

CHRONOLOGY

The Reuchlin Affair

- 1504 Johann Pfefferkorn converts to Christianity.
- 1509 Pfefferkorn advocates the destruction of Jewish books to facilitate the conversion of Jews to Christianity.
- 1510 Emperor Maximilian appoints a commission to examine Pfefferkorn's proposals.
- 1511 The commission, consisting mostly of theology professors, recommends in favour of destroying Hebrew books. Johann Reuchlin, a legal expert and a scholar of Hebrew, gives the only dissenting opinion. The emperor does not act on the recommendation of the commission. Reuchlin and Pfefferkorn engage in a polemic. Pfefferkorn publishes the *Hand Mirror*; Reuchlin replies with the *Eye Mirror*.
- 1513 The theologians at the University of Cologne support Pfefferkorn and condemn the *Eye Mirror*. Reuchlin is cited before a court of the Inquisition on charges of Judaism. He publishes a *Defence against the Cologne Slanderers* and challenges the citation on legal grounds. The case is moved to the episcopal court of Speyer.
- 1514 Humanists take up Reuchlin's defense in a letter campaign (published as *Letters of Famous Men*). The court of appeal decides in Reuchlin's favour. The inquisitor launches a counterappeal to the papal court in Rome.
- 1515 A second, anonymous collection of letters, *Letters of Obscure Men*, appears. The letters purport to defend the position of the theologians, but turn out to be fictitious. The book is a humanistic satire on scholastic theologians.

- 1517 Luther publishes the Ninety-five Theses; a second, enlarged edition of *Letters of Obscure Men* appears.
- 1518 Luther publishes the *Resolutions of the Disputations Concerning the Efficacy of Indulgences*, linking his case with Reuchlin's.
- 1520 The papal court condemns and fines Reuchlin. Luther, now threatened with excommunication, publishes the *Response to the Doctrinal Condemnation by the Louvain and Cologne Theologians*, again linking his case with Reuchlin.
- 1522 Reuchlin enters the priesthood shortly before his death in June.