Preface

This collection of essays was generated by the International Symposium on Religious Cultures in the Early Modern Period: Tradition, Authority, Hereterodoxy, organized by Chanita Goodblatt and convened at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in May 2005. In the exploration of the Early Modern period, this symposium emphasized the religious cultures and encounters of Judaism and Christianity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The papers focused on both intra-religious and inter-religious aspects of these cultures and encounters, in a period which saw the breakdown of religious consensus, the rise of science, the growing impact of printing, and encounters with numerous ‘others’.

The volume begins with a series of essays focusing on points of contact between Judaism and Christianity. In their essays Guibbory, Shami, Flinker and Labriola write about how such contacts were used to define the English church and literature in the Reformation. The following essay, by Raz-Krakozkin, shows one of the roles played by the Church, and in particular Jewish converts to Christianity, in the transmission of traditional Jewish culture to the modern period. The subsequent essays by Huss and Goldish develop a different aspect of the topic, concentrating on the contacts between Jewish and Christian heterodox thinkers and movements. The influence of printing is an important factor that figures in some of these studies, as well as in subsequent ones.

The next series of essays deals with the Bible, in how this shared book was read by Jews and Christians in addressing their respective religious communities. Rony, Cohen-Skall and Gross illustrate how different Jewish thinkers approached the Bible, either to address concerns belonging to their communities, or as providing a historical model for the thinker himself. Besser and Budick, on the other hand, demonstrate how Christian thinkers re-envisioned the story of Job in critiquing a traditional religious belief or philosophical view.

The concept of genre is at the center of the third series of essays, which bring to the fore both lyric poetry, as well as the visual arts of painting and sculpture. Brener looks at the use of Hebrew poetry in
Preface

adorning the first printed Rabbinic Bible, while Goodblatt and Prescott are concerned with Christian poetry as translation and response to the Psalms. Turning to the visual arts, Debby deals with the Christian representation of the Mendicant Friar and the Muslim on the eve of the Reformation. Spolsky discusses the use and rejection of art for creating religious identity in the English Reformation. Unger concludes the section with a discussion of the Catholic artistic depictions of penance in the period after the Council of Trent.

The final group of essays focuses on issues of identity and on polemics. The first three essays discuss identity: Landau focuses on self-identity in relation to alterity; Marotti on identity in defining the Catholic; and Kolbrener on defining religious identity through philosophic thought. In the closing essays of the volume, Akhiezer and Lasker deal with different types of polemical treatises written within the Jewish community and their importance for establishing or defending one’s religious identity in relation to the ‘other’.

While some of the articles in this volume show how developments within Christian and Jewish religious culture in this period can be understood independent of the other culture, most illustrate how important were the different types of contacts for both cultures. The decision to publish this volume in a series devoted to Jewish thought reflects the view that Jewish thought cannot be understood independent of its surrounding culture, at the same time that the dominant Christian culture cannot be properly appreciated without taking under consideration the effects of Jewish religious culture upon it.

We would like to thank the Israel Science Foundation and the Goldstein-Goren International Center for Jewish Thought for making the International Symposium possible, and the latter institution also for the publication of this volume. Our gratitude goes to Ms. Michele Horowitz, for her unflagging efforts in bringing the Symposium to a successful conclusion, to Mrs. Judith H. Seeligmann, for the stylistic editing of many of the articles in this volume, and to Prof. Daniel Sivan, the director of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, who prepared this volume for publication. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the following institutions for allowing us to reproduce the various illustrations in the volume: The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York; The Herzog August Bibliothek,
Preface

Wolfenbüttel; The Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem; The Bolles Collection, Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University; The Alinari Archive in Florence; The Alinari/Art Resource New York; The Scala/Art Resource New York; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; San Diego Museum of Art; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin; Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich; The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore; Louvre, Paris; Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble; Palazzo Barberini, Rome; Lessing Company.

Chanita Goodblatt
Howard Kreisel