

## **The Lost Mirror. Jews and *Conversos* in the Middle Ages**

Every image we create is a mirror that reflects a way of seeing. We look at the world and at others in relation to ourselves, through our own mentality and attitude.

Using a broad selection of works, this exhibition recreates a medieval mirror that shows how Jews and *conversos* (converts to Christianity) were portrayed by Christians in Spain from 1285 to 1492. Images played a key role in the complex relationship between all three groups during this period. On the one hand, they were an important vehicle for the transmission of rites and artistic models between Christians and Jews and provided a space for collaboration between artists from both communities. On the other—the grim flipside—they helped spread the growing anti-Judaism embedded in Christian society. In this respect, the visual stigmatisation of the Jews was a faithful reflection of the Christians' mirror, of their beliefs and anxieties, and accordingly a powerful means of asserting their identity.

Following the mass conversion of Jews to Christianity resulting from the pogroms of 1391, cult images became the centrepiece of the controversy. They were taken as evidence for confirming New Christians' sincerity or, on the contrary, for accusing them of Judaizing. The spread of these unfounded suspicions of Judaizing heresy lay at the root of the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1478. Aware of the power of images, the new institution used them intensively, either to design powerful settings or to define methods for visually identifying *conversos*.

The images featured in this exhibition remind us that while differences exist, the idea of otherness is a construct.

## Chronology

1215. 4th Lateran Council. Rules on differentiating Jews' clothing.

1290. *Affaire des Billettes* in Paris. Legend on the desecration of a host.

1320–21. Shepherds' Crusade. Episodes of violence against Jews in the Crown of Aragon.

1347–53. Black Death. Attacks on Jewish quarters.

1391. Attacks and destruction of the main Jewish quarters in the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon.

1412. Anti-Jewish laws of Ayllón.

1413-14. Tortosa Disputation. Forced by the Christians, the Jewish religious authorities recognise the 'errors' of their faith.

1449. Ordinance of Toledo. First laws on purity of blood.

1478. Bull issued by Sixtus IV establishing the Holy Office of the Inquisition.

1480. Decree founding the Castilian Inquisition.

1485. Murder of Pedro de Arbués, Inquisitor General of Aragon.

1491. Auto-da-fe in Ávila where a group of Jews and *conversos* are convicted of the ritual crime of the Holy Child of La Guardia.

1492. Decree on the expulsion of the Jews.

1.

## **TRANSFERS AND EXCHANGES**

Christians and Jews inhabited a shared space with permeable religious boundaries. Despite the differences between the two communities, Jewish artists produced works for Christians and Christian masters executed pieces for Jews. Transfers and exchanges were often encouraged by the patrons themselves. In a display of acculturation, the Jewish elite commissioned illuminated manuscripts— notably *haggadot*—similar in format and type to Christian codices. For their part, some Christian painters and patrons drew on their intimate knowledge of Jewish customs and rituals to devise portraits of various kinds: from positive depictions of traditional environments and practices to scenes designed from a clearly polemical perspective. The images show that for Christians no religious adversary was more familiar—and therefore more difficult to ignore—than the Jews.

## 1.1

### **Haggadot: Christian Masters in Jewish Works**

A haggadah ('telling' in Hebrew) is an account of the Exodus—the Israelites' departure from Egypt towards the Promised Land—that is required to be read at home during the Seder, the ritual Jewish Passover meal. The largest and most splendid group of medieval illuminated codices was produced in Catalonia. These manuscripts closely follow the models of contemporary Christian books, both in the style of the miniatures and in the iconography of the Genesis and Exodus scenes. Even the Seder illustrations, which depict rituals exclusive to Judaism, sometimes include elements drawn from Christian visual culture. All these works provide evidence that Christians and Jews worked in partnership.

1

Scenes of the Plagues of Egypt in the *Rylands Haggadah* 1335-40. Illuminated parchment

The folios on display illustrate Moses and Aaron's meeting with the Pharaoh and the first three plagues that were unleashed on Egypt: water turned to blood, frogs and mosquitos. The illuminated haggadot begin with a cycle from Genesis and Exodus and end with the Seder scenes. They draw a direct line between biblical time and the medieval present, stressing the unchanging status of the ritual and the continuity of Judaism.

COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER  
THE JOHN RYLANDS RESEARCH INSTITUTE AND  
LIBRARY, MANCHESTER. HEBREW MS. 6

## 2

Jewish Passover Scenes from the *Golden Haggadah*  
1320–30. Illuminated parchment

The image of Miriam, accompanied by maidens dancing and playing musical instruments, recalls the Song of the Sea recited after the Crossing of the Red Sea. It is followed by ritual scenes of the Seder, such as the distribution of *matzot* and *haroset*, the cleaning of the house and the slaughtering of the paschal lambs. The delicate faces and fashionable hairstyles of the Jewish protagonists resemble those of Christian figures in courtly Parisian manuscripts of the same period.

THE BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON. ADD MS. 27210

### 3

#### *Matzah* in the *Barcelona Haggadah*

c. 1340. Illuminated parchment

To commemorate the Israelites' suffering and deliverance from slavery in Egypt, *matzah* (unleavened bread), *maror* (bitter herbs) and *haroset* (a sweet paste made from nuts and fruits) are eaten at the Seder feast. A frequent iconographic choice in haggadot is the depiction of *matzot* as exceptionally large circumferences. Here it is accompanied by a group of musicians similar to the jongleurs and acrobats found in Christian manuscripts. A specifically Jewish symbol thus gives rise to an expression of courtly culture that must also have fascinated the book's prosperous Jewish owner.

THE BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON. ADD MS. 14761

## 1.2

### **Jewish Rites and Life in Christian Scenes**

The images drawn from the Jewish world that we find in Christian art reflect realities of close contact and exchange between the two communities. The faithful portrayals of synagogues, liturgical objects and ritual clothing attests to this. Some pieces—such as the scene with Zacharias on display here—demonstrate a remarkable knowledge of Jewish customs that enabled the artist to depict an esoteric tradition inspired by the Zohar, the foundational book of the Kabbalah. Others, however, reinterpret some of the basic rites of Judaism, such as circumcision, anachronistically in order to strip them of their original meaning and subject them to a new Christian reading.

## 4

**Domingo Ram** (act. in Aragon)

The Angel appearing to Zacharias

c. 1470. Tempera and gold leaf on panel

Zacharias's rich robes with hanging bells are characteristic of the high priest, the only person allowed inside the inner sanctuary of the Temple during the feast of Yom Kippur. The striking gold chain attached to his leg is held by another priest, who is entrusted with extracting the high priest's body if he dies during the sacred ritual. This exceptional iconographic detail reveals knowledge of an unusual postbiblical Jewish rite.

THE CLOISTERS COLLECTION, 1925

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

## 5

**Jaume Huguet** (act. in Catalonia)

Lot fleeing from Sodom and Exodus from Egypt (from the retable of Saint Bernardino of Siena and the Guardian Angel)

1462–75. Oil on panel

Moses leads the Israelites across the Red Sea. His head is draped in a striped garment, probably a *tallit* or prayer shawl worn by Jews. Although in the Ashkenazi Jewish traditions of northern and central Europe the *tallit* was donned exclusively for prayer, on the Iberian Peninsula it continued to be used in non-ritual contexts as well.

MUSEO DE LA S. I. CATEDRAL BASÍLICA DE  
BARCELONA

6

**Follower of Bernat Martorell** (act. in Catalonia)

Christ among the Doctors

c.1420-40. Tempera and gold leaf on panel

The rectangular space of the Temple, where Jesus meets the studious Jewish teachers, displays several parallels with Iberian medieval synagogues. These include the position of the wooden benches for the faithful at the sides, the glass lamps that provide lighting, and the *bimah* or elevated pulpit reached by steps from which the Torah was read to those in attendance.

THE FRIEDSAM COLLECTION, BEQUEST OF MICHAEL  
FRIEDSAM, 1931

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

7

**Pere Vall** (act. in Catalonia)

Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law

c. 1410. Tempera and gold leaf on panel

The hexagonal halo not only stresses Moses' holiness but also distinguishes him from the Jews who are worshipping the golden calf, characterised by the red badge on their chests. In contrast to the positive depiction of the prophet, the idolatrous Jews are signalled by this discriminatory symbol which, together with the hooded cloak, became a recurring visual device in Christian works for identifying Jews at first sight.

PRIVATE COLLECTION

## 8

### **Master of La Sisle** (act. in Toledo)

#### The Circumcision

c.1500. Oil on panel transferred to canvas

The Gothic architecture of the temple, the high priest dressed in bishop's vestments and the presence of an altar transform the Circumcision of Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem into a Catholic liturgical ceremony. The Christian artists reinterpreted the Gospel episode as a demonstration of Christ's humanity and a prefiguration of his redemptive sacrifice on the cross. A traditional Jewish ritual was thus redefined as a fundamental moment within Christian salvific history.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

## 9

**Nicolás i Martín** (act. in Aragon)

Expulsion of Saint Joaquim and Saint Anne from the Temple (from the retablo of Santa María de Borja)

1465–77. Oil on panel

The scene takes place in a synagogue, as indicated by the Torah case (*tik*), depicted as a precious piece of Christian Gothic gold work. Joachim displays an octagonal halo, used to distinguish Jewish figures venerated by Christians. In contrast, his wife Anne, who according to the doctrine became the immaculate vessel for Mary, Jesus' mother, has a circular halo like that of sacred Christian figures.

MUSEO DE LA COLEGIATA DE SANTA MARÍA, BORJA  
(ZARAGOZA)

## 10

Jewish necklace with apotropaic amulets from Les Roquetes

c. 1350. Glass paste, jet, horn, coral, silver, bronze, glass and rock crystal

This necklace belonged to a Jewish child killed in 1348 during the attack on Tàrrega's Jewish district, whose remains show that he suffered from a malformation of the legs. The materials of the pendants, among them the hand of Fatima, indicate that it was an apotropaic object designed to protect the wearer. Jews, Christians and Muslims believed that these amulets served to guard against the evil eye. It is a good example of interculturality.

MUSEU TÀRREGA URGELL, TÀRREGA (LÉRIDA)

## **FROM FORERUNNERS TO A BLIND PEOPLE**

According to the Christian concept of Salvation History, the so-called Old and New Testaments are inextricably linked. That is why prominent Jewish kings and prophets were common subjects of Christian iconography, where they were represented as prefigurations of the New Law. In contrast to this positive view, from the 13th century onwards Christian theologians developed a distinctly belligerent attitude of negatively stressing the Jews' inability to accept Jesus' divine nature. Images, like texts, echoed this controversy through the explicit metaphor of the Jews' blindness, a theme that was widely disseminated and reproduced in all kinds of works and media. Although many authorities continued to argue that it was possible for the Jews to convert to Christianity, the visual recreation of this blindness paved the way for constructing their alterity. Through their denial of the Messiah, the Jews began to become the Other.

## 11

**Diego de la Cruz** (act. in Burgos)

Christ of Mercy between the Prophets David and Jeremiah  
c. 1495–1500. Oil on panel

The three figures depicted each hold a ribbon scroll: that of Christ Man of Sorrows alludes to the Passion, those of the prophets to the Incarnation. Evidence of a visual association between the figure of David and the image of the Man of Sorrows, an emblem of Christ's triumph over death, dates back to the 13th century. According to the Scriptures, the Old Testament king and prophet David was a herald of Jesus' resurrection.

DONACIÓN DE LA FAMILIA VÁREZ FISA, 2013  
MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

12

**Matfre Ermengaud de Béziers**

*Breviari d'Amor, The Devil prevents the Jews from understanding the Scriptures*

c. 1325–50. Illuminated parchment

In contrast to the formula chosen elsewhere in the *Breviari d'Amor* manuscripts to evoke the Jews' obstinacy, here the Jew is not deprived of sight but of hearing. The devil's weapon is not the blindfold but a tuba that he blows into his victim's ear, preventing him from hearing. The inscriptions explain the consequence: 'the blinded Jew does not understand the prophecy' or 'does not understand the Church'.

BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE ESPAÑA, MADRID

## 2.1

### **The Church and the Synagogue**

Medieval theologians and church leaders subscribed to the idea of the need for Jewish people to exist within Christendom in order to remind the world of their obstinacy, their blindness in refusing to recognise the Messiah. They were following the assumptions of Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, who prophesied that the Jews would accept the Scriptures and convert at the end of time. Allegories of the Church and the Synagogue and scenes of preaching prefigure this future acknowledgement of Christianity. However, the frequent use of discriminatory and negative visual features to evoke Jews' blindness further accentuated their stigmatisation, hindering the possibility of reconciliation.

**13**

**Palencia workshop**

Synagoga

c. 1250–1300. Polychrome wood

Blindfolded and with her head tilted in a gesture of sadness, for Christians this elegant personification of the Synagogue symbolises the defeat of the Old Testament. Like the woodcarving of the Church on view here, it probably comes from a Castilian Crucifixion. The Synagogue once ruled, but her time is over: her crown is now worn by the Church, who governs while awaiting the second coming of Christ.

«EL CONVENTET» COLLECTION, BARCELONA

**14**

**Fernando Gallego** (act. in Castile)

Christ blessing

c.1494–96. Oil on panel

On either side of the enthroned Christ are the allegories of the Church, a young woman with a laurel crown holding a chalice and carrying a cross-topped standard, and the Synagogue, a decrepit, blindfolded old woman with a broken staff. The yellow of her pennant and dress is a negative sign: this colour had been linked to falsehood and treason since the 13th century. This explains its association with Judas and, through an evidently defamatory intention, with Judaism and the Synagogue.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

**15**

**Palencia workshop**

Ecclesia

c.1250–1300. Polychrome wood

The allegory of the Church is a young queen who asserts her authority on earth: she is crowned and attired in a dalmatic, chasuble and alb. Judging by the hole visible in her right hand, she must have held a staff or chalice. Church and Synagogue are personifications, but medieval audiences viewed them as specific characters. Moreover, they are a metaphor for Jews' subjection to Christianity and their possible conversion at the end of time.

FUNDACIÓN FRANCISCO GODIA, BARCELONA

## 2.2

### **Matfre Ermengaud, *Breviari d'amor***

Christian prejudice about Jewish blindness is expressed in a large series of images in the *Breviari d'amor*, an encyclopaedic text composed by the Franciscan Matfre Ermengaud around 1288. The work was widely circulated during the 14th and 15th centuries in the south of France and in Catalonia, where sumptuous illuminated copies were produced. In some codices, such as the one on display from the British Library, the Catalan text is accompanied by a Hebrew translation of the biblical passages which, according to the author, the Jews refuse to accept as prophecies of the coming of the Messiah. The images emphasise this misinterpretation and attribute it to the intervention of the devil.

## 16

Matfre Ermengaud de Béziers

*Breviari d'Amor, The Devil prevents the Jews from understanding the Scriptures*

c. 1375–1400. Illuminated parchment

The figures of the Fathers of the Church illustrate the Messianic prophecies. Beside them is a meaningful image: a devil blindfolds a Jewish man, preventing him from reading a book. Blindness expresses the idea of Judaism's obstinate denial of the Scriptures. As the Catalan title heading the image states: 'the blind Jew does not understand the prophecy'. To emphasise the point, the sacred text is transcribed in Hebrew.

THE BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDRES. MS. YATES  
THOMPSON 31

17

**Circle of Ferrer and Arnau Bassa** (act. in Catalonia)

Saint Stephen preaching in the Synagogue

c. 1340-50. Tempera and gold leaf on panel

In this image, which is designed to show the superiority of the Christian faith, the Jews react to Stephen's words with a mixture of acceptance, disbelief and despair. Some are dressed in long, hooded tunics. The 4th Lateran Council (1215) ruled that Jews and Muslims should wear some kind of identifying sign to distinguish them from Christians. Although the legislation on clothing was limited in enforcement, it gave rise to the creation of a series of discriminatory iconographic codes.

MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA,  
BARCELONA

**18**

**Nicolás and Martín Zahortiga** (act. in Aragon)

Christ among the Doctors (from the retablo of Santa María de Borja)

1465–77. Tempera on panel

Unlike most representations of this theme, here the Jewish priests listen attentively to Jesus' words. It is worth noting that instead of sporting the Jewish cloak, they are characterised by oriental-looking headdresses resembling those worn by Muslims of Valencia and Aragon. This is another iconographic device for visually marking the religious frontier separating Jews from Christians.

MUSEO DE LA COLEGIATA DE SANTA MARÍA, BORJA  
(ZARAGOZA)

**19**

**Circle of Jaume Cascalls** (act. in Catalonia)

The Prophet Daniel

c. 1360. Polychrome limestone

The origin of this sculpture is unknown. However, as prophets were not usually represented individually, it is reasonable to conjecture that it was once part of a larger ensemble. During the Late Middle Ages groups of images of Old Testament kings and prophets were designed as essential complements of New Testament cycles. Their purpose was to herald the Incarnation and the Messiah's redemptive sacrifice.

CASACUBERTA MARSANS COLLECTION

**20**

**Master of Saint George and the Princess**

(act. in Aragon)

Saint Daniel

c. 1455-60. Tempera on panel

Prophets, sometimes paired with the Evangelists or Fathers of the Church, are commonly found in the outer sections of Gothic altarpieces. A likely example is this small panel painting of the prophet Daniel, who is recognisable from the inscription referring to one of his eschatological prophecies. It was probably part of the predella or lower area of a larger ensemble.

LEGADO PABLO BOSCH Y BARRAU, 1916

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

## **ANTI-JUDAISM AND MEDIATIC IMAGES**

A varied anti-Jewish iconography began to develop in the late 13th century in a context of systemic violence against the Jews. It ranges from portraits based on caricatures and distinguishing signs (clothing and round badges) to scenes portraying the Jews as enemies of the Christian faith. As in the rest of Western Europe, besides expressing intolerance and prejudice, these degrading images often stemmed from strategies for asserting the Christian identity. We need only look at the scenes showing acts of desecration of cult images and the host, or at the Passion cycles. From a Christian viewpoint, many of these representations were regarded as an effective means of ratifying beliefs that had sparked heated controversy within the Church—for example, the cult of images and of the Eucharist— or of spreading Christocentric devotions. The distorted image of the Jews as desecrators and deicides was a reflection returned by the Christian mirror—an expression of the beliefs, fears and anxieties of the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church.

### **3.1**

#### **Eucharistic Miracles**

The combination of growing anti-Jewish sentiment and the development of the cult of the Eucharist—on the rise since the establishment of the feast of Corpus Christi in 1264—sparked the appearance of numerous libels accusing the Jews of desecrating the Eucharistic host. The specific details of each accusation vary, but they all share a common feature: the Jews attack a sacred host, which miraculously begins to bleed. Like the debates on images, depictions of bleeding hosts were an effective means of publicising such a complex and controversial theological concept as the real presence of Christ in the consecrated host during Mass. The flipside was the increasing stigmatisation of the Jewish people.

**21**

**Guillem Seguer (?)** (act. in Catalonia)

Altarpiece of Corpus Christi from Vallbona de les Monges  
(Lérida)

c. 1335-45. Tempera and gold leaf on panel

Four of the scenes depicted on the two panels displayed opposite each other here tell of the aggressions (involving a dagger, spear and cauldron) inflicted on the host by some Jews. In another we see a pair of them being burnt at the stake, and a further two in the upper right area of the frontal show a Jew taking communion and being baptised.

Whereas in the episodes of the Eucharistic miracles the Jews are portrayed in a clearly negative light, their role is reversed in the latter.

MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA, BARCELONA

22

**Llorenç Saragossà (?)** (act. in Catalonia and Valencia)

Altarpiece of the Eucharist

c. 1370-80. Tempera on panel

Here the glorification of the cult of the Eucharist draws on the *affaire des Billettes*, a well-known Eucharistic miracle that reportedly occurred in the late 1200s. As illustrated in the lower scenes flanking the *Last Supper*, a Jew of Paris is given a host by a Christian woman who wishes to retrieve a pawned dress. Accompanied by other members of his faith, the Jew subjects the host to different tortures. However, it not only remains intact but also bleeds, clearly evidencing Christ's real presence.

IGLESIA PARROQUIAL DE LA NATIVIDAD DE NUESTRA  
SEÑORA, DIÓCESIS DE SEGORBE-CASTELLÓN,  
VILLAHERMOSA DEL RÍO (CASTELLÓN)

**23**

**Guillem Seguer (?)** (act. in Catalonia)

Altar Frontal of Corpus Christi from Vallbona de les Monges  
(Lérida)

c. 1335–45. Tempera and gold leaf on panel

The two panels displayed here opposite one other were originally the altar frontal and altarpiece of a chapel dedicated to the Corpus Christi in 1348. Like other female communities, the Cistercian nuns of Vallbona made worship of the body of Christ and contemplation of the host the focus of their meditations. This explains the central images of both works and the large cycle of Eucharistic miracles, notably those involving Jews.

MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA, BARCELONA

## **3.2**

### **In the Passion**

Saint Augustine had assumed the Jews' ignorance during the Passion of Christ: according to him, they did not regard Jesus as the Son of God. In medieval anti-Jewish literature, this mitigating circumstance gradually gave way to the idea that they had acted with full awareness and were therefore guilty of outright deicide. This terrible accusation was echoed in texts and images produced in connection with various late medieval devotional movements that advocated an empathetic approach to the Passion of Christ. The device was simple: emphasising the wickedness of the Jews in order to heighten faithful Christians' feelings of commiseration and pain at Christ's suffering. The images varied in intensity and spanned the whole spectrum from strictly incriminating to blatantly anti-Judaist.

**24**

**Pere Serra** (act. in Catalonia and Aragon)

Christ before Pilate

c.1375–1400. Tempera on panel

The figure of Pilate is judged variously. A long tradition dating back to Matthew the Evangelist exonerates him from responsibility for Jesus' death and pins all the blame on the Jews, as in this panel. Here the Roman prefect seems to hesitate at the Jews' accusations. In contrast, in other contemporary depictions—such as the painting on view by Alonso Sedano—Pilate takes part wholeheartedly together with the other Jews in the conviction and death of the Messiah.

MUSEU EPISCOPAL DE VIC, VIC (BARCELONA)

**25**

**Alonso de Sedano** (act. in Castile)

Ecce Homo

c. 1495–96. Oil on panel

The Jews clamouring for Christ's execution are characterised by their exaggerated gestures, discriminatory clothing and distorted faces. Pilate, appearing on the right, gives the go-ahead on Caiaphas's advice. The dramatic and theatrical tone of the painting displays many parallels with contemporary accounts of the Passion, many of them composed in verse and in vernacular languages, such as the well-known *Pasión trobada* by Diego de San Pedro (c. 1470–80).

MUSEO DIOCESANO DE LA CATEDRAL DE BURGOS

## 26

### Christ before Pilate and Flagellation of Christ in the *Catalan Passion*

c. 1340. Illuminated parchment

This manuscript seeks to convey in images the major role played by the Jews in the Passion. Whereas in the scene of Christ before Pilate the characters accusing the Messiah are labelled as 'Jews', there is a further turn of the screw in the Flagellation scene, where not only are the two executioners portrayed as Jews but the inscriptions brand them as 'evil'. The Catalan text states that it was designed for a lay audience.

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARÍS

**27**

**Joan Reixach** (act. in Valencia)

Predella with Passion scenes

c. 1454. Tempera and oil on panel

In this sequence of episodes of the Passion from the altarpiece of the Charterhouse of Valldecris (Castellón), many of the Romans and Jews wear Arab-style clothing. Pilate sports a headdress similar to that of Caiaphas, a Jewish priest. The anachronistic association of the gospel figures of the Passion with Muslims—also considered enemies of the Christian faith—was relatively common in Spanish Gothic art and was a new means of visual stigmatisation. The exception is Judas, who is based on the usual defamatory stereotype.

MUSEU DE BELLES ARTS DE VALÈNCIA

28

*Passion Scenes*, in *Speculum animae*  
c. 1500. Coloured inks on paper

The kingdoms of Iberia have bequeathed a rich collection of representations of the Passion that stress Jewish culpability. A particularly significant, extensive and vitriolic example is the *Speculum Animae*. In this manuscript a series of torture episodes from apocryphal sources is added to the cycle of traditional images of the Passion. One shows the punishments inflicted on Christ on crossing the Kidron stream. The purpose seems clear: to move the recipients of the codex, the nuns of the convent of La Trinidad in Valencia.

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARÍS

29

**Jaume Serra** (act. in Catalonia and Aragon)

Predella of the Altarpiece of the Virgin in the monastery of Santa María de Sijena (Huesca)

c. 1367–81. Tempera and gold leaf on panel

In this predella the Eucharistic miracle of Billettes (Paris) is summed up in a single compartment to the right of the *Last Supper*. It features a variant: in the cauldron—an allusion to desecration in boiling water—the host turns into the Christ Child. The Paris story was widely publicised and depicted in multiple versions during the Late Middle Ages—so many that it played a decisive part in spreading the libel of Jews as desecrators of Blessed Sacraments. Images were a key driver of anti-Judaism.

MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA,  
BARCELONA

**30**

**Jaume Serra** (act. in Catalonia and Aragon)

Last Supper

c. 1360–70. Tempera and gold leaf on panel

In the Last Supper scene of the Villahermosa del R o altarpiece, the Sijena predella and this small painting, the figure of Judas is characterised with physiognomic features (reddish hair, hooked nose, exaggerated profile) and clothing (yellow) that signal his evil nature—in the Sijena panel he is even accompanied by the devil. He is the counterfigure of the Christian, the result of an exercise in visual otherness that was also used to debase Jews. From Judas to the Jews.

GALLERIA REGIONALE DELLA SICILIA, PALAZZO  
ABATELLIS, PALERMO

## Caricatures

Christian notarial ledgers known as *libri iudeorum* record the financial transactions of Jews in Catalonia, especially their loans. Many include caricatures of Jews that reproduce a stereotype repeated since the 13th century, characterised by exaggerated facial features such as a disproportionately large nose and eyes and an unkempt beard. This iconographic device is based on ideas from the ancient world that equated physical diversity with the exotic and monstrous. Actually, these facial deformities should be interpreted as a way of expressing a supposed moral inferiority and give rise to strange, even menacing, individuals. Ultimately, they are used to construct the paradigm of the Other.

Caricature of Salomó Vidal in a *liber iudeorum*  
c. 1334–40. Ink on parchment

This book recorded the loans granted by Salomó Vidal in Vic from 1334 to 1340. He is depicted with a fantastical headdress and monstrous face with a huge nose, a gaping mouth and a squint. The informality of the drawing indicates that it is the spontaneous product of a Christian notary with limited artistic training who vented all his resentment of a well-known, powerful Jewish moneylender in it.

ARXIU I BIBLIOTECA EPISCOPAL DE VIC, VIC  
(BARCELONA)

Jew-bearing demon on a *liber iudeorum*  
15th century. Ink on parchment

The vitriolic depiction of three Jews being carried off by a grinning black devil suggests the profound hostility aroused by the money-lending business of some members of this community. The Church's prohibition against Christians lending at interest to other believers led the authorities to encourage Jews into the money trade to keep capital flowing. This gave rise to some of the most widespread denigratory anti-Jewish clichés.

BIBLIOTECA DE CATALUNYA, BARCELONA

### **3.3**

#### **The Power of Images**

In the 13th century stories of icons, crucifixes and statues of the Virgin coming to life were used by the Church to legitimise the cult of images in the eyes of those who considered it an idolatrous practice. The Christian imagination made Jews the protagonists of violent desecrations that highlighted the miraculous nature of images. Among them were stories inspired by Byzantine accounts or included in European repertoires that reflect many of the negative legends about Jewish people, from their association with the devil to accusations of image desecrations and ritual crimes.

**34**

**Juan de la Abadía the Elder** (act. in Aragon)

Passion of the Christ of Beirut

c.1500. Oil on panel

The painting evokes the legendary episode of the ill-treatment some Jews of Beirut inflicted on a wooden crucifix, imitating the Passion of Christ. As a result of the aggressions the crucifix came to life and began to bleed, signalling the sacred nature of images and, accordingly, the advisability of worshiping them. During the 13th and 14th centuries representations of this anti-Jewish story were one of the main visual arguments for legitimating the Christian cult of images in the West.

BEQUEST OF MR. LYNN DINKINS, 38.3

NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART, NEW ORLEANS

## IMAGES FOR *CONVERSOS*, IMAGES OF *CONVERSOS*

Following the pogroms that devastated many of the Jewish quarters on the Iberian Peninsula in 1391, large numbers of Jews were forced to embrace Christianity. Far from putting an end to the tensions, the mass conversions fuelled unease that Christianity was now under threat from Judaism from within. Accusations of Judaizing caused fears and anxieties to be redirected towards New Christians—that is, *conversos* and their descendants. In this situation, unique in Europe, images were an active and powerful means of expressing a wide range of desires and concerns. On the one hand, Christians in favour of evangelisation used them to stress the need for all those who remained faithful to the Law of Moses to convert. On the other hand, the growing climate of mistrust prompted many *conversos* to commission religious images to allay suspicions of Judaizing. In both cases, images were at the centre of the controversy.

## 4.1

### Images as Incriminating Evidence

Just as advocates of persuasive catechesis held that images were necessary to encourage *conversos* to practise forms of Christian devotion, so did inquisitors deludedly regard the mistreatment of these images as the perfect grounds for accusing and convicting them of Judaising practices. Indeed, charges of flogging a crucifix frequently appear in the records of the Inquisition tribunals, as well as in the convictions inscribed on sanbenitos (penitential garments worn by condemned heretics). In the growing climate of intolerance that marked the second half of the 15th century, Jews and *conversos* had to be very careful about their relationship with Christian cult images. Any suspicion of irreverent handling could prove fatal.

35

Pietà

c. 1462. Burin

In 1462 a Jew of Tortosa was accused of deliberately trampling on an engraving of the *Pietà* in one of the city's streets. Unusually, the torn print is still preserved. It was stitched together and included as prosecution evidence among the records of the court proceedings brought against the Jew. Used for centuries for incriminatory and slanderous purposes, charges of desecrating sacred images played a major role as evidence in the inquisitional trials of Jews and *conversos*.

ARXIU HISTÒRIC DIOCESÀ, TORTOSA (TARRAGONA)

## 4.2

### **New Christians and Images**

These four representations of Christ reveal the significance that images held for New Christians. One of them, the *Christ of the Vine*, is a miraculous testament to conversion. Another, the crucifix commissioned by Alonso de Burgos, seems to express a more orthodox position. The pressure on *conversos* and the increasingly common accusations of Judaising made religious images certificates of Christian identity, as in the case of the busts of Antoniazzo Romano and Juan Sánchez de San Román. Also noteworthy is the great variety of aesthetic options, which range from the most bizarrely rustic to the most exquisitely sophisticated, visible in the combination of Flemish naturalism and traditional Byzantine models.

**36**

**Juan Sánchez de San Román** (act. in Seville)

Christ Man of Sorrows

c. 1500. Oil and gold leaf on panel

Direct and moving, this small portrait of Christ is the result of a skilful compromise between Flemish illusionism and the iconic formulas characteristic of cult images. It is consistent in theme and date with the ideas advocated by the *converso* bishop Hernando de Talavera, who in 1478 decreed the compulsory use of devotional images in households to encourage the practice of Christianity in *converso* environments.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

37

**Gil de Siloé** (act. in Burgos)

Christ on the Cross

c. 1488–90. Polychrome wood

This crucified Christ presided over an altarpiece funded by the *converso* bishop Alonso de Burgos in the friary of San Pablo in Valladolid. Given his close collaboration with the Holy Office, the choice of subject matter, besides springing from the devotional motives typical of any faithful Christian, may have been influenced by the fact that the crucifix was a common symbol of inquisitorial propaganda. The image is designed to express the orthodoxy of the faith and to appeal to all Christians committed to defending it.

PARROQUIA DE SAN GINÉS, CIGUÑUELA  
(VALLADOLID)

38

**Antoniazio Romano** (act. in Rome)

Bust of Christ

c. 1495. Tempera on panel

The *converso* Juan López settled in Rome, fleeing from accusations of crypto-Judaism. There he commissioned Antoniazio Romano to paint the *Triptych of the Saviour*, whose central image, this bust of Christ, is based on the icon of the *Sancta Sanctorum* in the palace of St John Lateran. Besides expressing a devotional sentiment, the work is an effective vehicle for religious affirmation—a radically traditional cult image used by its patron to express his attachment to the Christian faith and allay suspicions of Judaising.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

**39**

Christ of the Vine

c. 1400. Vine wood and roots

Its sacred character and miraculous nature are two defining features of this crudely carved vine trunk that resembles a Christ on the cross. A Jew of Toledo found it around 1400 while pruning his vineyard and the discovery immediately prompted him to convert to Christianity. Donated to the monastery of San Benito in Valladolid, it was venerated by the vintners' guild and paraded in processions in the 18th century to pray for an end to droughts and floods.

MUSEO DIOCESANO Y CATEDRALICIO DE  
VALLADOLID

## **4.3**

### **Evangelisation and Preaching**

The forced conversions that took place after 1391 were combined with an intense policy of evangelising the Jewish communities remaining on the Peninsula. Taking up the assumptions of Saint Augustine and Saint Paul, Christian preachers argued that the Jewish people could be saved if they acknowledged their error and joined in a universal conversion that would unite Old and New Christians. These catechetical methods of persuasion were implemented at the same time as new discriminatory measures were enacted, such as the Laws of Ayllón (1412), which put further pressure on the Jews. There is evidence that proselytising and preaching were always accompanied by threats and segregating measures.

**40**

**Master of the View of Saint Gudula** (act. in Brussels)

Preaching Saint Vincent

c. 1470–80. Tempera on panel

The Dominican Saint Vincent Ferrer, one of the most active early 15th-century preachers, placed particular emphasis on evangelising Jews and Muslims. It is very likely that he used images to make his sermons more effective. This is how he is portrayed in this panel, where one hand performs a preaching gesture and the other displays a small panel painting of the Last Judgement to a group of people including Jews in exotic caps.

CONVENTO DE NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LAS CALDAS  
LAS CALDAS DE BESAYA, LOS CORRALES DE BUELNA  
(CANTABRIA)

**41/42/43**

**Bernat Martorell** (act. in Catalonia)

Birth of Saint John the Baptist

Saint John the Baptist engaged in Disputation with the  
Priests and Levites

Saint John the Baptist preaching

c. 1450. Oil on panel

These panels, from the altarpiece from Vinaixa (Lérida), depict the birth of Saint John the Baptist—in a Jewish setting with a midwife sporting the characteristic badge—and his subsequent preaching to his people about the imminent coming of the Messiah. His half-open mouth and finger gestures illustrate his eloquence. A statement about the power of words, the paintings should be viewed in the light of the evangelising campaigns carried out in the 15th century.

MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA, BARCELONA  
CASACUBERTA MARSANS COLLECTION

MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA, BARCELONA

**44**

Juan de Nalda (act. in Provence and Castile)

Virgin of Mercy

c. 1500. Oil on panel

The presence on the Virgin's right of two Jews wearing the characteristic hooded tunics and a turban-clad Muslim beside the monarchs and ecclesiastic authorities protected by the Virgin's cloak is, once again, a reference to the possibility of salvation through conversion. This stance was defended by various sectors of Christian society far removed from the intransigent positions that finally prevailed. The painting originally comes from the monastery of Santa Clara in Palencia.

MUSEO ARQUEOLÓGICO NACIONAL, MADRID

## 4.4

### **Jewish Details in Works by *Conversos***

The existence of a vast movement of false converts or crypto-Jews was a figment of the inquisitors' imagination. The few *conversos* who continued to hold beliefs characteristic of Judaism all belonged to small, unorganised groups with no doctrinal corpus. It is quite another matter that some images showed a Christian perspective with Jewish overtones—the same attitude that led many converts to maintain some of their ancestors' traditions and customs (such as keeping the Sabbaths or certain eating habits). This original perspective seems to be reflected in certain paintings by Bartolomé Bermejo, probably a *converso* painter of Jewish descent who is known to have maintained a close professional relationship with a dynamic community of New Christians during his fruitful stay in Daroca (c. 1470–76).

45

**Bartolomé Bermejo** (act. in the Crown of Aragon)

Christ of the Pietà

c. 1471–76. Oil on panel

Bermejo may have devised this image for a *converso* of Daroca. It is an orthodox *Christ of the Pietà* (chalice, wounds) though certain elements underline the client's particular status. The translucent muslin loincloth, besides evidencing Christ's human condition, hints that he is circumcised. Another significant aspect is the choice of Hebrew for the inscription that proclaims his divinity and his power over death.

MUSEU DEL CASTELL DE PERALADA, PERALADA  
(GERONA)

46

**Bartolomé Bermejo** (act. in the Crown of Aragon)

Descent of Christ into Limbo

c. 1474–79. Oil and gilding on panel

Like *Christ with the Just in Paradise*, this panel comes from the predella of the altarpiece of Saint Dominic of Silos in Daroca (Zaragoza). The ensemble was commissioned by some parishioners of that church, among them the *converso* merchants Juan and Mateo de Loperuelo. The Old Testament characters are rescued from the flames of Hell and join the chosen few as they accept that Christ is the Messiah. This explains why they are shown prostrated before an image of Christ on the cross. Both panels allude to conversion.

MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA,  
BARCELONA

47

**Bartolomé Bermejo** (act. in the Crown of Aragon)

Christ with the Just in Paradise

c. 1474–79. Oil and gilding on panel

The figures of the Forefathers and Old Testament prophets were essential in devising a less aggressive assimilation discourse. Presenting them as early converts enabled 15th-century New Christians to demand their own place in society on the understanding that Christ himself, like the patriarchs and prophets, had Jewish blood running through his veins. It reaffirmed the transition from a Jewish past to a sincere Christian present.

FUNDACIÓ INSTITUT AMATLLER D'ART HISPÀNIC  
(EN DEPÓSITO EN EL MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE  
CATALUNYA, BARCELONA)

**48**

**Nicolás Francés** (act. in Leon)

Crucifixion (attic of the Altarpiece of the Lives of the Virgin and Saint Francis)

c. 1445–60. Oil and tempera on panel

According to certain legends Longinus, the pagan soldier who speared Christ, converted to Christianity after his sight was restored by the blood gushing from Jesus' wound. Kneeling at the foot of the cross and dressed in a green tunic decorated with a pseudo-Hebrew inscription in gold lettering, he holds the spear while wiping his eyes with the miraculous blood. Here Longinus embodies the Christian cliché of the Jews' blindness and the Augustinian argument of conversion in recognition of the Messiah's divine nature.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

## 5

### INQUISITIONAL SETTINGS

During the 15th century animosity towards *conversos* grew and eventually led to the establishment of the Inquisition (1478). Specific to the kingdoms of Spain, this institution was founded to persecute new Christians suspected of Judaizing. Religious suspicions were joined in 1449—the date the first statutes on purity of blood were enacted in Toledo—by racial prejudice: the idea that *conversos* were corrupt because their blood was impure. Religious images once again played a prominent role in this atmosphere of persecution and suspicion. Accusations of their desecration became one of the most common arguments levelled against people prosecuted for Judaizing heresy. Images were also the means of designing rhetorical programmes justifying and glorifying the Inquisition's repressive agenda. Lastly, the creation of an iconography that stigmatised Judaizing *conversos* paved the way for a new and shameful visual otherness. This intense production process reached its peak around 1492, when the expulsion of the Jews was decreed.

## 5.1

### ***Fortalitium fidei***

The Franciscan Alonso de Espina, confessor to King Henry IV, wrote *Fortaleza de la fe* ('Fortress of Faith', c. 1460) from sermons he had preached in Castile. The result was one of the most violent pieces of literature directed against Jews and *conversos*. From a position of utmost religious intolerance, the work fiercely defends the Christian faith against its doctrinal enemies: heretics, Jews, Saracens and demons. The manuscript from El Burgo de Osma on display here is the oldest surviving version and was commissioned by Bishop Pedro de Montoya. Given its instant success, the text was translated into several vernacular languages and presented in luxurious copies, some with high-quality miniatures made in Flanders, as well as in printed editions distributed throughout Europe.

49

Attack on the Fortress of Faith, in Alonso de Espina,  
*Fortalitium fidei*

c. 1464. Illuminated parchment

The manuscript's introductory illustration sums up its contents: a great fortress—an allegory of the Christian faith—presided over by Christ the Man of Sorrows is defended by angels and clerics from four besieging armies. On the right, the Jews are depicted wearing red badges, weighed down by heavy chains and with their eyes covered by blindfolds that reveal their inability to interpret the Scriptures correctly. The oppressive, violent composition expresses the imaginary of the most orthodox Christians, who opposed any policy of religious tolerance.

CATEDRAL DE LA ASUNCIÓN DE NUESTRA SEÑORA,  
BIBLIOTECA Y ARCHIVO CAPITULAR, EL BURGO DE  
OSMA (SORIA)

## 5.2

### **Tomás de Torquemada, Pedro Berruguete and the Staging of the Inquisition**

Tomás de Torquemada, the inquisitor general of Castile, converted the Dominican friary of Santo Tomás in Ávila into one of the main headquarters of the Inquisition. For this purpose he enlisted the services of Pedro Berruguete, one of the most famous painters of the time, who executed various works between approximately 1491 and 1499 as part of a rhetorical project to decorate the friary's church. Notable among them are the three altarpieces in the chancel—dedicated to Saint Thomas Aquinas (still in place), Saint Dominic and Saint Peter Martyr—and smaller compositions such as the *Auto-da-fe*. Their inquisitorial interpretation was reinforced by the hundreds of sanbenitos (penitential garments worn by condemned heretics), convictions and other shameful signs of the condemned displayed on the walls.

**50**

**Pedro Berruguete** (act. in Castile)

Altarpiece of Saint Dominic

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

To enable him to paint the cycles of images for the altarpieces in the friary of Santo Tomás in Ávila, Tomás de Torquemada provided Pedro Berruguete with an illuminated manuscript telling of legends of Dominican saints. It was the basis for several ensembles to which various iconographic modifications were made on the instructions of the authoritarian friar in order to evoke the order's inquisitional mission and its fight against false converts or crypto-Jews.

**51**

**Pedro Berruguete**

Saint Dominic resurrects a Boy

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

The miraculous healing of Napoleone Orsini, who died after falling from a horse, likens Saint Dominic to Jesus and his resurrection of Lazarus. The supernatural action is triggered by a gesture of power used since Antiquity: raising his right hand with his ring and little fingers bent.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

**52**

**Pedro Berruguete**

Saint Dominic and the Albigensians

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

In this ‘trial by fire’, a type of ordeal, we see how Saint Dominic’s book miraculously emerges unharmed and rises into the air, while the heretic manuscripts of the Albigensian scholars are consumed by flames. The episode dates back to the height of the spread of the Cathar or Albigensian heresy but actually alludes to the Inquisition’s fight against false converts, the new 15th-century heretics.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

**53**

**Pedro Berruguete**

Saint Dominic of Guzmán

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

Besides the traditional open book from which a branch of lilies—a symbol of purity—emerges, this likeness of Saint Dominic has two unusual features: the inscription ‘inquisitor’ on the halo and the action of spearing a vixen, a metaphor for heretics. Inspired by Torquemada, Berruguete used them to transform the saint into a champion of the Inquisition.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

**54**

**Pedro Berruguete**

Apparition of the Virgin to a Community of Dominicans  
c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

According to certain stories about the Dominican order, the Virgin saved various friars from being tormented by the devil. Mary's protection is alluded to in this scene, where the Virgin, surrounded by angel musicians, appears to a community during the Hail Mary prayers while a yellow demon, winged but with an anthropomorphic appearance, threatens one of its members.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

55

*Tratado del Alborayque*

n.p., n.d

Woodblock print

Designed to defame *conversos*, this anonymous pamphlet was widely disseminated in Castile from the late 1400s. It begins with the image of a monstrous hybrid animal with the body of a donkey, the face of a horse, human eyes, the ears of a hound, the tail of a snake and a mixture of feet from various beings (man, horse, lion and eagle). From the perspective of Old Christians, bodily hybridity was a metaphor for the Judaising nature of *conversos*. It was an icon of their treachery and impure blood.

“BIBLIOTECA DE BARCARROTA” COLLECTION  
BIBLIOTECA DE EXTREMADURA, BADAJOZ

**56**

**Pedro Berruguete** (act. in Castile)

Altarpiece of Saint Peter Martyr

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

The three altarpieces installed at the east end of the church of Santo Tomás in Ávila—the central one is still in place; the side ones are displayed here—are similar in composition. They consist of a central panel with the image of the titular saint of each ensemble flanked by four panels, two on each side, illustrating hagiographic episodes that stress the saint's supernatural power and defence of Christian orthodoxy. Torquemada established links with the past, looking back at the history of his own order in order to legitimate its action at the helm of the Holy Tribunal.

57

Sanbenitos with inquisitorial inscriptions  
c. 1550. Painting on canvas

These sanbenitos are rare surviving examples of the inscriptions that were hung permanently in churches on the orders of the Inquisition. They bear the names, convictions and punishments of people condemned in autos-da-fe. From Coruña del Conde (Burgos), they refer to *conversos* tried between 1490 and 1509 on charges of 'Judaising apostate heretics'. The first, with the head of a wolf whose open mouth spews fire, a symbol of heresy, belongs to 'Maestre Juan', a surgeon burnt at the stake in 1490.

PARROQUIA DE SAN MARTÍN DE TOURS, CORUÑA  
DEL CONDE (BURGOS)

**58**

**Pedro Berruguete**

Saint Peter Martyr praying

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

Kneeling before a crucifix, the saint complains of the suffering caused by his defence of the faith, to which Jesus replies that he too sacrificed himself for the same reason. The scene is inspired by the methods of prayer advocated by Saint Dominic, but also alludes to the persecution of heretics and the inevitability of martyrdom.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

**59**

**Pedro Berruguete**

The Miracle of the Cloud

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

While preaching against heretics, Peter of Verona responds to the challenge of one of his bishops by miraculously causing a cloud to put an end to the stifling midsummer heat bearing down on his audience. The painting is a testament to the triumph of the true faith, in line with the trial by fire depicted in the altarpiece dedicated to Saint Dominic.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

**60**

**Pedro Berruguete**

Saint Peter Martyr

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

Killed by heretics in 1252, Peter of Verona became the prefiguration of other inquisitors who were murdered. Here he is depicted with his usual powerful and striking iconography: a knife driven into his head, the tip of a dagger sticking out of his chest, a palm with three crowns and an open book showing the first three letters of the Creed.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

61

**Pedro Berruguete**

The Death of Saint Peter Martyr

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

The saint and his companion, Fray Domenico, are murdered while travelling from Como to Milan. Before dying, Peter of Verona writes the first words of the Creed on the ground. Spectators of the period must have associated this martyrdom scene with recent events such as the death of the inquisitor Pedro de Arbués, who was killed by *conversos* and Jews in Zaragoza in 1485.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

62

**Pedro Berruguete**

The Adoration of the Tomb of Saint Peter Martyr

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

Sick people, including a blind man, are healed by the *virtus* emanating from the saint's tomb. Even the lamp is miraculously lit by a ray shining through the window. These are two expressions of the thaumaturgical power of Saint Peter Martyr's relics and, accordingly, his celestial nature.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

### 5.3

#### The Holy Child of La Guardia

The case of the Holy Child of La Guardia is one of many anti-Jewish ritual crime libels that occurred throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. Amid a climate of heightened tension following the murder of the inquisitor Pedro de Arbués and intense inquisitional activity, in 1490 a group of Jews and *conversos* were accused of abducting a boy in Toledo and subjecting him to the tortures suffered by Christ during the Passion. They were tried at a highly publicised auto-da-fe in Ávila shortly afterwards. The case is a characteristically Spanish variant of the accusation of ritual infanticide as it incriminates not only Jews but also converts.

**63**

**Anonymous Castilian**

Martyrdom of the Holy Child of La Guardia  
1590s or after. Oil on panel

This small, simple panel of uncertain origin illustrates another way of representing infanticidal Jews and conversos. Similar in composition to the print in Yepes' book, and possibly from a later date, it shows the Child of La Guardia crucified and surrounded by seven executioners. Despite the condition of the panel, it is still possible to read fragments of the inscriptions that originally identified the figures, providing the names and surnames of the people convicted of the boy's alleged murder.

ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO NACIONAL, MADRID

**Monogrammist HA**

**Crucifixion of the Holy Child of La Guardia, in Rodrigo de Yepes, Historia de la muerte y glorioso martirio del Sancto Innocente... Madrid, 1583, fol. 1**

Engraving

Although the case had a huge social impact and was one of the events that gave decisive impetus to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, there are no known images of the story of the Child of La Guardia dating from before the mid-1500s. This engraving shows a curious depiction of the boy: the wings on his back and extremities liken him to Cupid, while the large cross supporting him derives from the iconography of the risen Christ Child

**BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE ESPAÑA, MADRID**

**65**

**Pedro Berruguete**

(act. in Castile)

Saint Dominic presiding over an Auto-da-fe

c. 1491–99. Oil on panel

Five conversos are being tried by an Inquisition tribunal: two are burned alive and the other three wear yellow sanbenitos and conical caps decorated with flames and display inscriptions ('condemned heretic'). The gruesome scene, from the friary of Santo Tomás in Ávila, was commissioned as an admonitory remembrance of the autos-da-fe held to purge Christians of Judaism. Executed around the time of the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, this painting is a sad reminder of the active role images played in the religious and social polemic of late medieval Spain.

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID

**66**

**Pedro Berruguete** (act. in Castile)

Christ on the Cross

c. 1493–98. Oil on panel

This painting commissioned for the friary of Santa Cruz in Segovia, where it dominated the former altarpiece in the antechapel of the Holy Cave, further attests to Tomás de Torquemada's use of images. The Crucifixion of Christ was not only an essential element of the friars' meditative practices but was also at the centre of the religious debate as the fuse that triggered the division between Jews and Christians. This explains its prominent role in anti-Jewish discourses.

MUSEO DE SEGOVIA (DEPÓSITO DE LA DIPUTACIÓN  
PROVINCIAL DE SEGOVIA)

67

Gil Morlanes el Viejo

(act. in Aragon)

Sepulchre of Pedro de Arbués

c. 1487–90. Alabaster

Pedro de Arbués, the inquisitor of Aragon, was considered a martyr of the Inquisition following his murder by Jews and *conversos* in 1485. In an intentional act of devotion, the Catholic Monarchs commissioned a grand reliquary-funerary monument, erected at the transept of Zaragoza cathedral, from which this statue comes. Autos-da-fe were held around it for decades and the condemned people's sanbenitos and inscriptions were hung there. This overpowering setting was designed to glorify and commemorate the martyr, but also to proclaim the ignominy of *conversos*.

MUSEO DE TAPICES. EXCELENTÍSIMO CABILDO  
METROPOLITANO DE ZARAGOZA, CATEDRAL DEL  
SALVADOR (LA SEO), ZARAGOZA

68

**Pedro Millán**

(act. in Seville)

Christ tied to the Column

c. 1487. Polychrome wood

One of the visions the Blessed María de Ajofrín described to her confessor in 1488 was an apparition of Christ tied to the column.

After showing her his bloody back, he told her that he would continue to be tortured as long as there were heretics (that is, Judaizing Christians) and asked her to pass on this message to the inquisitors. In an environment fraught with suspicion and anxiety, any devotional image could become an anti-*converso* icon simply because it recalled Christ's suffering.

MUSEO DE SEGOVIA (DEPÓSITO DE LA DIPUTACIÓN  
PROVINCIAL DE SEGOVIA)