteratur und Kulturgeschichte des 13. Jahrhunderts*, 39, ed. Erich Kleinschmidt (Cologne; Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1974), 101. For a historical treatment, see especially Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs: An Image and Its Interpreters* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); for the common association of pigs and Jews, see also Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), *passim*.

Such animal images were useful instruments to illustrate the Jews' intellectual and moral shortcomings. Animal imagery was easily transferred to medieval art and iconography;¹¹ perhaps best known is the *Judensau* ("Jew's Sow") motif, found most commonly in Germanic lands in the later Middle Ages, in which Jews are shown suckling the teats of a sow or eating her excrement.¹² Fourteenth-century English manuscript illuminations of Christ's Passion depict Jews with a snub-nosed pig snout, reinforcing the identification of Jews as pigs and enemies of Christ.¹³ The received connection between Jews and pigs seems even to have influenced municipal legislation: John Carpenter's 1419 compilation of London town ordinances includes an entry "Of Jews, Lepers and Swine that are to be removed from the City." Since there had been no Jews in England for more than a century, Carpenter's compilation likely served to reinforce existing notions that associated Jews and swine (and lepers) as sources of filth or impurity.¹⁴ Finally, a late fifteenth-century engraving of the ritual murder of Simon of Trent depicts Jews whose garments display the Jews' badge or

rota;¹⁵ inside the badge is a picture of a pig, likely evoking a link between Jews and the homicidal and infanticidal behavior attributed to pigs.¹⁶

The question remained, however: for what purpose were the dietary laws given to the Jews? In the twelfth century, Peter Abelard explained the Jewish-Christians' observance of some dietary regulations in the early church as an overabundant caution, stemming from a mistaken tendency to equate any form of abstinence with moral virtue and a failure to understand the true nature of Christian liberty.¹⁷ While it is an error for Christians to observe these laws, in his *A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*, Abelard places in the mouth of the Jew the explanation that both circumcision and the dietary laws have this same purpose for Jews: circumcision prevents marriage between Jews and non-Jews, and the dietary laws prevent social interaction.¹⁸ Not coincidentally, this same purpose had long been promoted by ecclesiastical canons, and the church often sought to punish Christians—both lay

¹¹ See Debra Higgs Strickland, "The Jews, Leviticus, and the Unclean in Medieval English Bestiaries," in *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, ed. Mitchell B. Merback (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 203-32.

¹² For the *Judensau* and its appearances in medieval iconography, see Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and its History* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1974). See also Claudine Fabre-Vassas's fascinating ethno-anthropological study, *La Bête singulière: les Juifs, les chrétiens, le cochon* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1994), available in translation as *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). The *Judensau* seems to appear first in the early thirteenth century.

¹³ See Wendelien A.W. van Welie-Vink, "Pig Snouts as Sign of Evil in Manuscripts of the Low Countries," *Quaerendo* 26/3 (1996): 213-228.

¹⁴ Frank Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-2. The "swine" are evidently stray pigs that should be removed from the city, much as modern cities seek to round up and remove stray dogs.

¹⁵ For this illustration, see Heinz Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art: An Illustrated History* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 280.

¹⁶ About the middle of the thirteenth century, Albert the Great provided evidence from his own experience in Cologne that pigs will eat their own young. See his *Quaestiones super de animalibus* 7, q. 8, ed. Ephrem Filthaut, ed. Colon. 12 (Monasterii Westf.: Aschendorff, 1955), 175, Ins. 73-75. By the fourteenth century, too, there appear legal proceedings against sows accused of having killed (and sometimes eaten) human infants. Also see Jody Enders, "Homicidal Pigs and the Antisemitic Imagination," *Exemplaria* 14/1 (2002): 201-209; and Ervin Bonkalo, "Criminal Proceedings Against Animals in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Unconventional History* 3/2 (1992): 25-31.

¹⁷ See Abelard's comments on Rom. 14:1 in his *Commentaria in epistulam Pauli ad Romanos* 4.14, ed. E.M. Buytaert, CC CM 11 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1969).

¹⁸ Peter Abelard, *A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*, trans. Pierre J. Payer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1979), 34, 47.

and clerical—for eating or feasting with Jews.¹⁹ Abelard's younger contemporary, Petrus Alfonsi, who had converted from Judaism, also put the view in the mouth of his Jewish interlocutor, Moses, that God had given both the dietary laws and ritual circumcision to Israel in order to separate them from their Gentile neighbors, seemingly providing Jewish support for the wisdom of the ecclesiastical canons.²⁰

But how did the dietary laws differentiate the Jews? Not only did they serve to reinforce a social separation between Jews and Christians, but they also contributed to Christian notions of Jewish psychological and physiological otherness. The early thirteenth-century Jewish convert to Christianity, William of Bourges, treated the dietary laws as unnecessary for Christians but necessary for the Jews specifically because of the Jews' *obstinacy (duritia)*.²¹ Since it was widely accepted that the foods we eat affect the body, the passions, and the will, the special diet God commanded for the Jews came to be seen as a way to address, if not fully correct, their stubbornness and natural inclination to vice. This is especially evident in medieval Christian explanations for the prohibition concerning pork.

¹⁹ For examples, see *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Amnon Linder (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 445, 466-68, 544, 569, 576-81, 586, 597, 600, 631, 662, 672-73.

²⁰ See Petrus Alfonsi, *Der Dialog des Petrus Alfonsi: seine Überlieferung im Druck und in den Handschriften Textedition* 12, ed. Klaus-Peter Mieth (Inaug. diss.: Freien Universität Berlin, 1982), 138-39. Petrus rejects the notion, of course, that the Gentiles are unclean because they eat foods forbidden to the Jews. Hereafter this work is cited as *Dialogi contra Iudaeos*.

²¹ "Non precepit Deus abstinere se a carnibus porcinis et immundis avibus et animalibus...sicut lex Moysi ad tempus legitur precepisse propter Iudeorum duriciam,..." Guillaume de Bourges, *Livre des Guerres du Seigneur et deux homélies*, cap. 27, trans. and ed. Gilbert Dahan, Source Chrétienne 288 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1981), 184, Ins. 67-70.

A connection between the pig and the vices was well established. Isidore of Seville (d. 636) explained that the Latin *porcus* is derived from *spurcus*, that is, "unclean," and recorded that the philosopher Epicurus had been known as "the pig" because he asserted that carnal pleasure is the highest good.²² The pleasure-loving pig, then, became a familiar image. The pig's pleasure-loving nature sometimes is tied to its well-known propensity for gluttony. In a sort of transference, the thirteenth-century Dominican Vincent of Beauvais insists that the unclean animals of Scripture were designated unclean *for the Jews*²³ in order to restrain their gluttony and wickedness.²⁴ Likewise, Petrus Comestor ("Peter the Eater"; d. 1178) remarked generally that "In fact, in the text [of Scripture] the Lord restricted the foods that were permitted to them [the Jews] owing to their gluttony."²⁵ This term for gluttony—*gastrimargia*—explains Albert the Great, is illustrated by the insatiable hunger of pigs, grunting clamorously when they see acorns.²⁶

Just as often, the pig was linked to sexual pleasure and to lust, which can be aroused by gluttony. Peter Damian

²² *Etymologiarum sive originum libri xx* 8.6.15; 12.1.25, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911; repr. 1985), 179, 248.

²³ The text of Lev. 11: 8, addressed to the Hebrews, makes clear as well that "The flesh of these you shall not eat, nor shall you touch their carcasses, because they are unclean to you." My italics.

²⁴ Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* 2.33; 2.36, in *Speculum quadruplex, sive, Speculum maius: naturale, doctrinale, morale, historiale*, 4:58-59.

²⁵ Petrus Comestor, *Eine deutsche Schulbibel des 15. Jahrhunderts: Historia scholastica des Petrus Comestor in deutschen Auszug mit lateinischem Paralleltext*, cap. 17, ed. D. Hans Vollmer, 2 vols. in 1 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1925), 224.

²⁶ *Commentarii in Iob* 330.5, ed. Melchior Weiss (Freiburg: Herder, 1904), p. 342. Similarly Thomas of Chobham notes that *castrimargia* denotes gluttony and a slothful belly (*ventris pigritia*). See *Summa Confessorum* art. 3, dist. 1, q. 5a, fol. 3va, ed. F. Broomfield, *Analecta mediaevalia Namurcensia* 25 (Louvain: Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1968), 24.

(d.1072) states clearly a connection between sexual desire and gluttony when he remarks that “the stomach and the sexual organs are closely related, and when the former is intemperately satisfied, the latter is quickly aroused to shameful action.”²⁷ Similarly, Albert the Great recognizes that “gluttony [*gula*] and wantonness [*luxuria*] have a great deal in common.”²⁸ Commonly, medieval texts treat the female sow as the most lustful animal because she allows herself to be covered by the male even when she is already pregnant.²⁹ Albert the Great contends that the sow (*porca*) is so lustful that, when she cannot be satisfied by a boar, she may even attempt intercourse with humans.³⁰ The sow’s sexual attributes likewise form a link between the pig and the “carnal” Jew in the medieval imagination. Rabanus Maurus (d. 856) had closely identified the Jew and the pig because of the pig’s negative natural attributes: that is, its lust, wantonness, and gluttony.³¹ These are the qualities that the Jew and the pig share.

As already indicated, it was widely accepted that the foods we eat affect the body, the passions, and the will. Among

²⁷ Damian, Epist. 96.17, in *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, ed. Kurt Reindel, Epp. Kaiserzeit, 4 vols. (Munich: MGH, 1983-93), 3:58; trans. in *The Letters of Peter Damian, 91-120*, trans. Owen J. Blum, Fathers of the Church, Medieval Continuation 5 (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 62.

²⁸ “gula et luxuria ut plurimum secum communicant;” *Quaestiones super de animalibus* 5, q. 7, p. 157, Ins. 29-30. For translation, see *Albert the Great’s Questions Concerning Aristotle’s ‘On Animals’*, trans. Irvn M. Resnick and Kenneth F. Kitchell Jr., Fathers of the Church, Medieval Continuation 9 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 194.

²⁹ Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*, 105-106.

³⁰ Albert the Great, *De animalibus* 6.3.1.103, ed. Hermann Stadler, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 15-16 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1916-20), 1:485, Ins. 7-8.

³¹ Rabanus Maurus *De universo* (PL 111: 206D).

Thomas Aquinas’s several justifications for the dietary restrictions given the Jews, he recognizes that some foods can affect the soul in an accidental fashion (*per accidens*), producing in it lust or sexual desire. For this very reason even some Christians may avoid meat and wine.³² In the same way, the language of humoral theory was employed to assert that the Jews had been forbidden pork, lest the meat exacerbate in them the egregious qualities that they share with the pig. The fifteenth-century Dominican Antoninus of Florence argues that certain meats were prohibited *to the Jews* because they generate choleric and adust humors in the body, resulting in deleterious influences upon the soul as well. Citing Maimonides, St. Antoninus explained that this is why *the Jews* had been forbidden blood and fat, which produce gluttony in them.³³ While individual Christians may elect to avoid these foods in order to restrain desire, the biblical food prohibitions were *obligatory* for *all* Jews, and for that reason they appear to have been intended by God to counteract the Jews’ natural inclinations for gluttony, immorality, and illicit sexual activity.

Dietary Laws and Messianic Theology

What one is permitted to eat, then, allowed inferences about nature. Dietary customs that deviated from those observed in medieval Christian communities were not only identified as mistaken, but often they served to identify a heretical group and to associate it with the Jews’ error. Some medieval inquisitors identified the Cathar’s avoidance of meat as a judaizing tendency, even though we might see this practice as having more in common with monastic dietary rules than

³² *Summa Theologiae* 1.2, q. 102, art. 6, resp. ad 1.

³³ St Antoninus of Florence, *Summa Theologica* 1, tit.14, c. 5, §4, 4 vols. (Verona: 1740; repr. Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959), 1: 733A-B.

biblical dietary laws.³⁴ Similarly, especially after the First Crusade, Christians had become better aware that Muslims also avoided pork and certain other foods, and sought to assign appropriate reasons for this. Regardless of the origin of the Islamic prohibition, Christians understood the Muslims' dietary restrictions to be a judaizing tendency and as foolish as the dietary laws of the Jews.³⁵ This was so despite the fact that some Christian biographies of Mohammed indicate that Jews murdered and dismembered him, and then fed his body parts to pigs, accounting thereby both for Islam's abhorrence for pork, and for the animosity that exists between Jews and Muslims.³⁶

Conversely, both Jewish and Muslim anti-Christian polemics sometimes singled out Christian consumption of pork as a sign of the uncleanness and foulness of Christians.³⁷ The

³⁴ See Moneta of Cremona, *Adversus Catharos et Waldenses libri V*, 2.5 (Rome, 1743), and Bernard Gui, *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis*, 5.1.2, ed. C. Douai (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1886), p. 241, cited in Arnold of Villanova, *De esu carniū*, ed. Dianne M. Bazell, in *Arnaldi de Villanova Opera Medica Omnia*, 11 (Barcelona: Seminariū Historiæ Scientiæ Cantabricense, 1999), 63. For a more general effort to identify Christian heresies with the arguments of the Jews, see David Berger, "Christian Heresy and Jewish Polemic in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Harvard Theological Review* 68 (1975): 287-303.

³⁵ Alan de Lille, *Contra Haereticos*, 4.10 (PL 210: 427A). This complaint may have elicited a response from Muslims, as Camille Adang has shown that Ibn Ḥazm was sensitive to Jewish influence upon Muslim dietary practices in Islamic Spain. See "Ibn Ḥazm's criticism of some 'Judaizing' tendencies among the Mālikites," *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations*, ed. Ronald L. Nettler, *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations* 2 (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 1-15.

³⁶ See John Tolan, "Un cadavre mutilé: le déchirement polémique de Mahomet," *Le Moyen Âge* 104 (1998): 53-72, citing pp. 57-58.

³⁷ James Lindsay, *Daily Life in the Medieval Islamic World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 119, citing the ninth-century al-Jahiz, author of a *Contra Christianorum*, in which the latter complains that "at heart the Christian is a foul and a dirty creature...because he is uncircumcised...and eats pig meat." The Judeo-Arabic *Account of the Disputation of the Priest* also objects

Franciscan Alonso de Espina (ca. 1412-ca. 1464) complains that Jews regard Christians as unclean (*immundi*) because they eat swine's flesh that is prohibited under the Law of Moses, but the author, in turn, cites the eleventh-century R. Moses ha-Darshan of Narbonne to demonstrate that Jewish authorities themselves understood that in the time of the messiah this pork prohibition will be lifted.³⁸ Therefore, Alonso infers, because pork is permitted to Christians it is a sign that the messiah has come, and equally a sign of their messianic faith. In the same way, Petrus Alfonsi insists that Jewish sages themselves have "said that the meat of the pig is called 'hazir' that is, 'changeable,' since after the advent of Christ it had to be changed from inedible to edible."³⁹ Alfonsi reflects some awareness, then, of rabbinic traditions that in the messianic age the pig will become acceptable again.⁴⁰ For him, the fact that Christians are permitted to eat pork now is a testimony to the fact that the messiah has already come. By contrast, the Jews' continuing observance of the prohibition against pork is merely a reminder of

that Jesus "ordered you [Christians] to eat pork and to make sacrifice of bread and wine, which becomes smelly dung inside your bodies." *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest*, ed. and trans. Daniel J. Lasker and Sarah Stroumsa, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, 1996), 1:77.

³⁸ Al[ph]onso de Espina, *Fortalitium fidei contra Judeos: Sarracenos: aliosq[ue] christiane fidei inimicos*, 3.5.2 (Lyons: 1512), fol.110v. For Alonso de Espina's life and career, see Ana Echevarria, *The Fortress of Faith: The Attitude Toward Muslims in Fifteenth Century Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47-55.

³⁹ *Dialogus contra Judaeum*, 12, pp. 139-40. For the translation, see *Petrus Alfonsi's Dialogue Against the Jews*, trans. Irven M. Resnick, *Fathers of the Church, Medieval Continuation* 8 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 268.

⁴⁰ See Barry R. Mark, "Kabbalistic *Tocinofobia*: Américo Castro, *Limpieza de Sangre* and the inner meaning of Jewish dietary laws," *Fear and its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso, *Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* 6 (Tempe, AZ.: Arizona Center for Middle Ages and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS) Publications, 2002), 179-81.

their obstinate rejection of Christian truths.⁴¹ This polemic is not new in the twelfth century. It is evident as early as the seventh-century Byzantine Greek polemic, the *Trophies of Damascus*, which presents some unconverted Jews somewhat implausibly as yearning for the foods Christians enjoy and for remarking that, had they understood that Jesus was in truth the Messiah, "How much ham we could have had!"⁴²

Moreover, medieval Christians were aware that talmudic sages acknowledged halachic exceptions to the biblical prohibition against pork according to the principle of *piqquah nefesh*, that is, in order to save a life. Jews acknowledged that medical treatment, then, might require relaxation of the laws of *kashrut*. Medieval physicians might prescribe consumption of pork as a way to remedy the body's humoral imbalance, or the use of lard or pork fat as a way of treating certain skin ailments. Elisheva Baumgarten has assembled evidence that medieval Jewish parents might feed their children non-kosher foods if their health required, and that Jews might routinely keep non-kosher items in the household to be used as salves and balms.⁴³ There was still a good bit of room for disagreement, however, concerning the limits of medical necessity under which the dietary laws could be suspended: the late twelfth or thirteenth century *Sefer Hasidim* ("Book of the Pious") for example, prohibits Jews from eating non-kosher foods (in particular, fish) for their aphrodisiac properties in order to treat sexual dysfunction, but recommends instead kosher alternatives.⁴⁴ This, of course,

suggests that some Jews were allowing themselves this leniency. Christians were certainly aware of this weakening of what, in their minds, had been construed as an absolute commandment for the Jews. This issue figures prominently in the Jewish-Christian disputation of Mallorca (1286 C.E.), where the Christian disputant, the lay merchant Inghetto Contardo, asks: can a sick Jew be given pork to eat, if medical treatment demands? The Jewish respondent replies that he can, which allows the Christian to insist, then, that the commandments against forbidden foods can be put aside, just as the Christians have done.⁴⁵ Although this text from Mallorca does not emerge from a northern European milieu, nonetheless it seems to reflect accurately a Jewish conviction that, under medical necessity, dietary restrictions can be put aside. The Christian disputant then treats the conditional as absolute: a law that can be put aside once, can always be put aside, thereby confirming Christian critiques of the dietary laws. Pork consumption, then, symbolized profound theological and messianic convictions; their continuing to follow the biblical command that forbids Jews to eat pork reinforced Christian assumptions about the Jews' peculiar nature.

⁴¹ See *Dialogus contra Judaeum*, 12, pp. 139-40.

⁴² *Les Trophées de Damas: Controverse Judéo-Chrétienne du VIIe Siècle*, 3.7.1, ed. Gustave Bardy, in *Patrologiae Orientalis* 15/2 (1920), 173-275, citing p. 275.

⁴³ Elisheva Baumgarten, in *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 137.

⁴⁴ *Sefer Chasidim: The Book of the Pious*, 404 (390), trans. Avraham Yaakov Finkel (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc. 1997), p. 224. Finkel used two Hebrew editions of the *Sefer Hasidim* for his translation: the text edited by

Reuben Margalio (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1957) and *Sefer Hasidim* (Jerusalem: *Mechon Rishonim*). In the citation above, 404 represents the paragraph number in the English translation; 390 represents the corresponding paragraph in the Margalio edition.

⁴⁵ See *Die Disputationen zu Ceuta (1179) und Mallorca (1286). Zwei antijüdische Schriften aus dem mittelalterlichen Genua*, ed. Ora Limor, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* 15 (Munich: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1994), 172-73. In this disputation, Contardo debates with two learned Jews, a rabbi, and a Jewish convert to Christianity. For the difficulties Jewish physicians faced when adopting medical cures that contravened the laws of *kashrut*, see also Luis García Ballester, "Dietetic and Pharmacological Therapy: A Dilemma Among 14th c. Jewish Practitioners in the Montpellier Area," *Clio Medica* 22 (1991): 23-37.

Commensality and Market Regulations

As noted already, Peter Abelard's Jewish interlocutor insisted that the dietary laws were intended to prevent social interaction between Jews and others. In theory, the dietary laws prevented Jews from sharing a Christian's meal, although it is difficult to know how often this barrier was ignored in practice. Nonetheless, food had indeed become an obstacle to social interaction. But it was not only the Jews' dietary restrictions that prevented interaction. Canon law and Christian prelates repeatedly instructed their brethren not to eat with Jews. The Carolingian bishop Agobard of Lyon remarks that just as the Jews believe that they should not share a feast with Gentiles, so Christians are forbidden to share food or drink with Jews for fear of being led into their error.⁴⁶ His successor Amolo of Lyon (841-851 C.E.) laments that by their contact with Jews, Christians have too often been led to violate ecclesiastical dietary restrictions imposed for the Lenten season, which perhaps suggests that Christians were influenced by Jewish practice, or it is possible that they were eating meat with Jews when they were not supposed to.⁴⁷ Eleazar Gutwirth reminds us that

⁴⁶ Agobard of Lyon, *De cavendo convictu et societate Judaica*, ed. L. Van Acker, in *Opera omnia*, CC CM 52 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1981), ln. 50. This letter was written ca. 827. For Agobard's compositions, see J. Allen Cabaniss, "Agobard of Lyons," *Speculum* 26/1 (1951): 50-76, and pp. 62-63 for this letter. For his views on Jews, see Robert Bonfil, "Cultural and Religious Traditions in Ninth-Century French Jewry," in *Jewish Intellectual History in the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph Dan, Binah 3 (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 1994), 1-17.

⁴⁷ Amulon, *Epistola seu liber contra Judaeos ad Carolum Regem* 41 (PL 116: 170A). This text has sometimes been attributed to Florus of Lyon. For a useful discussion see Alfred Raddatz, "Zur Vorgeschichte der 'Epistula seu liber contra Judaeos' Amulos von Lyon," in *Ecclesia Peregrinans. Josef Lenzenweger zum 70. Geburtstag* (Vienna: Verband der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1986), 53-57. For Agobard's "campaign" against Jews and Judaism, see Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 123-45.

"Christian legal efforts to isolate Christians from Jews by means of dietary legislation do not mean that such an isolation could be maintained."⁴⁸ A Cistercian statute from 1232 C.E. provides confirmation when it chastises an abbot for allowing Jews to dine at his table.⁴⁹ Such attempts to prevent contact over meals, however, were sometimes linked to efforts to prevent Jews from luring Christians away from their faith. Thomas of Chobham (d. ca. 1236) expresses surprise in his *Summa Confessorum* (composed ca. 1215) that canon law allows a Christian to eat with pagans but not with Jews, but concludes that this stems from the fact that Jews represent the greater threat to Christian faith.⁵⁰ Vincent of Beauvais, reflecting increasingly restrictive canon law traditions regarding commensality,⁵¹ adds that Christians should neither eat with Jews because of the contempt the latter show for Christian foods, nor should they eat with Saracens, because Saracens are "Judaizers."⁵²

⁴⁸ E. Gutwirth, "Medieval Alimentation: The Hispano-Jewish Evidence (c. 1255-1310)," *Helmantica* 46 (1995): 293-98, citing p. 294.

⁴⁹ *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786*, ed. D. Josephus-Mia Canivez, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique fasc. 9-14 (Louvain, 1933-41), 10: 1232, ln. 51.

⁵⁰ "Unde mirum videtur quare non possumus comedere cum iudeis sed cum paganis. Quod tamen ideo factum est] quia iudei periti sunt in lege secundum literam, unde facilius possent corrumpere simplices christianos quam pagani." Thomas de Chobham, *Summa Confessorum*, art. 6, dist. 1, fol. 51ra, ed. F. Broomfield, *Analecta Mediaevalia Namurcensia* 25 (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1968), 252.

⁵¹ See David M. Freidenreich, "Sharing Meals with Non-Christians in Canon Law Commentaries, Circa 1160-1260: A Case Study in Legal Development," *Medieval Encounters* 14 (2008): 41-77.

⁵² Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum doctrinale* 9.40, in *Speculum quadruplex, sive, Speculum maius: naturale, doctrinale, morale, historiale*, 4 vols. (Graz, Austria: Duaci: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt; ex officina typographica Baltazaris Belleri, 1964-1965), 2:796. Vincent's complaint that Saracens are "Judaizers" implies that Islamic food prohibitions were derived from the dietary laws of Judaism.

Not only should Christians not eat with Jews but, as Maurice Kriegel has shown, medieval Spanish municipal documents contain numerous laws regulating the behavior of Jews in the marketplace, which forbid Jews even to touch various foods on sale. Should they touch them, either they must buy them or pay a fine. Kriegel has argued that Christians viewed such food items, once they had been touched by Jews, as impure, polluted, or unclean.⁵³ It is also possible that, based on a perception that Jews were not only impure but also “sick”, their presence in the marketplace had become a source of anxiety, just as lepers in fourteenth-century England were often forbidden to enter urban markets or to touch food for sale out of fear of contagion.⁵⁴

Certainly there was Christian religious resentment too that Jews could sell to them meats that they could not eat themselves (see Dt 14:21) because they had some characteristic that rendered them not kosher, while Jews refused meats and wine produced by Christians.⁵⁵ Again, Agobard of Lyon

complained to Emperor Louis the Pious that Jews sold to the Christians meats that Jews themselves could not eat, and called these rejected animals by the insulting expression “Christian beasts” (*christiana pecora*).⁵⁶ Similarly, in a letter to the Count of Nevers dated 1208, Pope Innocent III complains that after Jews have slaughtered an animal according to their rite, they leave the “leftovers” for Christians.⁵⁷ St. Antoninus of Florence also remarks that it is insulting for Christians to eat foods from Jews that the Jews have rejected as unclean.⁵⁸ Such resentment supported legislation that prohibited Christians from purchasing meat from Jewish butchers.⁵⁹ A London ordinance of 1274 threatened with excommunication any Christian that purchased meat from Jewish butchers; as a penalty, the meat would be seized and given either to lepers or to the

⁵³ Maurice Kriegel, “Un trait de psychologie sociale dans les pays méditerranéens du bas moyen âge: le juif comme intouchable,” *Annales* 31 (1976): 325-30. Cf. David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 167-70; Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs: An Image and Its Interpreters* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 20-22; Louis Stouff, “Les Juifs et l'alimentation en Provence a la fin de la période medievale,” in *Armand Lunel et les juifs du Midi. Actes du colloque international du centre regional d'histoire des mentalités 14-16 juin 1982* (Montpellier: SUP exam, 1986), 141-53.

⁵⁴ Carole Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2006), 280-81.

⁵⁵ For an early example of the complaint that Jews refuse Christian wine, when more properly Christians should refuse the wine that Jews produce because it is a product of their sinful hands, see the fifth-century *Altercatio legis inter Simoneum Judaeum et Theophilum Christianum*, 7. Peter Abelard's Jewish interlocutor also notes that “just as we abhor flesh slaughtered by Gentiles, so they abhor flesh prepared by us, and we all likewise abstain from

wine prepared by strangers.” See *Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*, pp. 34 and 66.

⁵⁶ “Est enim Iudaeorum usus ut, quando quodlibet pecus ad esum macant...si apertis intraneis iecur lesum apparuerit, si pulmo lateri adheserit vel eum insufflatio penetraverit, si fel inventum non fuerit, et alia huiusmodi, hec tanquam immunda a Iudeis repudiata Christianis vendantur, et insultario vocabulo Christiana pecora appellantur.” Agobard of Lyons, *De insolentia Iudaeorum*, in *Opera omnia*, ed. L. Van Acker, CC CM 52 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1981), 193.

⁵⁷ See Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century* (New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 127.

⁵⁸ St. Antoninus of Florence, *Summa Theologica* 2, tit. 14, c. 2, §3, 2: 1149A-B.

⁵⁹ For market regulations, see Norman Roth, “Food Use by Jews, Laws Relating to,” in *Medieval Jewish Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Norman Roth (New York: Routledge, 2003), 263-64. Curiously, Felix Fabri notes without criticism that in the city of Modon he saw Turks selling to Christians pigs that the Turks had raised because Turks, like Jews, are forbidden to eat them. See *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egyptii peregrinationem*, ed. Konrad Dietrich Hassler, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Stuttgart Literary Society, 1843-49), fol. 189A, 3: 336.

dogs!⁶⁰ Ecclesiastical legislation also sought to prevent Christian butchers from selling meats provided by Jews, and market restrictions on Jewish foodstuffs were especially common in southern France.⁶¹ That such prohibitions had to be repeated during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries would suggest that economic reality often prevailed over fears of impurity engendered by social contact.⁶²

Food, Diet, and Humoral Theory

Furthermore, what one eats or refuses to eat does not only erect a social barrier: it also implies theological and physiological differences. We must bear in mind that humoral theory assumed that food digested and decocted in the body is transformed into nutriment for the organs and into bodily humors or fluids. Since the humors affect an individual's complexion, the foods we eat represent the material causes of our habits, mental state, and behavior. This basic principle helps explain the

⁶⁰ "Notorium est quod Judei omnia animalia et volatilia, quorum carnibus vescuntur, propriis manibus interfeciunt....de carminibus illorum que sunt de lege commedunt, et non de aliorum carnibus. Quid ergo faciunt Judei de carnibus illorum que non sunt de lege sua? An liceat Christianis illas emere et manducare?'Ad quod responsum per Cives, quod si quis Christianus aliquas tales carnes de Judeo emerit, ipse statim erit excommunicatus; et si super hoc per Vicecomites Civitatis vel per aliquem alium convictus fuerit, amittet carnes illas et dabuntur leprosis vel carnibus manducandum;..." *Liber de antiquis legibus. Cronica maiorum et vicecomitum Londoniarum*, ed. Thomas Stapleton (London: Camden Society Publications, 1846), 171-72. Noting that the meats were to be distributed to lepers (or dogs), Rexroth (*Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London*, 6) speculates that this is because both Jews and lepers were thought to live in sin, and to present bodily infirmities or illness that visibly signified this state of sin.

⁶¹ William C. Jordan, "Problems of the Meat Market of Béziers 1240-1247: A Question of Anti-Semitism," *Revue des Études juives* 135/1-3 (1976): 31-49.

⁶² See *The Jews of Tortosa 1373-1492. Regesta of Documents from the Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Tarragona*, compiled by Josefina Cubells i Llorens, ed. Yom Tov Assis, Sources for the History of the Jews in Spain 3 (Jerusalem: Henk Schussheim Memorial Series, 1991), v.

important role that physicians played in establishing a healthful dietary regimen for their clients, collected in guides that fall under the rubric of regimens for health (*regimina sanitatis*), or rules for hygiene and healthy living.⁶³ Dietary guides were sometimes written for specific groups united by their specific humoral composition. The *Gerontocomia*, composed in Rome in 1489 by the Veronese physician Gabriele Zerbi, outlines a diet especially appropriate for the elderly, whose complexion will typically be colder and drier than a young person's.⁶⁴ Because the foods we eat represent the material causes of our habits and complexion, typically, for medieval medicine, *you are what you eat*, strangely, and in contrast, Jews will be associated especially with the food they are forbidden.⁶⁵ As pork became a more important part of the European Christian diet, its consumption served to proclaim Christian physical, moral, and intellectual superiority: Christians thought themselves different because they could eat what had been forbidden to the Jew, and they thought themselves superior because they understood that they could prevail over the filth that the pig represented and over the inclination to gluttony and sexual desire that pork consumption could produce in both the body and the soul.

⁶³ For a good example, see *Tacuinum Sanitatis. The Medieval Health Handbook*, ed. Luisa Cogliati Arano, trans. Oscar Ratti and Adele Westbrook (New York: George Braziller, Inc.: 1976). This richly illustrated volume contains five medieval handbooks on health and diet. For a general introduction to this medical genre, see Melitta Weiss Adamson, "Regimen sanitatis," in *Medieval Science, Technology, and Medicine: An Encyclopedia*, eds. Thomas F. Glick, Steven J. Livesey, and Faith Wallis (New York: Routledge, 2005), 438-39.

⁶⁴ For this text, see Gabriele Zerbi, *Gerontocomia: On the Care of the Aged, and Maximianus: Elegies on Old Age and Love*, trans. L.R. Lind (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1988), 17-308.

⁶⁵ Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*, 94.

By implication then, if the Lord, like a good physician, ordained a special diet for the Jews, it must be because they have a corrupt or defective nature. Later, when a Jew converted to Christianity, the consumption of pork often became a sign of his transfer from one community to another, as well as a sign of a physical, intellectual, and moral transformation, while his continuing observance of the dietary laws indicated the defective nature of his conversion. The dietary laws served then as a clear marker of religious identity, helping to explain why, as early as seventh-century Visigothic legislation in Spain, Jewish converts to Christianity were required to take an oath to repudiate the Jewish dietary laws. If, because of his former habit the convert could not eat pork itself, he promised at least to eat food cooked with pork without loathing.⁶⁶ Similarly, Visigothic Christians who sought a business relationship with such a convert were advised to demand first that the convert eat the foods Christians eat as a proof of religious identity.⁶⁷ Conversely, continuing observance of the dietary laws could imply to Jewish authorities the continuing faithfulness of those Jews that had been forcibly converted. Thus, the twelfth-century longer Hebrew Chronicle of the First Crusade remarks approvingly that “it is fitting to tell the praise of those forcibly converted....They slaughtered meat and removed from it the fat. They examined the meat according to the regulations of the sages. They did not drink wine of libation.”⁶⁸ Dietary customs, then, and especially the consumption of pork, were a visible component in a litmus test of Christian and Jewish self-definition.

⁶⁶ “De suillis veris carnibus id observare promittimus, ut si eas pro consuetudine non minime percipere potuerimus, ea tamen, que cum ipsis decocta sunt, absque fastidio et orrore sumamus.” Amnon Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages*, 279.

⁶⁷ Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages*, 281.

⁶⁸ Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 294; cf. Kenneth Stow, “Conversion, Apostasy, and Apprehensiveness: Emicho of Flonheim and the Fear of the Jews in the Twelfth Century,” *Speculum* 76 (2001): 911-33, and esp. 924-25.

Pork served not only as a static marker separating Jew from Christian, but also as a dynamic marker, illustrating the transformation of conversion. Under the eye of the late medieval Inquisition, Jewish converts ate pork to demonstrate their commitment to their new religion. Records show that *Marranos* (i.e., Jews who had become new Christians, but a term that some scholars argue carried the meaning “swine” by the end of the fourteenth century),⁶⁹ were frequently denounced to the Inquisition based on claims that they refused to eat pork and continued to observe religious dietary restrictions.⁷⁰ In a study of the significance of food as a marker among *conversos* in Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, Anna Foa records the words that the *converso* poet Antón de Montoro addressed to Queen Isabella at her coronation, which express both the signs of his conversion and a despairing sense that he could not eliminate all traces of his earlier Jewish identity: “I said the Credo and I knelt, ate lots of pork and lard, half-roasted bacon; heard masses and prayed hard...never able to discard this

⁶⁹ For the origin of the term, see B. Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain: From the late 14th to the early 16th Century, according to Contemporary Hebrew Sources*, 3rd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 59, n. 153. There the author conjectures that *marrano* is “a haplogic contraction of the Hebrew *mumar-anus*”; these terms imply conversion under constraint. But cf. Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), pp. 3-4. There is no doubt that the term is derogatory, but its origin and meaning remain elusive.

⁷⁰ Haim Beinart, *Trujillo: A Jewish Community in Extremadura on the Eve of the Expulsion from Spain*, *Hispanica Judaica* 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1980), 288-89, cited in *The Jews in Western Europe 1400-1600*, ed. and trans. John Edwards (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 41. For other examples of *conversos* that admitted to the Inquisition they had followed the dietary laws and, in particular, had sought to avoid eating pork, see Renée Levine-Melammed, “The Ultimate Challenge: Safeguarding the Crypto-Judaic Heritage,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 53 (1986), esp. pp. 102-103, and 107.

trace of being a *confeso*.⁷¹ Eating meat during Lent was another sign of “otherness”, and this accusation was often turned against recent converts, whether Jews or Muslims, in order to impugn the character of their Christian faith. In the twelfth century, it was one of the charges directed against a Muslim convert to Christianity, Philip of Mahdīya (who served King Roger II of Sicily), that led to his execution.⁷²

Food prohibitions, then, have been an integral part of religious polemics. Medieval religious polemics, moreover, also appealed to shared medical doctrines to stigmatize the food rules of the religious “other.” In his *Kuzari*, Judah Ha-Levi (d. 1141) contends that Jews are the heart of the world and, like the heart in the center of the body, they require the purest nourishment, establishing thereby a rationale for the dietary laws. At the same time, he notes, like the heart, Jews remain more sensitive to the illness and afflictions of the other parts of the body, illnesses that are contracted especially through frequent contact with their Gentile neighbors.⁷³

⁷¹ Antón de Montoro, *Cancionero*, ed. F. Cantera Burgos y C. Carrete Parondo (Madrid: 1984), 133, cited in Anna Foa, “The Marrano’s Kitchen: External Stimuli, Internal Response, and the Formation of the Marranic Persona,” in *The Mediterranean and the Jews: Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times*, ed. Elliott Horowitz and Moises Orfali (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 2:13.

⁷² See Joshua C. Birk, “From Borderlands to Borderlines: Narrating the Past of Twelfth-Century Sicily,” *Multicultural Europe and Cultural Exchange in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. James P. Helfers, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 12 ([Turnholt]: Brepols, 2005), 11. The charge is confirmed in the 12th century account of Ibn al-Athīr, *The Complete Treatment of History*, where Philip was alleged to be a Muslim because he did not fast at the appropriate times on the Church calendar, for which he was burned at the stake. See *Medieval Italy: Texts in Translation*, eds. Katherine L. Jansen, Joanna Drell, and Frances Andrews (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 123.

⁷³ Judah Ha-Levi, *Book of Kuzari*, trans. Hartwig Hirschfeld (New York: Pardes, 1946), 2.36-44, pp. 95-97.

Food, then, had become an ethnographic marker that was at least as important to Jews as to Christians. The social segregation established by the dietary laws, and which Abelard’s Jewish disputant suggests constitute their principal purpose, may have been understood by some Jews not only as intended to protect the Jews from the religious ideas of others, but also to guard them against illnesses that beset the body and, indirectly, the soul.⁷⁴ In contrast, the nutriment Christians enjoy befits their bodies, but also attests to a spiritual or intellectual coarseness. This becomes especially apparent in the late thirteenth-century Spanish kabbalistic work, the *Zohar*, which contains a story of an encounter between a Gentile and Rabbi Eliezer. The Gentile complains:

“You assert that you abstain from forbidden kinds of food in order that you may be healthy, and that health may be given to your bodies. But in reality it is we, who eat whatever we please, that are healthy and strong, while you are weak and afflicted with illnesses and bodily infirmities more than all other nations.” R. Eliezer became angry and stared at the Gentile until he was reduced to a heap of bones. Then R. Eliezer wept, and recalled that he once posed the same question about forbidden foods to the prophet Elijah, who told him, “Israelites, unlike the Gentiles, abstain from all unclean food, just as the tender and delicate heart, on which the

⁷⁴ It should be noted that Peter Abelard and Judah Ha-Levi were contemporaries—indeed, they died only one year apart—and that the two works indicated (the *Kuzari* and Abelard’s *Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*) share certain similarities. For discussion, see Aryeh Graboīs, “Un chapitre de tolérance intellectuelle dans la société occidentale au XIIe siècle: le *Dialogus* de Pierre Abélard et le *Kuzari* d’Yehudah Halevi,” in *Pierre Abélard—Pierre le Vénérable. Les Courants philosophiques, littéraires et artistiques en Occident au milieu du XIIe siècle*, Abbaye de Cluny 2 au 9 juillet 1972, Colloques internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, no. 546 (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975), 641-54.

welfare of the all the limbs depends, only absorbs the purest elements of food, leaving all coarser nutriment for the stronger limbs."⁷⁵

This passage reveals the manner in which food came to determine the health not only of the individual, but also of an entire nation. The Gentile repudiates the notion that the dietary laws safeguarded the Jews' health, and instead he implies that anyone on a special diet must have a weakened constitution, and thus the dietary laws indicate Jewish weakness or corruption. Eliezer's stare, which reduces the Gentile to a "heap of bones", belies any sense of weakness. Nonetheless, Elijah confirms that the dietary laws do attest to a kind of weakness in Jews—the weakness of a tender and delicate heart that can absorb only the purest food. As the heart is the source of heat and power for the rest of the body, so the Jews seem to be the "heart" of the world, as Judah Ha-Levi remarked, while the Gentiles, who represent its stronger limbs, can tolerate a coarser nutriment.

While the *Zohar* provides this more "mystical" although still medicalized food assessment, earlier in the twelfth century Maimonides (d. 1204), himself a physician, employed the language of humoral theory to help explain the Jews' rejection of pork. In his *Guide of the Perplexed* he explains that among all the forbidden foods, pork may be imagined by physicians not to be harmful:

But this is not so, for pork is more humid than is proper and contains much superfluous matter. The major reason why the Law abhors it is its being very dirty and feeding on dirty things...Now if swine were used for food, market-places and even houses would have been

dirtier than latrines, as may be seen at present in the country of the Franks [i.e. of Western Europeans]. You know the dictum [of the Sages], may their memory be blessed: The mouth of a swine is like walking excrement. The fat of the intestines, too, makes us too full, spoils the digestion, and produces cold and thick blood.⁷⁶

For Maimonides, then, pork is prohibited to Jews at least in part because it is a "humid" food that contains superfluous material (presumably, fat), causes repletion, spoils digestion, and produces blood that is cold and thick. Citing the Sages, he adds that the pig's mouth "is like walking excrement." It is a dirty animal, which, in an attack on European Christian habits, Maimonides insists befouls the towns of the Franks, undermining public hygiene. In fact, pigs do eat excrement. Albert the Great (d. 1280) explains that Frisians often tie a pig to a cow's tail while the cow is feeding. The cow does not break down all the grain fed to it, but passes much of it in its excrement, which the pig, placed behind it, will then eat and digest.⁷⁷ According to Alan Dundes, "[this] explains why *schwein* is such an offensive insult in German folk speech. The implication is that the object of the insult is a shit-eater."⁷⁸ Scatological medieval insults that identified Jews as pigs, or showed

⁷⁵ *Zohar* 3:220b-221b, quoted in Barry R. Mark, "Kabbalistic *Tocinofobia*: Américo Castro, *Limpieza de Sangre* and the inner meaning of Jewish dietary laws," 174-75.

⁷⁶ *Guide of the Perplexed* 3.48, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 598-99. For this text, see also Jacob Levinger, "Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* on Forbidden Food in Light of his own Medical Opinion," in *Perspectives on Maimonides: Philosophical and Historical Studies*, ed. Joel L. Kraemer (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization), 195. Cf. Hanna Kasher, "Well-being of the Body or Welfare of the Soul: the Maimonidean Explanation of the Dietary Laws," in *Moses Maimonides: Physician, Scientist, and Philosopher*, eds. Fred Rosner and Samuel S. Kottel (Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1993), 127-138, 257-258.

⁷⁷ Albert the Great, *De animalibus* 7.1.5.53, 15: 518.

⁷⁸ Alan Dundes, *Life is Like a Chicken Coop: A Portrait of German Culture through Folklore* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 121.

them nursing from a sow or eating its excrement, as in the image of the *Judensau*, likely were intended to construct an image of the dirty Jew, the “excrement of the human race” (*humani generis feces*) as Peter the Venerable says.⁷⁹

Like Maimonides, Latin tradition as well viewed the pig as phlegmatic; its meat, then, will be cold and moist or “humid.”⁸⁰ But God did not impose upon the Christians dietary laws that prohibit pork, and therefore they must be unnecessary for them, as Christian theologians emphasized. This contention is quite explicit in another text, composed ca. 1520, Solomon ibn Verga’s *Shevet Judah* (*Staff of Judah*), an imaginary dialogue between a Jew named Abravanel and a Christian named Tomás. According to Abravanel, the Jews form a category above the rest of humanity, and that is why they observe a special diet. Tomás rebuffs this explanation, but treats the dietary laws as necessary for Jews because of their natural imperfection, and unnecessary for Christians because of their natural superiority. Thus, he alleges, although typically pork increases sexual desire, “Christians because of their humours and perfection change everything to accord with their humours, just as honey changes the bitterness of the orange’s peel into sweetness.”⁸¹ Therefore, Christians are permitted pork in their diet because they can withstand its influence on carnal desire. Jews, he adds, had to be restrained from such foods because their natural imperfection or inclination to vice makes it impossible for them to withstand a desire for sexual intercourse. Even though the argument is presented with tongue in cheek,

⁷⁹ *Adversus Judeorum inveteratam duritiem*, 3, ed. Yvonne Friedman, CC CM 58 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1985), p. 56, ln. 526.

⁸⁰ Cf. William of Conches, *De philosophia mundi* 23 (PL 172: 56B); Albert the Great, *Quaestiones super de animalibus* 7, q. 33-39.

⁸¹ *Shevet Judah*, p. 36 and p. 175, n. 8, quoted in E. Gutwirth, “Gender, History, and the Judeo-Christian Polemic,” in *Contra Iudaeos. Ancient and Medieval Polemics Between Christians and Jews*, ed. Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 272.

nonetheless its appeal to humoral theory relies on generally shared and recognized principles.

Conclusion

I have attempted to survey the extent to which dietary laws and food concerns entered into medieval Christian-Jewish polemics. Not only did Christians reject the biblical dietary laws, but they understood the Jews’ continuing observance of these laws to signify both a “carnal” understanding of Scripture and Jews’ lived carnality. Paradoxically, the Jews’ rejection of pork identified them with the pig and its negative attributes, which include especially gluttony and unbridled lust or sexual desire. The Lord’s imposition of the dietary laws upon the Jews and not Christians, moreover, suggested the Jews’ defective corporeal nature or physiology, which the laws of *kashrut* might ameliorate in the way that certain medical remedies control chronic illness. Aware of such Christian interpretation, medieval Jewish thinkers attempted to invert the metaphor, and to show that if Jews were given a special diet it signified not chronic illness but the tenderness or weakness of the heart, the central but most fragile bodily organ.