against the Christian Albigensians of southern France, see Chap. 8.) The Fourth Lateran Council, convened by him in 1215, attempting to enforce discipline on Christendom, reaffirmed and strengthened the Church's regulations concerning the Jews, some of which went back to Roman law and to the epistles of Pope Gregory I (590–604). Not only should Jews not employ Christian servants and should Jewish usury be combated, but Jews should be distinguished by a special badge or dress from the Christians. (This measure was borrowed from the Islamic Pact of Omar; the need for a special badge acknowledges that the Jews could not at that time be distinguished by their dress or appearance from Christians.) These regulations were not immediately enforced in most Christian lands, but in the long run they contributed to the decline in Jewish status.

Also in the early thirteenth century, as part of the campaign against heresy, two new preaching orders of the Church were established, the Dominicans and the Franciscans. The Dominicans were especially active against the Jews. In 1240 they participated in a public disputation with Jews in Paris, ordered by the king of France and supported by the pope, which resulted in a decision to burn the Talmud, its being considered the main cause of the Jews' refusal to accept Christian truth and a work that contained slanders of the Christian religion. (The ensuing massive destruction of talmudic manuscripts dealt a serious blow to Jewish scholarship in France.) Soon afterwards, another disputation was arranged by Dominican friars in Barcelona (1263) where they attempted to prove the opposite: that rabbinic lore actually supported the Christian conception of the Messiah. Political conditions in Spain at that time were not favorable to degrading the Jews and the Dominican efforts did not result in a general persecution. The practical consequences of the negative image of the Jews and Judaism throughout Christian Europe depended on local conditions.

Expulsions and Massacres

In 1182 Philip Augustus, king of France, expelled all Jews from the royal domains (then confined to the areas around Paris), confiscated their property, and declared Christian debts to Jews canceled, except for a fifth to be paid to the royal treasury. In 1198 the Jews were recalled, and an additional royal tax imposed on their activities. In the following century French Jews were increasingly considered property of the king rather than free men.

In the thirteenth century the English kings compensated for the deficits in the royal treasury by continually increasing taxes on the Jews. When Italian banking firms began supplying the king with adequate funds at the end of the century, the first mass expulsion of Jews from

Jewish moneylender and German peasant, from a sixteenth-century woodcut.

a whole country was feasible. In 1290 all Jews were ordered to leave England, their dwellings and capital reverting to the king. Most went to France.

By this time the situation of French Jewry was ominous. Louis IX (Saint Louis, who reigned 1226–1270) had conducted a campaign against usury, liberating his subjects from part of their debts to their Jewish creditors. Toward the end of the century Philip IV (the Fair, reigned 1285–1314), who had brought vast additional territories under royal control, lent his support to several events designed to strengthen popular animosity against Jews: a ritual murder trial at Troyes in 1288, a host desecration trial at Paris in 1290. In 1306 an edict of expulsion was issued, the French treasury taking over all debts owed the Jews.[29]

The situation in Germany was more complex. Throughout most of the thirteenth century Jews continued to establish new communities and remained a valuable source of imperial revenue. In Bohemia, Austria, Hungary, and other areas of East Central Europe they received charters

protecting their lives, property, and freedom of movement. (The Austrian charter of 1244 was a model for those issued elsewhere.) Only at the end of the century did outbursts of violence against the Jews become frequent there. The most eminent rabbi of the time, Meir of Rothenberg (c. 1215–1293, the last of the tosafists) was taken prisoner in 1286 while seeking to make a pilgrimage to the holy land. Outraged by an attempt to impose a special tax signifying that the Jews were the emperor's property, Meir refused to allow himself to be ransomed and died in prison. In 1298 plundering gangs marched from province to province in Germany, wiping out about 140 Jewish communities. After several decades of quiet, another wave of massacres broke out in 1336. In 1348–1349, during the Black Death (the bubonic plague, which some modern scholars hold may have killed more than a third of the population of Europe), it was widely believed that the Jews had poisoned the wells of Europe with a mixture of animal and human parts, and dough from the sacred Host. The butchery of Jews was unprecendented in its geographical extent and number of victims. Beginning in southern France in September 1348, the slaughter of Jews spread to Switzerland and western Germany. Temporarily dying down from March to July 1348, the persecutions flared up again in Belgium, northern Germany, and Bavaria

Woodcut showing Jews being burned alive during the Black Death persecutions of 1348–1349.

until late in 1349. The main instigators were often flagellants, wandering bands of religious fanatics who marched from place to place whipping and beating each other to atone for the sins of Christendom. Some outbursts can be attributed to local rulers who arranged in advance for a division of the Jewish property in anticipation of the massacres. The Ashkenazic Jews tried to defend themselves at times, but where they realized that this was impossible, they almost always preferred martyrdom to apostasy.[30]

The surviving Jews were never expelled from Germany in the Middle Ages, as they were in the West, because there was no central German authority that could have expelled them. In the fourteenth century the

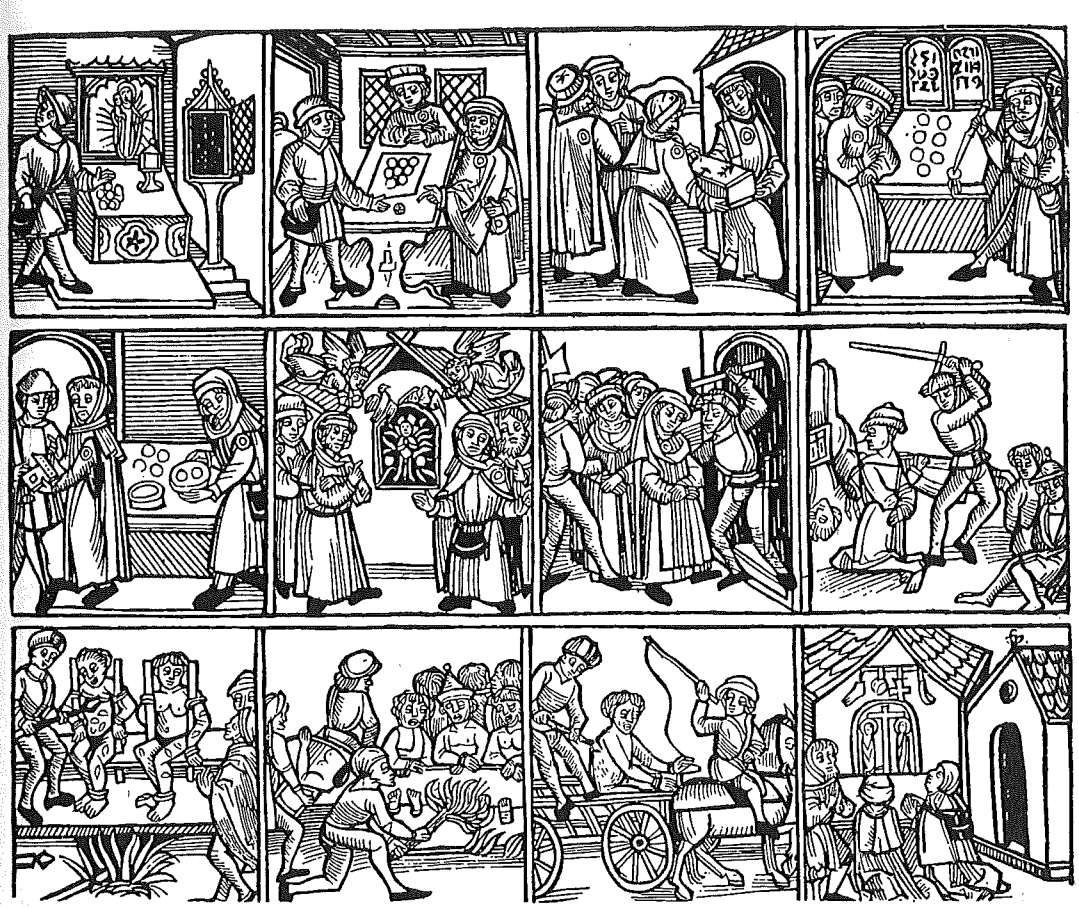
German woodcut from 1493 of the Simon of Trent blood libel; Jews wear the circular badge required of them at the time.

Holy Roman emperor was becoming progressively weaker, and German was fragmented into dozens of principalities and independent cities. Jew who remained were always able to find some place to reside, despit continual expulsions throughout the latter half of the fourteenth and i the fifteenth centuries. Many localities expelled the Jews and then re called them for a limited period of time, confining Jewish residence to special district of the town. (Later the term *ghetto* is applied to thes Jewish quarters.) The Jews were legally serfs of the royal exchequer (*servi camerae nostri*), that is, the property of the emperor or whatever agency to which the emperor ceded the right to control and tax them. German Jews continued to engage in moneylending (but only for small sums, the Italian and south German firms having taken over the major part of the banking business); Jews also engaged in petty trade in agricultural products and in used clothes. The greatest talmudic scholars moved to Poland or to Spain, so the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries were also a period of intellectual impoverishment for German Jews.

The expulsions and massacres of the Jews in the late Middle Ages were a symptom of Jewish vulnerability in an age of social breakdown, recurrent plague, protracted feudal wars, and economic stagnation. A brief description of these events as they affected Jewish history probably obscures the good relations that individual Jews had with non-Jews who considered them trustworthy businessmen. But the negative stereotype of the Jew, deeply rooted in European civilization, had its own momentum, remaining in the people's minds and folklore even when the Jews no longer lived there, and infecting countries where the Jews were still considered valuable subjects. The history of the Jews in Christian Spain was an epitome of this latter tendency, with features unique to Sephardic Jewry.

The Jews in Christian Spain

As a result of the reconquest of most of the Iberian peninsula, the Christian kingdoms of Spain (Castile, Aragon, Portugal) contained large numbers of Muslims and Jews. For almost two centuries the three religions lived side by side under Christian kings. Jewish life in Christian Spain reflected a mixture of features characteristic of the Jews in Muslim lands and in Christian feudal countries. Like most of the Jewries around the Mediterranean, the Sephardim had a wide range of occupations: shopkeepers, artisans (e.g., in textiles, metal work, leather goods), physicians, and only a small number of moneylenders. Spanish Jewry was far more numerous than the Ashkenazic Jews of any single country. (There were at least 200,000 Jews in Castile, Aragon, and Portugal.) It had a much broader range of social classes, ranging from poor and lower-middle-class Jews to a small but influential stratum of courtiers who participated



A fifteenth-century depiction of a host desecration accusation in Passau, ending with the torture and execution of Jews.

in the state administration as royal councilors and financial experts. In the thirteenth century, almost every Spanish king had several Jewish favorites, a policy dropped in fourteenth-century Aragon but continued in Castile. Because a Jew could not aspire to political power on his own, he was considered a particularly dependable royal adviser. Nevertheless, the rise and fall from favor of the Court Jews, as a result of changing whims and policies of a king, were frequently abrupt and dramatic. The Jewish courtiers' reputed inclination to luxurious living and irreligious behavior was often attacked by Jewish preachers.

The legal status of the Spanish Jewish communities was much closer to that of the kehillot of northern Europe than to the legal status of the Jewries under medieval Islam. The separate communities were each given charters (*fueros*), guaranteeing the economic rights of the members and the community's freedom to live according to custom and talmudic law. The *aljamas* (the term used for the Sephardic communities) were much larger in population than the northern kahals; they were virtually Spanish Jewish cities alongside and within the Christian cities, with their own bureaucracy, social services, educational institutions, and

system of courts. During the thirteenth century there were many disputes within the aljamas over the representation on communal boards of the different classes of Jews, similar to the social conflict that often took place in the European cities of the Middle Ages. The relation of the Jewish courtiers to the aljamas was a particularly bitter issue.

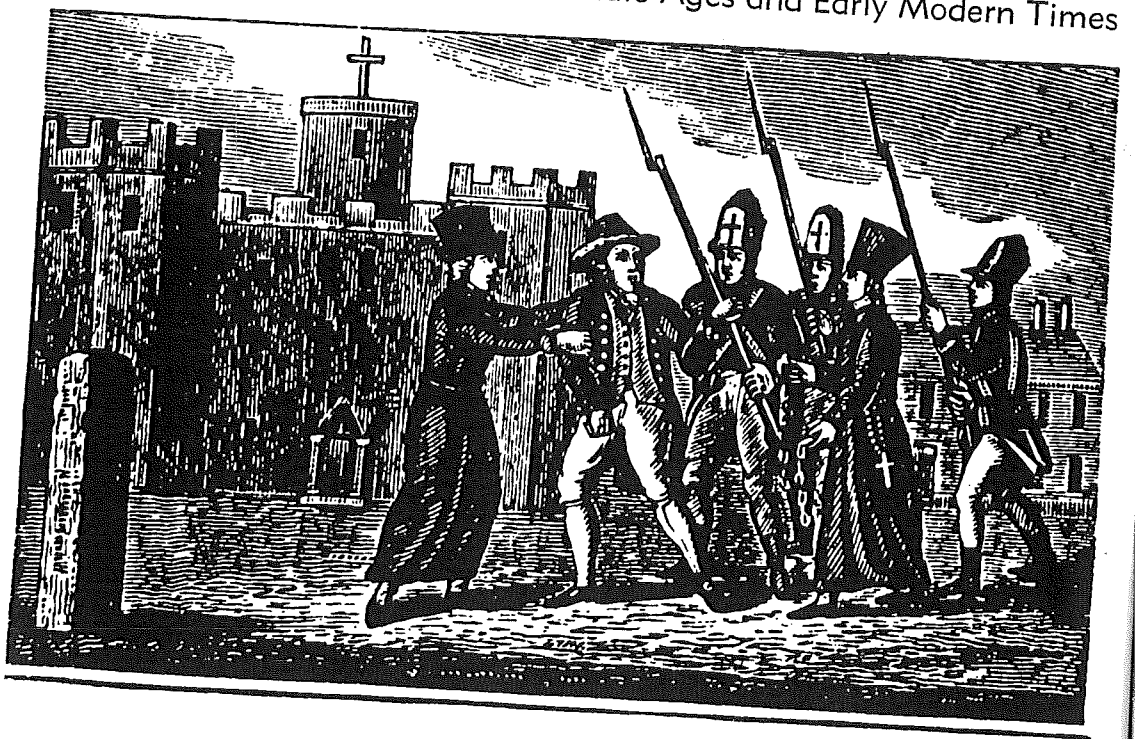
The intellectual life of the Sephardic Jews was also a mixture of conflicting tendencies. As in Muslim Spain, a significant number of Spanish Jews studied the natural sciences, mathematics, and philosophy and made important contributions to geography, astronomy, and medicine. The thirteenth century was an age of intense cultural creativity, marked by the spread of a new form of speculative theology among Spanish Jews—the mystical tradition known as the Kabbalah. The presence of Ashkenazic Judaism was also felt in the thirteenth century: The greatest rabbis of the time, Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides) and Solomon ibn Adret, both of Barcelona, were thoroughly acquainted with the tosafists of northern Europe and used their ideas in halakhic matters. In 1303 Asher ben Yehiel, a student of Meir of Rothenberg, fled from Germany to Spain, where he became a rabbi in Toledo. His son, Jacob ben Asher (c. 1270–1340), compiled one of the most influential codes of Jewish law, the *Arba'ah Turim* (*Four Rows*), summarizing the laws still practicable in the diaspora concerning Jewish rituals and ceremonies, family and civil matters, and religious prohibitions.

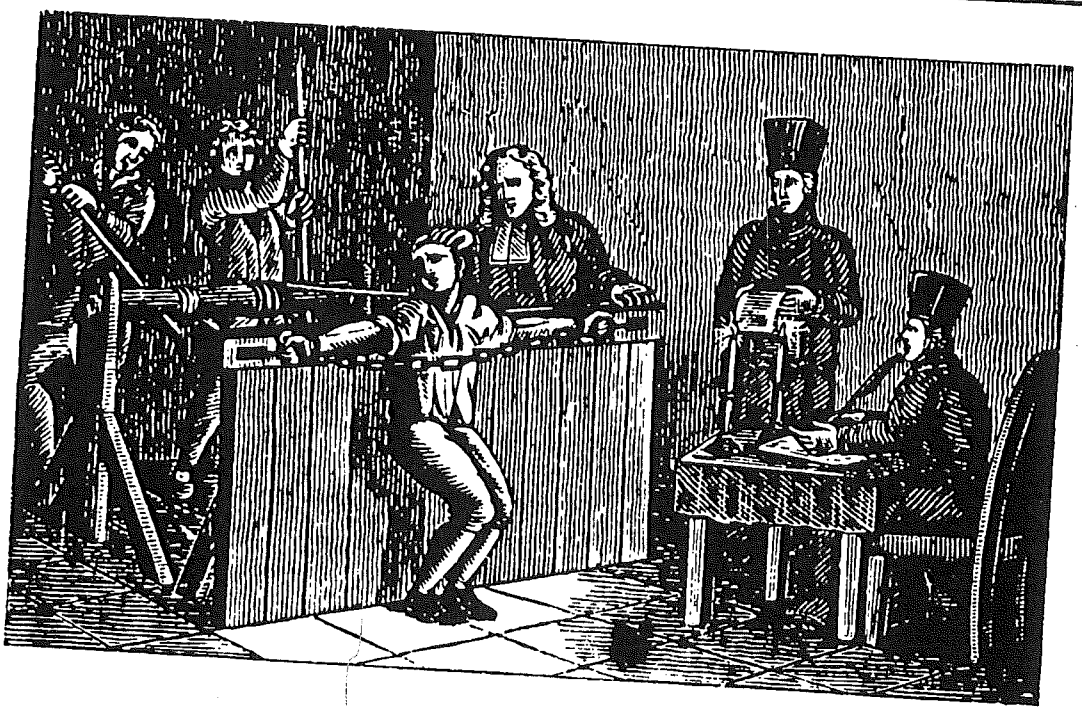
The thirteenth century in the north was a period when hatred and violence toward Jews were on the rise. (Asher ben Yehiel had come to Spain because it promised refuge from persecution.) On the whole, effective action by the kings of Castile and Aragon prevented the large-scale massacres of Jews that took place elsewhere during the Black Death. In the final stages of reconquering the Iberian peninsula from the Muslims, Spanish kings even gave large tracts of land to Jews to repopulate and develop. Only toward the end of the fourteenth century did the situation of the Spanish Jews noticeably deteriorate.

In the 1360s, the victor in a long military struggle for the throne of Castile (Henry of Trastamara) used anti-Jewish slogans to win support, although afterwards he continued the old policy of having Jewish advisers. Further political instability and weakness set the stage for widespread anti-Jewish violence in 1391. Encouraged by Jew-haters in the Church, mobs slaughtered Jewish communities in one city after another throughout Castile and Aragon. The massacres of 1391 were a symptom of a wave of social unrest in which Jews were the first and chief victims. When the rioters began to turn on Christians and their property as well, the authorities reimposed order as quickly as possible. The year 1391 was a turning point in the history of Spanish Jewry, for two reasons. First, tens of thousands of Jews, especially among the upper classes, converted to Christianity to save their lives and possessions. Second, the

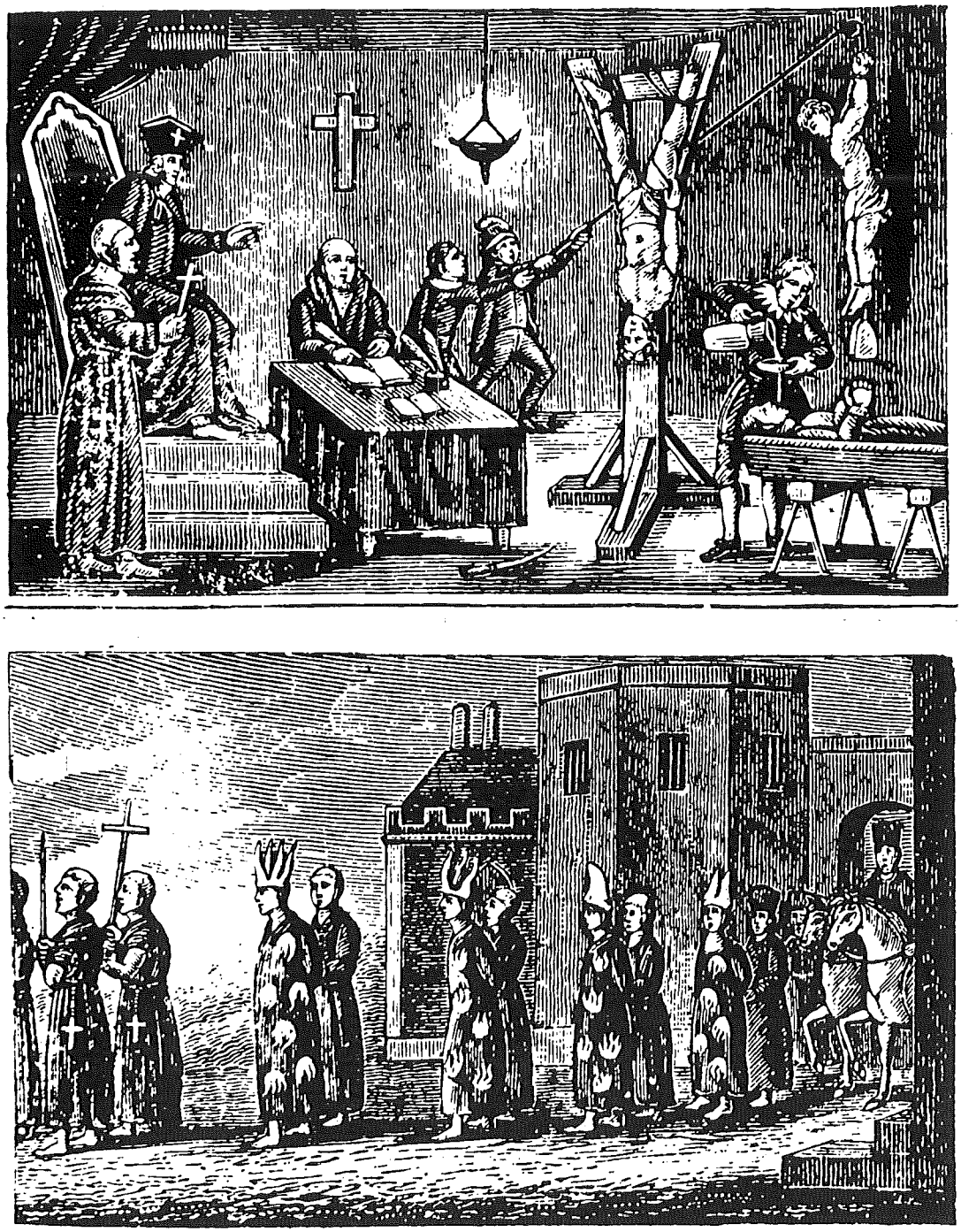
¶ Aber an enden da die judiſchait nicht wonhafft/ noch die pücher für zů bringen ſein / mag man die vorberürten wort des gepotts in hebreyſcher oder teütſcher ſprach/ dem juden ſchrifftlich oder mündtlich fürlegen oder jn ſelbs laſſen verleſen. Sein hand darauf/ oder an ſein prust legen/ vnd den ayd wie vorſteet/ thůn.

Jews in court taking the special Jewish oath, from an early sixteenth-century engraving.





Spanish rulers, for the first time, introduced legislation degrading the Jews (the Castilian laws of 1412, which sought to isolate Jews socially and economically from Christians). The new policy was underlined by a public disputation (1413–1414) in the town of Tortosa, where Jewish leaders were forced to debate their doctrine of the Messiah. (The prosecution was led by a converted Jew, and the proceedings were given the



Scenes from the Spanish Inquisition: seizure of suspects, forms of torture, the condemned being led away to punishment.

blessing of one of the men competing for recognition as pope.) Another wave of conversion to Christianity resulted from pressure applied during the Tortosa dispute, so that when the quarter century of anti-Jewish pressure (1391–1415) finally subsided, there was a large population of former Jews in Spain (called "New Christians" or *Conversos*), perhaps equal in number to Jews who had refused to apostasize. The presence

of these two groups, Conversos and Jews, shaped the course of Jewish history in Spain during the fifteenth century.

At first the Conversos found that their situation had been improved by baptism. Barriers against their participation in many aspects of Spanish life disappeared, and new opportunities opened up in city government, the state administration, and the Church. (Several Conversos and children of Conversos became important bishops and church officials who, in order to emphasize the sincerity of their Christian faith, were among the most outspoken enemies of Judaism in fifteenth-century Spain.) The Spanish nobility and even the royal family of Aragon eagerly sought to marry their offspring to children of wealthy Conversos. While the Conversos were seemingly being absorbed into Spanish society, the Jews were attempting to reconstruct their communities and educational institutions. *Aljamas* were re-established in some places (though not in the great centers, such as Toledo and Barcelona, where Jewish life had been totally destroyed), and new Jewish settlements were founded in many small towns of northern Castile.

In the mid-fifteenth century, a new wave of hostility surfaced. At first, popular hatred was directed mainly against Conversos conspicuous as tax collectors. (The first anti-Converso riot was in Toledo in 1449; in the succeeding decades these attacks became more common, culminating in an especially violent outburst in Cordova in 1473.) Attacks on the New Christians were rationalized by the accusation that they were Jews in disguise and practiced Jewish ceremonies secretly. The term *Marrano*, "swine," applied to the Conversos by their enemies, enters Jewish history at this time. Eventually *Marrano* loses its connotation of loathing and becomes a badge of honor among Jews.[31]

In 1469 Isabella, Queen of Castile, married Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Aragon; ten years later the two realms were joined into one Spanish kingdom. In 1480, Ferdinand and Isabella established the Spanish Inquisition to investigate the charges circulating against the Conversos. An inquisition was a religious court to root out heresy; although the Spanish Inquisition was officially under the jurisdiction of the pope, for all practical purposes it was controlled by the monarchy. In the first twenty years of a history that lasted almost three and a half centuries, the Spanish Inquisition claimed to have discovered several thousand secret Jews among the New Christians; their property was confiscated and they were condemned to various penances. Those who refused to repent were turned over to the secular authorities to be burned at the stake. In the late 1480s inquisitors using threats of torture extracted confessions concerning a blood libel (the case of the "infant of La Guardia"—although no corpse was ever discovered), which set the stage for the expulsion of Spanish Jewry. After Ferdinand and Isabella conquered Granada in 1492 (the last Muslim territory on the Iberian peninsula), they issued

Ferdinand and Isabella, the Spanish monarchs who expelled the Jews in 1492.

an edict making Judaism illegal in Spain. Supporters of this measure argued that the Conversos had to be quarantined against Judaism. Some Jews converted in order to avoid having to leave, but an estimated 100,000–150,000 Jews departed from Spain in the summer of 1492. Many went to Portugal, where despite royal promises, they were coerced into

baptism five years later (1497). Others went to North Africa, Italy, and Ottoman Turkey.

By 1500 the greatest medieval European centers of Judaism had either been destroyed (England, France, Spain, Portugal) or much diminished (Germany). In Eastern Europe and in the eastern Mediterranean, however, Judaism was about to find new strength.