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A Dialogue of the Deaf:
Hebrew Pedagogy and Anti-Jewish Polemic
in Sebastian Münster's
Messiahs of the Christians and the Jews (1529/39)*

By Stephen G. Burnett

The majority of Christian Hebraists during the early years of the Reformation devoted their attention to studying the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Hebrew language itself. Heeding the humanist admonition to "return to the sources," Martin Bucer, Konrad Pellikan, and a number of other scholars used their new skills to create a plethora of new Bible translations, biblical commentaries, and linguistic helps.¹ Greater knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish literature also made these scholars aware of Jewish anti-Christian polemics. Jewish biblical commentators such as David Kimhi and the authors of books such as *Sefer Nizzahon* and *Toledot Yesu* responded to stock theological arguments used by Christians against Judaism with verve, skill, and biting sarcasm.² Christian Hebraists who were familiar with such works believed that they constituted a challenge to the legitimacy of Christian Old Testament interpretation, and some attempted to refute them with polemical works of their own.³ Sebastian Münster's *Messiahs of the Christians and the Jews* (1529/1539) was one of the most creative apologetic responses to these anti-Christian polemics.⁴

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1. See Bernard Roussel, "Une 'école rhénane d'exégèse' (ca. 1525-1540)," in *Le Temps des Réformes et la Bible*, ed. Guy Bedouelle and Bernard Roussel (Paris, 1989), 215-240; and G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester, 1983), 39-83.

2. See David Berger's introduction to *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1979), 3-37.

3. Stephen G. Burnett, "Calvin's Jewish Interlocutor: Christian Hebraism and Anti-Jewish Polemics during the Reformation," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 55 (1993): 117-118, 121-123.

4. Münster printed two different editions of *Messiahs* (see Appendix II). I have used the second printing as the basis of discussion both because it is more readily available than the first printing and because it represents the fullest expression of Münster's anti-Jewish polemical argumentation.

The book *Messiahs* is fraught with interpretive problems from beginning to end. A cursory reading of the book might suggest that Münster was unable or unwilling to pursue a sustained argument throughout the work, since the first twenty-three pages of the Hebrew text have almost nothing to do with the messiah.⁵ Moreover, while a Christian wrote the book, its Jewish spokesman did not behave as a straw-man should by willingly agreeing with the truth of his opponent's objections. At times the Jew seemed to escape the control of the author as he raised offensive and puzzling objections to the Christian's views.⁶ Indeed, the Jew spoke more frequently in *Messiahs* than the Christian, and the book contains no sustained argument for the truth of Christianity. The book concluded with both the Christian and the Jew equally convinced in their own minds that they were correct.⁷ Why would Münster write such a self-defeating Hebrew language book on the differences between Judaism and Christianity?

These apparent rhetorical weaknesses in *Messiahs* have convinced one recent scholar that Münster was a failure as a would-be writer of missionary treatises. Jerome Friedman argued in *The Most Ancient Testimony* (1983) that Münster wrote *Messiahs* as an attack upon Judaism in order to defend himself against charges of "judaizing."⁸ He asserted that Münster did not address real Jewish objections to Christ and Christianity and branded the book as a "bogus missionary tract" which "could only prove edifying to very ignorant anti-Semites, which many of Münster's critics were."⁹ The appearance of the book in 1539, Friedman believed, was not accidental since the year before, Bucer had published his famous Kassel Advice on Jewish policy for Hesse and Luther had composed the first of his anti-Jewish works, *Against the Sabbatar-ians*. Both of these works signaled a change in the attitude of leading Protestant theologians toward the Jews, and with this change came a more negative attitude toward Christian Hebraism.¹⁰

5. Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens, OH, 1983), 235.

6. *Ibid.*, 239.

7. *Ibid.*, 242-243.

8. *Ibid.*, 214.

9. *Ibid.*, 239, 249, 243.

10. In his earlier article, "Sebastian Münster, the Jewish Mission, and Protestant Antisemitism," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 70 (1979): 242 and n. 8, Friedman accepted a 1529 dating for *Messiahs*. He assumed a 1539 dating in *The Most Ancient Testimony*, 243-244, without mentioning either the possibility of a 1529 dating or explaining why he had changed his position.

Since Friedman's discussion of Münster's *Messiahs*, however, several new sources have come to light, and a number of works have been published on medieval Christian-Jewish polemics and missionary writings which provide important insights into how this unusual book should be understood. The re-discovery of Münster's first printing of *Messiahs* (1529) places it nine years earlier than Friedman's "turning point" year 1538 and thus invalidates Münster's purported motive for composing the book.¹¹ A closer examination of Münster's rhetorical strategy in both printings also indicates that he followed a well-worn path of anti-Jewish argumentation which had been blazed in late medieval Spain.¹² He drew upon medieval models and sources when composing *Messiahs*, but the contents of the book were also informed by a concern for biblical interpretation and a conviction that Jewish anti-Christian polemics had to be refuted convincingly in order for Christians to make the fullest possible use of Jewish biblical scholarship. Münster's purpose was to write a serious polemic intended to equip Christian disputants to argue with Jews using the Hebrew language and Jewish sources.

Münster identified the genre of his book through the Hebrew title of both the 1529 and 1539 printings: disputation (Hebrew: *Vikkuah*).¹³ The use of

11. *Ibid.*, 195–202. Conceivably, however, Münster may have reissued his book with a Latin translation in 1539 as a defense against charges that he "judaized." Friedman argued for this position in "Sebastian Münster," 251. On the relationship between the first and second printings of *Messiahs*, see Appendix II. I have also been able to identify Münster's manuscript copy of *Sefer Emunah* (Basel UB Ms R IV 3) by his Latin marginalia. For a description, see Joseph Priejs, *Die Handschriften der Universität Basel: Die hebräischen Handschriften*, ed. Bernhard and David Priejs (Basel, 1994), 56–57.

12. On Christian-Jewish disputations in Spain see especially Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca, 1982); and Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley, 1989); and *idem*, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and its Aftermath* (Berkeley, 1992).

13. In the 1539 printing the Hebrew title reads: *ha-Vikkuah ha-Nozri ha-maamin be-Meshiah ha-medabber 'im Yehudah he-hazaf veva-moru*. The Latin title reads slightly differently: *Christiani hominis cum Iudaeo pertinaciter prodigiosis suis opinionibus, & scripturae violentis interpretationibus addicto, colloquium*. In copies where both parts were bound together, there is a title page which bears the title usually cited: *Messias Christianorum et Iudaeorum Hebraicè et Latinè* (Basel: Henric Petri, 1539) (hereafter *Messias*). In addition to the Hebrew and Latin versions, I have also referred to the seventeenth-century English translation since it is readily available on microfilm through the Wing microfilm series (film 1707): *The Messiah of the Christians and of the Jewes*, trans. Paul Isaiah (London: William Hunt, 1655).

the dialogue as a literary vehicle for anti-Jewish polemics was fairly common in the Middle Ages. Both Peter Alphonsi and Paul of Burgos employed the dialogue form.¹⁴ A disputation, however, is somewhat different from a dialogue. Disputations were not meant to be a free and fair exchange of theological views; rather, they were arranged by Christian authorities to force Jewish spokesmen to respond to the claims of Christianity.¹⁵ By posing specific questions, Christians could also put Jewish opponents on the spot by obliging them to explain potentially embarrassing aggadic passages in the Talmud such as those which portrayed God losing an halakhic argument to several rabbis and cursing himself every night for having destroyed the Temple.¹⁶ Since Christians posed the questions and demanded responses, the Jewish spokesman was necessarily at a disadvantage. After a disputation had ended, written accounts of it were often published and widely circulated by both sides, each side naturally claiming victory in the exchange.¹⁷ Portions of these disputations ultimately found their way into missionary manuals such as Alfonso de Espina's *Fortalitium Fidei* (c. 1464). Quotations from disputations and from Jewish books were often cited using formulae such as "if a Jew says" or "the Jew will say," amounting to a form of implicit dialogue.¹⁸

14. On the use of the dialogue form by Peter Alphonsi and Paul of Burgos, see A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1935), 233–234, 269–270. Karl Heinz Burmeister argued that Münster's work was similar in both argumentation and form to the "dialogues" of Paul of Burgos and Pietro Galatino in *De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis. Sebastian Münster: Versuch eines biographischen Gesamtbildes* (Basel, 1963), 84. Dialogues as a genre were used quite frequently during the sixteenth century for polemical, didactic or other purposes. See Johannes Schwitalla, *Deutsche Flugschriften 1460–1525: Textsortengeschichtliche Studien* (Tübingen, 1983), 92–97; Rudolf Bentzinger, *Untersuchungen zur Syntax der Reformationsdialoge: Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung ihrer Wirksamkeit* (Berlin, 1992), 9–23; and the essays in *The Dialogue in Early Modern France, 1547–1630*, ed. Colette H. Winn (Washington, D. C., 1993).

15. Chazan, *Barcelona*, 55–56.

16. Judah Rosenthal, "The Talmud on Trial: The Disputation of Paris in the Year 1240," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 47 (1956–57): 156–159.

17. See Chazan, *Barcelona*, 39–50, and Antonio Pacios Lopez, *La Disputa de Tortosa*, 2 vols. (Madrid and Barcelona, 1957), 1: 31–42. On the Hebrew account of the Disputation of Paris (1240), see Robert Chazan, "The Condemnation of the Talmud Reconsidered (1239–1248)," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 55 (1988): 20–22.

18. Steven J. McMichael, *Was Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah? Alphonso de Espina's Argument against the Jews in the Fortalitium Fidei (c. 1464)* (Atlanta, 1994), 332, 373, passim. Jewish writers such as David Kimhi and the author of *Sefer Nizzahon* also employed "implicit" dialogue form.

The contending parties in medieval disputations were not above slanting their portrayals to indicate to their readers who “really” won. The most conclusive demonstration of the superiority of one religion over another involved the conversion of the losing party to the religion of the winner, as some of the Jewish spectators did at the Disputation of Tortosa (1413–14).¹⁹ A less satisfactory but still effective way to identify the winner was to follow the strategy of Moses Nahmanides in *Vikkuah*, the Hebrew-language account of the Disputation of Barcelona (1263). Nahmanides strongly hinted that he had won the contest by presenting better arguments than his opponents’; if one disputant could make the other look ridiculous or unreasonable, then he could claim victory.²⁰ By using a disputation format in *Messiahs*, Sebastian Münster employed a conventional literary vehicle for Jewish-Christian polemics.

If the form of Münster’s *Messiahs of the Christians and of the Jews* suggests medieval antecedents, the contents of the book confirm this impression. Münster quoted most of what the Jew and Christian said in *Messiahs* from earlier Hebrew books.²¹ Apart from the Hebrew Bible itself and several minor sources,²² Münster drew most of the dialogue in *Messiahs* from four books: *The Book of Faith*, Rabbi David Kimhi’s biblical commentaries, *Sefer Nizzahon*, and Nahmanides’ *Vikkuah*.²³ Münster’s most important source was *The Book of Faith* (*Sefer Emunah*), a Hebrew-language apologetic work written by an anonymous Jewish convert to Christianity at the beginning of the sixteenth century.²⁴ Its author sought to address Jewish objections to Christian-

19. Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1966), 210–224.

20. Chazan, *Barcelona*, 69–79, 82–83. Since this article focuses upon the rhetorical strategy of the *Vikkuah*, my argument does not hinge upon the identity of its author, whether Nahmanides himself or another.

21. *Messiahs* contains 2618 lines of dialogue, 1402 spoken by the Jew and 1216 by the Christian. Of these, I have positively identified 80% of the Jew’s portion of the disputation (1119 lines) and 67% of the Christian’s part (813 lines) as quotations from earlier Hebrew books (74% of the book as a whole).

22. Hebrew Bible: Jew: 119 lines, Christian: 55 lines. Münster also used Abraham Saba’s biblical commentary *Zeror ha-Mor* (Jew: 145 lines); *Yossipon* (a free Hebrew translation of Josephus which Münster published in 1541: 2 lines); cf. Prijs, *Drucke*, 96–97 [#60]); and R. Yehiel’s *Vikkuah Rabbenu Yehiel mi-Paris*, an account of the Disputation of Paris in 1240 (Jew: 73 lines; Christian: 6 lines).

23. *The Book of Faith*: Jew: 178 lines, Christian: 750 lines; R. David Kimhi’s commentaries: Jew: 477 lines, Christian 2 lines; *Sefer Nizzahon*: Jew 37 lines; Nahmanides’ *Vikkuah*: Jew: 88 lines.

24. Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 249–250. There is as yet no satisfactory study on the *Book of Faith* (hereafter cited by its Hebrew title, *Sefer Emunah*) itself.

ity in a systematic fashion, providing entire chapters on problems such as “The reason for three divine names: Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (chap. 1) and “Concerning the Suffering, Death and Ascension of (the Messiah) into Heaven” (chap. 5). His arguments were drawn largely from the medieval Spanish tradition of anti-Jewish polemics, the best-known of which is Raymundo Marti’s *Pugio fidei* (1278). By the fifteenth century, Spanish theologians had assembled a set of stock arguments for use against the Jews, including selected quotations from the Talmud and from biblical commentators such as Kimhi. They used these quotations to raise objections to theological positions espoused by Jews in an attempt both to prove the internal incoherence of Judaism as a system of belief and to demonstrate that it was incompatible with biblical revelation.²⁵ One frequently cited argument focused upon the interpretation of Haggai 2: 6–10. The tenth verse stated that the new temple being built in Haggai’s day would be greater in some sense than Solomon’s Temple. Some Jewish interpreters, such as Kimhi, argued that the verse should be interpreted literally, if baldly, as referring to the length of time each temple stood: the first temple stood 410 years while the second stood 420.²⁶

Moritz Steinschneider’s, “Le Livre de la Foi: Paulus Fagius et Sébastian Munster,” *Revue des études juives* (1882): 57–67 is a significant pioneering study which identified several of the more important Hebrew sources of the book. Prijs argues in *Die Handschriften der Universität Basel*, 56–57, that the book was written sometime after 1502 since it mentioned the false messiah Asher Lemlein. Cf. Paul Fagius, ed. and trans., *Sefer Emunah* (Isny: Fagius, 1542), para. 76. Since the book contains at least two German glosses, *hayyden* = Heiden in para. 13 and *glisner* = Gleisner in para. 18, it is likely that the author wrote for a German-speaking Jewish audience. In addition to Fagius’ published version of *Sefer Emunah*, I have also consulted Sebastian Münster’s manuscript copy, which dates from before 1529 since he quoted it in *Messias* (Basel, UB, Ms R IV 3). At some point Fagius’ system of paragraph numbers was written into the manuscript.

25. Alphonso de Espina’s *Fortalitium Fidei* (c. 1464) provides a good summary of this tradition of argumentation. See McMichael, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 57–106. See also B. Netanyahu, “Alonso de Espina – Was He a New Christian?” *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 43 (1976): 156–165, who traced all of the “rabbinic sources” used by Espina back to previous works written by old Christians or Jewish converts.

26. Kimhi’s comment on Haggai 2: 9, printed in standard rabbinical Bibles, ad loc. For example, the author of *Sefer Emunah* in paras. 69–70 discussed Haggai 2: 6–10 using much the same arguments as Alphonso de Espina in *Fortalitium Fidei*, III, 4, 14, printed in McMichael, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 431–433. Netanyahu traced the sources of Espina’s discussion in “Espina,” 161, n. 17. The author of *Sefer Emunah* made many of the same points, quoting the same references in para. 70.

Such medieval polemicists as Alfonso de Espina responded with a variety of objections to Kimhi's interpretation, some of them drawn from the Talmud itself.²⁷

In his search for material to rebut, the author of the *Book of Faith* also drew upon Jewish authors directly. He quoted from portions of Nahmanides' *Vikkuah* and the commentaries of Kimhi.²⁸ He drew an entire chapter of his book from Saadia Gaon's *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, quoting many of the arguments Saadia made from Scripture, history, and reason to "prove" that the messiah had not yet come.²⁹ The *Book of Faith* was, in effect, a Hebrew-language summary of many of the arguments made in Latin by fifteenth-century Spanish theologians against Judaism.

Sebastian Münster found the *Book of Faith* a useful source of information and theological arguments. Roughly 62% of the Christian's lines and 13% of the Jew's lines in *Messiahs* originated in the *Book of Faith*.³⁰ At times Münster copied entire sections out of the *Book of Faith*; since it employed an implicit dialogue format: phrases such as "and if you say" (para. 28) or "but the blind Jews say" (para. 83), it required little rewriting to create an explicit dialogue between a Christian and a Jew.³¹

After the *Book of Faith*, the biblical commentaries of Kimhi were Münster's most important source: roughly 30% of the Jew's lines were drawn

27. See Espina, *Fortalitium Fidei*, I. 1 and III, 4. 14, printed in McMichael, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 350–353, 434–437, quoting BT Yoma 21 a–b, a passage which relates the ten miracles of the First Temple and five things which it possessed that the Second Temple did not.

28. Cf. *Sefer Emunah*, paras.72–73 and Moses Nahmanides, *Vikkuah*, printed in *Kitve rabenu Mosheh ben Nahman*, ed. Charles Chavel (Jerusalem, 1963), 306–307, 315, paras.24, 30, 73. Chavel's translation of *Vikkuah*, "The Disputation at Barcelona" (which employs the same system of numbered paragraphs), is printed in Moses ben Nahman, *Ramban: Writings and Discourses*, vol.2, ed. and trans. Charles Chavel (New York, 1978), 651–696. The *Sefer Emunah* quotes Kimhi in paras. 70, 77; cf. Kimhi's commentaries on Haggai 2:9 and Isaiah 59:16.

29. *Sefer Emunah*, paras.79–81, quoting portions of Judah Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation of the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, treatise 8, chap.8. Cf. Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. Samuel Rosenblatt (New Haven, 1948), 315–319.

30. Christian: 750 lines of total 1216; Jew: 178 of total 1402. Friedman noted the importance of *Sefer Emunah* in *Most Ancient Testimony*, 249.

31. Compare Münster, *Messias* (Hebrew) Beth 6b–7 a, Gimel 5 b, Daleth 7 b, Waw 2b, Waw 8b–Zayin 1 a, 2 a–b, 3 b, Heth 1 b, 5 a–b, Tet 6 b with *Sefer Emunah*, paras.72, 69–70, 83, 78–79, 82, 28–29.

from them.³² Reformation-era Christian Hebraists were decidedly ambivalent about the content of Kimhi's biblical commentaries. The grammatical and historical insights which Kimhi provided were exceedingly useful to Christian exegetes. They were less receptive to Kimhi's frequently offensive remarks concerning Christ and the church. Even more dangerous to Christian orthodoxy were Kimhi's frequently plausible "literal" (*peshat*) interpretations of messianic proof texts such as Psalm 22: 16, "they pierced my hands and feet," which flatly contradicted traditional Christian exegesis.³³ What Münster sought in Kimhi's commentaries for the Jewish spokesman in *Messiahs*, however, was not his gleeful insults to Christianity but his prolix and enthusiastic discussions of the messianic age and the world to come. Münster drew most of his quotations from Kimhi's Isaiah commentary but also cited his commentaries on Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Malachi, and the Psalms.³⁴ By quoting the biblical verses and then Kimhi's comments upon them, Münster apparently hoped to use the "mirror of Scripture" to demonstrate how tenuous the biblical basis for Jewish theology actually was.³⁵

The words spoken by Münster's Jew which were quoted from the *Book of Faith* and from Kimhi's commentaries served to inform the reader about Jewish theology rather than to question the truth of Christianity. The same cannot be said for the quotations which Münster drew from *Sefer Nizzahon* and to a lesser extent from Nahmanides' *Vikkuah*. *Sefer Nizzahon Vetus* (*Book of Victory*), probably written in late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century Germany, was one of the most aggressive and pugnacious anti-Christian polemics

32. Friedman asserted that Münster's annotations in his Gospel of Matthew seemed to reflect objections raised by Kimhi which he had raised in his Psalms commentary and that the work had been written to address "wise Jews like Kimchi, Ibn Ezra, and Rashi," while *Messias* presumably was not. Curiously, he did not recognize how often the Münster quoted Kimhi in *Messias*. *Most Ancient Testimony*, 224, 226, 234.

33. See R. Gerald Hobbs, "Martin Bucer on Psalm 22: A Study in the Application of Rabbinic Exegesis by a Christian Hebraist," in: *Histoire de l'exégèse au XVIe siècle*, ed. Olivier Fatio and Pierre Fraenkel (Geneva, 1978), 157-160.

34. On Kimhi's eschatological beliefs, see Frank Ephraim Talmage, *David Kimhi: The Man and the Commentaries* (Cambridge, 1975), 135-162.

35. Reformation-era anti-Jewish polemicists made use of the "mirror of Scripture" when describing and criticizing the observant Jewish life. See Hans Martin Kirn, *Das Bild vom Juden im Deutschland des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts dargestellt an den Schriften Johannes Pfefferkorns* (Tübingen, 1989), 17-58; and Stephen G. Burnett, "Distorted Mirrors: Antonius Margaritha, Johann Buxtorf, and Christian Ethnographies of the Jews," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (1994): 275-280.

of the Middle Ages.³⁶ The book, written as a companion to the Hebrew Bible, contained Jewish answers to the Christian interpretations of Old Testament proof texts such as Psalm 22: 16 and Isaiah 7: 14. In addition the author sought to lampoon and ridicule Jesus of Nazareth, the clergy, and Christians in general, citing and responding to a number of passages in the Gospels. Münster owned a manuscript copy of *Nizzahon* which he made from Johannes Reuchlin's copy early in his career, and he attempted to counter its arguments not only in *Messiahs* but also in his translation of the Gospel of Matthew (1537) and in the annotations to his diglot Hebrew-Latin Bible (1534–1535).³⁷ To quote only one example, from *Messiahs*, Münster's Jew asked (following *Nizzahon*): "Moreover, if [Jesus] is God, why did he cover himself with flesh and why did he not appear publicly to renew his Torah and give it openly so that the people of that generation would not err and the people of the world would not be misled? He should, on the contrary, have done his deeds openly and in a clearly recognizable fashion so that all would believe in him."³⁸ For the Jew to question God's will and to criticize his plan of salvation horrified Münster's Christian, who responded: "You do not know what you are saying. Did he not show, by his deeds and words, such miracles as no one else has done, that he was the Messiah and savior of the world?"³⁹

Moses Nahmanides' responses to his Christian questioners at the Disputation of Barcelona were more discreet than the vituperative remarks of the author of *Nizzahon*, but his statements could also be rather blunt. When Münster's Christian appealed to the Jew to believe that Jesus was the messiah, the Jew responded: "You will never persuade me to receive your faith and believe in your Christ, for what you believe no reason can comprehend. For how shall I believe that the creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them shut himself up in the womb of a Jewish virgin, grew nine months and was born a child, and afterwards increased in stature and was delivered into the hands of his enemies, who condemned him to death, slew him on the cross, and you

36. Berger, *Nizzahon*, 31–32.

37. Burmeister, *Münster*, 26; and Steinschneider, "Le Livre de la Foi," 58–67. According to Berger, *Nizzahon*, 377, Münster quoted from the book roughly 65 times in his Old Testament and Gospel of Matthew. Berger did not note the presence of *Nizzahon* citations in *Messias*. For a discussion of responses to *Sefer Nizzahon* by Reformation-era Protestants, see Burnett, "Calvin's Jewish Interlocutor," 117–118, 121–123.

38. Berger, *Nizzahon*, para. 6; and Münster, *Messias* (Hebrew) Tet 3 a; (Latin) 140–141; (English) 224.

39. *Messias* (Hebrew) Tet 3 a; (Latin) 142; (English) 225.

then say and believe that he lived again and returned to his former state?"⁴⁰ In addition to Nahmanides' more caustic statements, Münster found his account of the Barcelona disputation useful for conveying other information to his readers. He quoted, for example, from Nahmanides' famous discussion of the relative authority of the Bible, the Talmud, and the Aggadat.⁴¹ More broadly, the theme of Münster's book is the same as Nahmanides' book: Münster's Christian, like Nahmanides' questioners, sought to learn whether Jews believed that the messiah had come and what the messianic age would be like.⁴² Münster fleshed out Nahmanides' remarks with David Kimhi's comments on the messianic age in order to present what he considered a fuller picture of Jewish messianic expectations. Although Münster's quotations from *Nizzahon* and Nahmanides comprise a fairly small proportion of his Jew's dialogue, they played an important role in his rhetorical strategy, since he used them to "reveal" what the Jew "really" thought about Christianity.⁴³

After providing himself with material for both the Christian and Jew to communicate to his readers, Münster assembled them into a coherent disputation which would end with a clear winner, the Christian, who sought to open the Jew's eyes to the truth of Christianity. As with the medieval Spanish disputations, the Christian was in control of the dialogue throughout the book, asking questions, eliciting responses from the Jewish participant, and critiquing what he heard.⁴⁴ The Jew was allowed to raise only two questions in the course of the dialogue, one on the incarnation (quoted above) and the other on how the Christian thought Haggai 2: 6-10 ought to be understood.⁴⁵ More subtly, Münster used both the Jew's answers to questions and the Chris-

40. *Ibid.* (Hebrew) Tet 1 a; (Latin) 137-138; (English) 217-218.

41. *Messias* (Hebrew) Beth 7b-8 a. Cf. Chavel, *Kitvo*, 308-309, para. 39. Münster's quotation contains two German glosses, *prediyqota* = Predigte and *qundiygung* = Kundigung, suggesting that his Nahmanides manuscript, like the one printed by Johann Christoph Wagenseil in *Tela Ignea Satanae*, 2 vols. (1681; reprint ed., Westmead, 1970), 2, ff. Dddddd4r-v [= pp. 35-36 of Nahmanides' *Vikuah*] may have been of German origin. I am indebted to Prof. Norman Roth for this observation.

42. Nahmanides, "Disputation," para. 5-7, 11, 19, 23, 29, 31 (has messiah come or not?); 49, 73, 78 (what will messiah be like?).

43. On this theme more generally, see Elisheva Carlebach, "Attributions of Secrecy and Perceptions of Judaism," *Jewish Social Studies* 2/3 (1996): 116-136.

44. Pace Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 234-235. On asking questions and controlling the conversation, see Schwitalla, *Flugschriften*, 95-96; and Cathy Yandell, "The Dialogic Delusion: Jacques Tahureau's *Dialogues* and the Rhetoric of Closure," in *Dialogue in Early Modern France*, ed. Winn, 164-165.

45. *Messias* (Hebrew) Dalet 1 b-2 a; (Latin) 57; (English) 224.

tian's criticisms to erode the standing of the Jewish informant. By the end of the dialogue Münster's Jew was reduced to the traditional stereotype of a stubborn, angry unbeliever who was blind to the true meaning of Scripture.

Messiahs of the Christians and Jews contains no subdivisions, but it is possible on the basis of the questions Münster posed and the way he used particular sources to divide the book into five parts.⁴⁶ In each of these sections Münster assigned the Jew opinions which helped him to achieve his rhetorical goal. Münster began his characterization of the Jew in the very title of the book. The Latin title from the 1529 printing translates as *Disputation: Conversation of a Christian Man with a Jew Stubbornly Devoted to Unnatural Opinions and to Forced Interpretations of Scripture*, clearly suggesting that the reader should be on his guard.⁴⁷ In the first and fifth sections most of the Jew's lines were derived from *Sefer Nizzahon*, whose tone is bitterly, uncompromisingly anti-Christian. Münster wished to begin and end his book with the implicit message that Jews were by nature incorrigibly unbelieving and hostile to the Gospel.⁴⁸ In the second section, which had little to do with the theme of the book, the Christian asked what Jews believed about Lilith, the Sun and Moon, and Leviathan, all questions mockingly raised by Nicholas Donin at the Disputation of Paris in 1240.⁴⁹ Donin's three objections were recorded in Christian

46. I have traced the flow of Münster's argument and identified the sources of his Jew's opinions in Appendix I.

47. *Vikkuah. Christiani hominis cum Iudaeo pertinaciter prodigiosis suis opinionibus, & scripturae violentis interpretationibus addicto, Colloquium* (Basel: Froben, 1529) (Tübingen, UB, call no. Ci VII 15 a).

48. *Messias* (Hebrew) Aleph 3 a, Het 7 a-b, Tet 2 b-3 a; cf. Berger, *Nizzahon*, paras. 238, 205, 232, 9, 6. See also the Jew's use of the phrase *avon gilyon* for Evangelium in Het 7 b and Tet 8 a; cf. Berger's note in *Nizzahon*, 310. Münster also quoted *Nizzahon* para. 232 on f. Waw 5 a. Friedman noted that by placing such statements in the mouth of his Jewish spokesman, Münster sought to demonstrate the "continuing responsibility of contemporary Jews for the actions of their God-murdering ancestors," without realizing that Münster had quoted the statements from Jewish sources and that his representation of Jewish opinion was to that extent authentic. *Most Ancient Testimony*, 239.

49. *Messias* (Hebrew) Aleph 4 b-5 a, 7 b-8 b, Beth 1 b-2 a. Münster quoted them in Hebrew from a manuscript of *Vikkuah Rabbi Yehiel mi-Paris*; the entire book was not published until 1873. I have verified the sections quoted by Münster using Samuel Grünbaum, ed., *Vikkuah rabbenu Yehiel mi-Paris* (Thorn, 1873), 8, 13-15; for an English translation see Morris Braude, *Conscience on Trial* (New York, 1952), 33-68. Münster supplemented R. Yehiel's discussion of Lilith (*Messias* [Hebrew] Aleph 5 b-7 a) with a lengthy excerpt from Abraham Saba's *Zeror ha-Mor* on Genesis 2. *Zeror ha-Mor* (Brooklyn, 1961), 9-10. For a recent discussion of Saba's exegetical method, see

accounts of the disputation and frequently appeared in later anti-Jewish polemical books under headings such as “absurdities and fables of the Jews.”⁵⁰ Münster used the Jew’s answers, drawn from R. Yehiel’s Hebrew-language account, in this part of *Messiahs* to characterize him as a credulous and superstitious man who trusted the words of the rabbis rather than the teachings of Scripture.⁵¹

Having established the Jew’s stance in the first two parts of the book as stubborn and superstitious, Münster then examined Jewish ideas concerning the messiah. In the third part of *Messiahs*, the Jew and Christian debated whether the messiah had already come. Following David Kimhi, Nahmanides, and other medieval Jewish thinkers, the Jew believed that he had not yet come. The Christian objected, citing the famous midrash from BT Sanhedrin 98a in which the prophet Elijah told one of the sages, R. Joshua b. Levi, that the messiah had already come and was alive and living in Rome. By mentioning this talmudic passage, Münster followed the old Spanish strategy of quoting contradictory talmudic passages to call into question the coherence of Jewish theology. The Jew responded with quotations from Nahmanides’ *Vikkuah*, taken from both the *Book of Faith* and a manuscript copy of Nahmanides’ book.⁵²

Abraham Gross, *Iberian Jewry from Twilight to Dawn: The World of Rabbi Abraham Saba* (Leiden, 1995), 41–67. Friedman dismissed Münster’s discussion in this portion of *Messiahs* as “aping common views of the Jew,” without recognizing either the sources of these comments or the rhetorical reasons why the latter might choose to quote them. *Most Ancient Testimony*, 236–237.

50. Gerónimo de Santa Fé, for example, mentioned Adam as the father of the demons by Lilith, the Sun and Moon midrash, and Leviathan in *De Judaicis Erroribus* (1412/1413), reprinted as *El Tratado De Judaicis Erroribus ex Talmut*, ed. and trans. Moises Orfali (Madrid, 1987), 46 (reflecting BT Erubin 18 b), 71–72, and 109 (reflecting BT Baba Batra 75 a). Raymundo Marti mentioned the Lilith midrash in *Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos*, ed. Johann Benedict Carpzov (1687; reprint ed., Westmead, 1967), 573–574, and the sun and moon on 931.

51. In the notes to his diglot Bible, Münster contemptuously summarized Jewish beliefs concerning Lilith: “Habent stulti homines multas stultas opiniones de hac Lilith sicut in libello *ha-Vikkuah* ostendi.” Sebastian Münster, *En tibi Lector Hebraica Biblia Latina planeque nova Sebast. Munsteri tralatione* (Basel: Henric Petri, 1534), f.EE1v (comment on Isa. 34, note h), (London: British Library, shelfmark 4 d. 10; St. Paul MN: Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation Reformation Library, microfilm). By placing an opinion he considered absurd in the mouth of the “proud Jew,” Münster sought to undermine the Jew’s credibility as a source of religious truth.

52. *Messias* (Hebrew) Bet 2b–Gimel 1 a. Cf. Fagius, *Sefer Emunah*, para. 72–73; and also Chavel, *Kitvei*, 306, 308–309, paras. 24, 39–40, 42. Münster also cited parts

Münster's Jew and Christian explored Jewish eschatology in the fourth part of the *Messiahs*, which comprises roughly half of the book. The Jew's opinions were drawn primarily from Kimhi's biblical commentaries, the Christian's responses from the *Book of Faith*. The Christian sometimes allowed the Jew to say what he wished without objecting, but at other times he took the opportunity either to criticize or to ridicule what he had heard. The portions of Kimhi which Münster quoted were not the exegetical passages which he would have used in lectures to his students, but places where Kimhi offered eschatological interpretations which Münster thought baseless.⁵³

Münster's disputation reached an impasse toward the end of the book, when the Christian attempted to convince the Jew that the length of the modern exile proved that God had permanently rejected the Jewish people. To clinch his argument, the Christian repeated what the Jew earlier admitted: the Jewish people no longer received visions or prophecies from God. Then the Christian appealed to his Jewish hearer to turn to the Christian messiah: "... if you also will believe in our Lord Christ, you may enter into the Kingdom of God."⁵⁴ From this point until the end of the book, most of what the Jew said was drawn from either *Nizzahon* or Nahmanides and his message was uncompromising: we will never believe in your gospel. The final words of the book are:

"Jew: Go in peace, and see that you return to me again, for I also have yet many things which I would say to you concerning your Christ, and concerning your 'sinful notions' (Hebrew: *avon gilyon*).

Christian: You speak like a desperate and perverse Jew."⁵⁵

Since most of the words attributed to the Jew and Christian by Münster were cribbed from earlier Hebrew books, it is worth asking how much of

of Nahmanides' book which were not included in *Sefer Emunah*. Cf. *Messias* (Hebrew) He1 a-b, 3 a-b, Tet 1 a, 2 a; and Chavel, *Kitvei*, 312-314, 310-311, paras. 54-55, 61, 47.

53. When Münster prepared a special student printing of Isaiah which included the Hebrew text, the Septuagint and a Latin translation, he appended a selection of Kimhi's comments on Isaiah, suppressing all references to eschatology and Jewish views of the messiah. This suggests that Münster did distinguish in his pedagogical writings between those portions of Kimhi which he thought were most useful for exegetes and those which were not. Cf. Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "Sebastian Muenster's Knowledge and Use of Jewish Exegesis," in: *Essays in Honour of the Very Rev. Dr. J. H. Hertz on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. I. Epstein, E. Levine, and C. Roth (London, [1942]), 360. For a description of the book, see Priejs, *Drucke*, 101-102 (#64).

54. *Messias* (Hebrew) Het 7 a; (Latin) 133; (English) 211.

55. *Ibid.* (Hebrew) Tet 8 a; (Latin) 153; (English) 240; Berger, *Nizzahon*, 310 n.

Messiahs he actually wrote. Apart from composing the questions and finding Jewish opinions to answer them, Münster's hand is most easily seen in the narrative framework of the book and in the Christian's responses to and rebuttals of the Jew's comments. Münster's narrative framework and occasional artistic touches encouraged his readers to persevere through the 141 pages of Hebrew text. The Jew and Christian encountered each other on the street, struck up a conversation and then went to the Jew's house. Inside one of the rooms, the Christian saw a strange phrase written on the wall: "Lilith stay out!" which prompted his second question. At one point the Jew became exasperated with the Christian's abusive responses and threatened, "If you wish to criticize my words in this way, I will no longer speak to you of this matter," temporarily silencing the Christian.⁵⁶ On the final page, the Christian abruptly ended the conversation, saying that he had to leave but wished to speak again at a future date. While Münster's artistic touches are not absolutely essential to the book, they add a bit more life to what would otherwise be an endless string of quotations.

Münster's objections to Judaism, stated through the Christian's criticisms of the Jew's ideas and interpretations, were his most substantial contribution to the book. The Christian not only posed most of the questions, but he also asked follow-up questions which often serve to further illustrate Münster's point that Jewish beliefs were not in accord with Scripture. When discussing Lilith and Leviathan, the Christian asked, "Where can this be found in Scripture?" – a question the Jew could not readily answer.⁵⁷ Münster's Christian responded several times to the Jew's ideas by arguing that he had interpreted a passage literally which should have been understood figuratively.⁵⁸ Other verses, the Christian objected, simply did not teach what the Jew said they did. Responding to Abraham Saba's midrashic interpretation of Genesis 28: 10–22, the Christian said: "I can no longer hear you speak of this business, since you so . . . twist the Scripture of God, and do sharpen your wit to pervert the word of God. For this exposition which you have brought is improper, and very unfit for the purpose, being upheld by no foundation . . ."⁵⁹ Münster believed that the Jew's answers to the questions posed in the book demonstrated that the Jews in general were blind to the meaning of the texts they

56. Ibid. (Hebrew) Zayin 1 a; (Latin) 104; English 163–164.

57. Ibid. (Hebrew) Aleph 5 a–b; (Latin) 16; (English) 12.

58. Ibid. (Hebrew) Beth 2 b, He 6 b; (Latin) 27, 83; (English) 31–32, 127–128.

59. Ibid. (Hebrew) Gimel 8 b; (Latin) 54–55; (English) 79. Cf. *Messias* (Hebrew) Gimel 6 b–8 b; and Abraham Saba, *Zeror ha-Mor* (Brooklyn, 1961), 62 (comment on Genesis 28: 10).

claimed to understand and live by.⁶⁰ He reserved particular scorn for the rabbis, however, arguing that they bore an especially heavy responsibility for misleading ordinary Jews by distorting the message of the Scriptures.⁶¹ The Jews were spiritually blind, and they would only realize that they had been rejected by God and were ignorant of the Scripture if Christ himself opened their eyes.

Since *Messiahs* began and ended with invective and the Jewish participant in the disputation rejected the Christian's appeals to convert, it is worth asking why Münster wrote the book at all. Both the book's form and content provide valuable clues for reconstructing Münster's purpose. The 1529 printing of *Messiahs* had a title page printed in Latin characters (useful for Christian readers, but unnecessary for Jewish ones) and like the later 1539 printing included vowel points, an unnecessary feature for educated Jewish readers but a great help for Christian students of Hebrew.⁶² Both the copy examined by Steinschneider and the Tübingen exemplar also contain student translations of the Hebrew text into Latin. The 1539 printing of *Messiahs* was issued as a diglot text, the Hebrew original with a Latin translation appended. It was only one in a long series of diglot books published by Münster as a way of encouraging Christian mastery of the Hebrew language in every possible way.⁶³ His purpose in writing the book was at least in part pedagogical, to help Christian students sharpen their Hebrew language skills.

Münster's theological reasons for composing the book, probably twofold, tallied neatly with his professional duties. Münster was a professor of Hebrew first at Heidelberg (1524–1529) and then at Basel (1529–1552). His auditors were primarily theological students who might someday engage in theological polemics with Jews.⁶⁴ Both Münster and his teacher Pellikan had themselves

60. *Messias* (Hebrew) Aleph 7 a–b, Het 1 b, 5 a, Tet 2 b; (Latin) 20–21, 121–122, 128–129, 140–141; (English) 20, 193, 204, 223.

61. *Messias* (Hebrew) Gimel 3 b, Dalet 5 a, Dalet 8 b–He 1 a, Het 4 a–b, Tet 2 b; (Latin) 45, 63, 70–71, 126–127, 135–136; (English) 63, 93, 105–106, 201–203, 221. Blaming the rabbis for the unbelief of common Jews is an old polemical charge; it was used by Justin Martyr, who warned Trypho not to trust the sages because they led both themselves and their followers into error. *Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. 52.

62. Paul Fagius claimed that his primary reason for publishing *Sefer Emunah* was to help Christian students improve their Hebrew. Cf. Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 245.

63. Karl H. Burmeister discussed Münster's numerous Hebrew-Latin diglot publications in *Sebastian Münster*, 65, 77–81, 86–90.

64. In his Latin introduction to *Messias*, Münster wrote, "Porro quid de Meschia suo, quem ex scriptura describunt aut potius sicut, sentiant, quam absurdas, impias,

sought out Jewish opponents to dispute the truth of Christianity, but always without success.⁶⁵ By writing *Messiahs* Münster was, in effect, providing his students with a disputation between a “paper Jew” and a Christian well-versed in Hebrew and in polemical arguments in order to further both their theological and linguistic education.

Pellikan’s continuing friendship with Münster and his ongoing interest in the Jewish mission may have been an factor in encouraging the latter to publish anti-Jewish polemics. In the introduction to his German-language Pentateuch commentary (written between 1538–1544), Pellikan expressed the hope that Jews might read it and see the error of their ways and that Christians might draw arguments from it for use in disputations with the Jews.⁶⁶ Pellikan made his own copy of the *Book of Faith* in 1540, perhaps from Münster’s original.⁶⁷ He also translated the Jewish disputation of Juan Luis Vives from Latin into German in 1543.⁶⁸ Pellikan frequently encouraged Münster to put his Hebrew learning to better theological use; his failure to do so was a lingering disappointment to Pellikan.⁶⁹

Münster himself had also long been troubled by the combative unbelief of the Jewish authors, according to his dedication letter to *Messiahs*.⁷⁰ Both

stultas & carnales opiniones, carnalis ille Israel ex prophetis falso collegerit, abunde, ostendam in libello isto, in quo potiora argumenta Iudeorum, quae contra Christianos ex scriptura colligunt, producam, & rursum quae nos contra illos habemus argumenta, inconcussa, firma & irrefragabilia prophetarum oracula illis obijciam, quin & suo ipsorum gladio interdum illos consodiam, cervicemque duram iugulabo, ostendens quam frustra expectent alium Meschiam, cuius adventus etiam priscorum Rabbiorum testimonio in hoc usque tempus prolongari non potuit, quantum libet unus hunc terminum & alius alium ex scriptura assignare conatus fuerit.” *Messias* (Latin), 6–7.

65. “Tentavimus quidem saepe & ego & praeceptor meus D. Chonradus Pellicanus inire cum illis certamen, sed frustra.” *Ibid.*, 4.

66. Zürich, ZB, Ms Car I 97. Christoph Züricher, *Konrad Pellikan’s Wirken in Zürich 1526–1556* (Zürich, 1975), 7, 205. Martin Bucer also had Christian-Jewish disputations in mind when he argued in his Psalms commentary (1529; second ed., 1532) that only historical exegesis was defensible before the Jews. Hobbs, “Bucer,” 151, n. 33, 155.

67. Pellikan’s copy of *Sefer Emunah* is Zürich, ZB, Ms Car XV 55; Züricher, *Konrad Pellikan’s Wirken*, 8.

68. *Ibid.*, 206.

69. *Ibid.*, 219.

70. “Postquam semel nomen dedi hebraismo, ornatissime vir, eidemque totis viribus incumbere coepi, perpetuum mihi fuit cum ex coeatis Iudaeis dissidium. Nam versanti mihi à triginta fere annis in hunc usque diem inter gentis illius scriptores, nullibi non occurrunt calumniae & iniuriae Christianis, hoc est pijs auribus intollerabiles, quibus

Münster's professional duties and his private study of the Hebrew Bible with Jewish Bible commentaries encouraged him to confront and respond to the truth claims of Judaism. Since the author of the *Book of Faith* had already translated many of these responses to Jewish objections into Hebrew, Münster could easily incorporate them into *Messiahs*. The single most important source of the Jew's ideas in *Messiahs*, however, was David Kimhi, whose biblical commentaries Münster frequently used in his teaching and writing.⁷¹ While he treasured these commentaries and defended their use by Christians in the preface to his *Hebraica Biblia* (1534), he also disagreed with much of what Kimhi said. *Messiahs* served as a polemical response to parts of Kimhi's commentaries.⁷²

Messiahs, then, may also have been intended for a Jewish reading audience. As incongruous as this might sound to the modern reader, Münster's book fits neatly into an early modern pattern of theological thinking on Jewish missions which was first explicitly formulated by Johannes Molther in 1600. Since faith comes from hearing and hearing from effective preaching, Molther argued that biblical exposition was essential to an effective Jewish mission. Before a Jew could hear and understand the Gospel, it was first necessary to prove that the Christian interpretation of Old Testament verses was correct and that the traditional Jewish understanding was invalid. However, the most painstaking exposition of messianic verses would have no effect upon a Jewish reader unless God first softened his heart.⁷³ What Münster sought to do in *Messiahs* was to shake the complacency of Jewish readers by comparing elements of Jewish messianic teachings with the biblical texts they were supposedly based upon in an effort to show that they had no foundation in Scripture.⁷⁴ The

vel lacerant depravant & falso interpretantur scripturas, potissimum prophetas ..." *Messias* (Latin) 3.

71. Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster*, 86–88. When Münster briefly taught Old Testament at Basel from 1542–1544, his lectures focused on the prophets, because, as Burmeister explained, "die Messiaslehre wegen seiner Beschäftigung mit dem Judentum im Mittelpunkt seines theologischen Interesses stand. Auch konnte Münster hier die Benutzung der von ihm geschätzten rabbinischen Kommentare als notwendig rechtfertigen" (100).

72. Münster, *Hebraica Biblia*, ff. b 2r–3v.

73. Martin Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr und Bekehrung. Die Stellung der deutschen evangelischen Theologie zum Judentum im 17. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1988), 51–52.

74. Münster's choice of messianic texts for his work was defensible, not only because they had traditionally been the most important subject addressed in medieval disputations, but because the hopes of European Jews had been stirred and disappointed within his lifetime by the activities of Asher Lemlein in 1502 and other messia-

Christian's responses, whether substantive or sarcastic, to the Jew's interpretation of biblical passages were intended to underscore this contrast. While Münster's Christian did not provide an extensive explanation of the Christian faith, he did at the end of the book appeal to his Jewish hearer, explaining how Christ died to save all men, including him, from their sins, and that he too could be reconciled to God⁷⁵ By emphasizing the idea that Jews could not be persuaded of the truth of the Christian Gospel without God's direct intervention, Münster and other Protestant polemicists felt that they had fulfilled their obligation to preach to the Jews by publishing polemical or apologetic writings, however unsuitable they might seem as persuasive pieces.⁷⁶

Sebastian Münster's *Messiahs of the Christians and Jews* is an unusual attempt to shake the confidence of Jews in their traditional understanding of the Hebrew Bible, written in the form of a language exercise/theological tract. Münster's choice of literary form, a disputation between a Christian and a Jew, may also reflect the uneasy feeling experienced by some Protestant interpreters that they were "working in the presence of a Jewish interlocutor."⁷⁷ Since they so frequently used Jewish exegetical literature as a resource for Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, Münster and his contemporaries felt obliged not only to quote the parts they considered profitable, but also to refute other passages which were at odds with their faith.⁷⁸ The book probably grew out of Münster's activities as a teacher of Hebrew, an interpreter of the Old Testament, and a frustrated would-be missionary to the Jews.

Münster's responses to the Jewish spokesman, drawn mostly from the *Book of Faith*, serve to illustrate the continuity between late medieval and early modern anti-Jewish polemics. As with his other Hebrew books, Münster anticipated that both Catholics and Protestants would read it, an assumption underscored by his dedication of the second printing of the book to Giovanni

nic pretenders. For a recent discussion of Asher Lemlein, see Abraham David, ed., *A Hebrew Chronicle from Prague, c. 1615*, trans. Leon J. Weinberger and Dena Ordan (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 24, n.11 and the bibliography cited there. *Sefer Emunah* (and Münster following it) briefly allude to Asher Lammlein in para. 76 = *Messias* (Hebrew) Gimel 3 a; (Latin) 44; (English) 61.

75. *Messias* (Hebrew) Het 7 a; (Latin) 133; (English) 211.

76. Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr und Bekehrung*, 52.

77. Hobbs, "Bucer," 158–160, 162. Hobbs argued that polemical passages in Bucer's Psalms commentary reflected apologetic rather than missionary concerns.

78. Friedman cogently described the inevitable tension experienced by Christian Hebraists who were indebted to Judaism for "tools, resources, and even wisdom for the elucidation of Christian concepts." *Most Ancient Testimony*, 214.

Panizzone, the ambassador of the Holy Roman Empire to Switzerland.⁷⁹ Both Catholic and Protestant anti-Jewish polemicists during the Reformation era proper and well into the seventeenth century drew extensively upon anti-Jewish polemics written in the tradition of *Pugio fidei*.⁸⁰ Münster's access to Jewish polemical manuscripts is also rather surprising. Not only did he possess his own copy of *Sefer Nizzahon*, but he also had access somehow to the disputations of both Rabbi Yehiel of Paris and of Nahmanides, neither of which had ever appeared in print. What makes Münster's *Messiahs of the Christians and Jews* so unusual among Reformation-era anti-Jewish polemics is not so much its contents as its form. Münster was almost unique among Christian Hebraists because he was able to compile/compose a disputation expressing these stock theological arguments in Hebrew rather than in Latin.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der vorliegende Aufsatz beschäftigt sich mit Sebastian Münsters hebräischem Traktat über die Messiasvorstellungen der Christen und Juden von 1529/39. Die Forschung fragt sich seit langem, welchen Zweck Münster mit dieser Schrift verfolgte. Eine Untersuchung der hebräischen Quellen dieses Traktats macht deutlich, daß Münster einer alten anti-jüdischen Argumentation folgte, die im spätmittelalterlichen Spanien entwickelt worden war. Aber die Schrift beschäftigt sich auch mit der Frage der korrekten

79. *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, 3 vols., ed. Peter G. Bietenholz (Toronto, 1987), s. v. "Giovanni Domenico Panizzone," by Peter G. Bietenholz. Burmeister discussed Münster's Catholic and Protestant reading public in *Sebastian Münster*, 92–97.

80. When Johannes Cocceius asked Johannes Buxtorf II for advice on useful anti-Jewish polemical works in 1651, Buxtorf responded, "Besides Raymundus (Marti) you should buy: Porchetus [*Victoria adversus impios Hebraeos* (Paris, 1520)], the *Fortalium fidei* [by Alfonso de Espina, c. 1464], the *Stella Moschiach* [by Peter Schwarz, 1475], Hieronymus de Sancta Fide [*Contra Judaeos*, ca. 1412–13], the book which is called *Zelus Christi* [by Petro de la Cavalleria, ca. 1450] which has been published in Venice, and Paulus de Santa Maria [probably *Scrutinium Scripturarum*, 1432/4]." Johannes Buxtorf to Johannes Cocceius, Basel, September 3, 1651, quoted by P. T. van Rooden and J. W. Wesselius, "The Early Enlightenment and Judaism: The 'Civil Dispute' between Philippus van Limborch and Isaac Orobio de Castro (1687)," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 144.

Bibelauslegung. Münster war der Auffassung, jüdische anti-christliche Polemik müsse überzeugend widerlegt werden, bevor Christen jüdische Bibelinterpretationen benutzen könnten. Er wollte Christen dazu befähigen, in Disputationen mit Juden die hebräische Sprache und jüdische Quellen zu gebrauchen.

APPENDIX 1:

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

IN MESSIAHS OF THE CHRISTIANS AND JEWS (1539)

Source Abbreviations:

Kimhi = Kimhi, David. Commentaries on the Prophets. Printed in standard rabbinical Bibles; and *ha-Perush ha-Shalem al Tehilim*. Ed. Abraham Derom. Jerusalem, [1967].

Nizzahon = Berger, David. *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*. Philadelphia, 1979.

Saba = Abraham Saba. *Zeror ha-Mor*. Brooklyn, 1961.

SE = Fagius, Paul, ed. and trans. *Sefer Emunah*. Isny: Fagius, 1542.

VikNahm = Nahmanides, Moses. *Vikkuah*. Printed in: *Kitve rabenu Mosheh ben Nahman*, 302–320. Ed. Charles Chavel. Jerusalem, 1963.

VikYehiel = Grünbaum, S., ed. *Vikkuah Rabbenu Yehiel mi-Paris*. Thorn, 1873.

Yosipon = Joseph ben Gorion. *Sefer Yosipon*. Ed. David Flusser. Jerusalem, 1978.

Questions and Answers:

I. *Introduction*: Is that a Jew? Heb. Aleph 2 a–4 b; Lat. 10–14. Cf. *Nizzahon* para. 238; *Yosipon*, cap. 38.

II. *Creating a Credulous Witness*

1. Charm against Lilith, Heb. Aleph 4 b–7 b; Lat. 14–21; VikYehiel, 15; Saba on Gen. 2.

2. Was the moon originally the same size as the sun? Heb. Aleph 7 b–Bet 1 b; Lat. 21–24; VikYehiel, 8.

3. Leviathan Heb. Bet 1 b–5 a; Lat. 24–32; VikYehiel, 14–15.

III. *Has the Messiah Come or Not?*

4. Why don't you Jews believe in our Messiah? Heb. Beth 5 a–b; Lat. 32–33.

5. Why does your Messiah delay his coming so long to deliver you out of your tribulations? Heb. Beth 5 b–Gimel 6 b; Lat. 33–51; VikNahm para. 40–42, 73; SE para. 70, 72–73.

IV. *Present Diaspora and Future Glory*

6. Why do you Jews think there will be a third temple? Heb. Gimel 6 b–Dalet 2 b; Lat. 51–58; Saba on Gen. 28; SE, para. 72.

7. Why does Messiah delay coming? Heb. Datet 2 b–4 a; Lat. 58–61; Kimhi on Isa. 56: 1–2; 59:16, SE, para. 77.

8. What signs will accompany gathering of Diaspora? Heb. Dalet 4 a–6 a; Lat. 61–66; Kimhi on Isa. 26: 8–9, 13, 18 Malachi 3: 1–2, 19, 23.

Interjection: Christian: on the resurrection of the dead: Heb. Dalet 6 a–He 2 b; Lat. 66–75; Kimhi on Is 26: 19; 40: 31; 41: 18–19; SE para. 83; VikNahm para. 54–55.

9. Who will show you the way from the remote countries? Heb. He 2 b-5 b; Lat. 75-80; Kimhi on Isa. 35: 9; 49: 7-12; 59: 7; 60: 8. 11-12; VikNahm, para. 61.

10. What will happen next? Will they build cities and till the ground? Heb. He 5 b-7 b; Lat. 80-85; Kimhi on Isa. 54: 12, 60: 11-13, 61: 5-9, 65: 17, Psalm 132: 2.

11. Shall men die in that land or shall they live forever? Heb. He 7 b-8 b; Lat. 85-90; Kimhi on Isa. 65: 19-20, 22.

12. What is the meaning of Zechariah 14: 10: "the whole earth shall be turned into a plain"? Heb. He 8 b-Waw 2 a; Lat. 88-90; Kimhi on Zech 10: 1, 14: 10, Jeremiah 31: 40, Psalm 127: 5.

13. "Shall the city and the temple be then built as Ezekiel saw them in the spirit of prophecy?" Heb. Waw 2 a-2 b; Lat. 90-91; SE, para. 78.

14. "... At what time of year shall the Israelites go into their own land after your Messiah has come?" Heb. Waw 2 b-3 b; Lat. 91-92; Kimhi on Ezekiel 20: 34-36; 40: 1; 45: 19; SE para. 78.

15. Shall all the nations believe in one God? Heb. Waw 3 b-5 a; Lat. 92-96; Kimhi on Isa. 66: 12, 18-20, 22-23; *Nizzahon* para. 232.

16. Who are Gog and Magog? Heb. Waw 5 a-8 a; Lat. 96-101; Kimhi on Ezk 38: 2, 8-12, 20-21; 39: 10-12; Isa. 66: 24.

17. Can you summarize what you have said? Heb. Waw 8 a-Zayin 5 a; Lat. 101-112; SE para. 79-81.

18. What will happen after the war of Gog and Magog? Heb. Zayin 5 a-6 b; Lat. 112-116; Kimhi on Jer 31: 28, 33: 11, Isa. 2: 4, 18.

19. How will animals behave after the Messiah's coming? Heb. Zayin 6 b-Het 1 a; Lat. 116-120; Kimhi on Isa. 11: 6, 8.

20. Shall your Messiah have a wife and children? Heb. Het 1 a-2 a; Lat. 120-122; SE para. 82, quoting Kimhi on Psalm 45: 10.

21. Shall the Messiah live always or shall he die as other men after a long time? Heb. Het 2 a-4 a; Lat. 122-126; SE para. 72, quoting Nahmanides para. 72.

V. *Final Arguments*

Interjection: Christian: Most of the prophecies that Jew has cited have already been fulfilled. Heb. Het 4 a-5 a; Lat. 126-129.

22. What is your sin that you suffer this banishment so long after the second house was destroyed? Heb. Het 5 a-7 a; Lat. 129-132; SE, para. 28; Kimhi on Isa. 54: 7.

Interjection: Christian invites Jew to convert and Jew's response. Heb. Het 7 a-Tet 2 b; Lat. 132-135; *Nizzahon* para. 9, 205, 232; SE para. 84 (paraphrase); VikNahm, para. 47, 55.

23. Jew: If your Christ is the true Messiah, why did he conceal himself in flesh? Heb. Tet 2 b-6 b; Lat. 141-149; *Nizzahon*, para. 6.

Final Exchanges: Heb. Tet 6 b-8 a; Lat. 149-153; SE para. 28-29; Jew mispronounces Evangelium as *avon gilyon* as author of *Nizzahon* does.

APPENDIX II:

COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE 1529 AND 1539 PRINTINGS OF *MESSIAHS*

Scholars have long differed on whether Sebastian Münster printed two editions of *Messiahs*. The better-known second printing contains a preface dated Tishri 5290 (= Sept/Oct, 1529), which both Burmeister and Prijs explained as a printing error. Viktor Hantzsch, however, included the 1529 printing of *Messiahs* in his bibliography of Münster's works under its unique title, listing Berlin and Tübingen as locations. Steinschneider described the copy formerly held by the Berlin State Library.⁸¹ Fortunately the Tübingen Universitätsbibliothek copy has survived (shelf mark Ci VII 15 a), and the existence of a 1529 printing can no longer be doubted.

Vikkuah Christiani Hominis cum Iudaeo pertinaciter prodigiosis suis opinionibus & scripturae violentis interpretationibus addicto, Colloquium (Basel: Froben, 1529) was printed exclusively in pointed Hebrew without facing Latin translation. The second edition, *Messias Christianorum et Iudaeorum Hebraicè et Latinè* (Basel: Henric Petri, 1539), contains both the Hebrew text and a separately foliated Latin translation, although at least some copies of the Hebrew text may have circulated separately without the Latin translation.⁸² The second printing is 32% longer than the first (2618 lines of Hebrew text vs. 1786 lines), but both printings share the same structure. The questions posed by the Christian are almost the same, except that in the 1529 printing the Christian asks about the resurrection of the dead much earlier in the conversation; it appeared as the sixth question in 1529 and as an interjection by the Christian in 1539.⁸³ Most of the additions either provide more information or allow the Christian to speak out more forcefully than in the first printing. In the second printing, the Jew

81. Karl Heinz Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster: Eine Bibliographie mit 22 Abbildungen* (Wiesbaden, 1964), 40 [#27], Prijs, *Drucke*, 91–93 [#57]. But see Viktor Hantzsch, *Sebastian Münster: Leben, Werk, wissenschaftliche Bedeutung* (Leipzig, 1896), 181, n.261/1; and Steinschneider, "Le Livre de la Foi," 64. Unfortunately the copy described by Steinschneider, Berliner Staatsbibliothek, shelf mark Ev 5518, was destroyed during the Second World War (Berliner Staatsbibliothek to the author, 23 Oct. 1995). Friedman in his earlier article, "Sebastian Münster," 242 and n.8, accepted a 1529 date for the first edition of *Messias*, but was silent on the question in *The Most Ancient Testimony*, 244, implicitly accepting a 1539 date for its composition. His quotations in "Sebastian Münster," 244–245, notes 16–18 are all from the 1539 printing rather than that of 1529. The latter two references may be found in *Messias* (1529), Daleth 2b and He 8a rather than Zayin 1a, Tet 8a. The Jew's sarcastic rejoinder, asking why if Jews were so ugly Christians found their women so attractive, is not found in the 1529 printing. Cf. *Messias* (1529), Aleph 2b and *Messias* (1539), Aleph 2a–b (244, note 16).

82. Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster: Eine Bibliographie*, 40, and Prijs, *Drucke*, list 35 copies of the book in various European libraries, seven of which contain only the Hebrew portion (an eighth exemplar, which I used for this study, is held by Hebrew Union College Library, Cincinnati). For a physical description of the book see Prijs, *Drucke*, 91–93 (#57).

83. Cf. *Messias* (1529) Beth 3a; and *Messias* (1539) (Hebrew), Daleth 6a–He 2b.

provides more information about Lilith, the relative size of the sun and the moon, Leviathan, a possible third Temple, and Gog and Magog.⁸⁴ About two-thirds of the additions, however, are given to Münster's Christian, who objects to the Jew's positions with several lengthy statements about the duration of the captivity, the resurrection of the dead, and the true meaning of Isaiah 53. The conclusion also differs somewhat in the second printing because the Christian twice makes earnest appeals to the Jew to reconsider Christ, only to have the Jew respond in the same way he had in the first printing, with an emphatic no.⁸⁵ The rhetorical strategy which Münster employed in both printings was identical.

84. Cf. *Messias* (1529), Aleph 3 b-Aleph 6 b; and *Messias* (1539), Aleph 4 b-Beth 5 a.

85. *Ibid.* (Hebrew), Gimel 1 a-5 a, Daleth 6 a-He 1 b, Tet 3 a-6 b, 7 a, 7 b-8 a; (Latin) 40-49, 68-74, 142-149, 150-151, 151-153; (English) 54-67, 98-110, 195-199, 216-17, 225-37.