PREFACE

In 1988, I published a work entitled *The Jews in Christian Europe, 1400–1700*,¹ which aimed at ‘a two-way view of Christian and Jewish life, with a stress on the relationships between adherents of the two faiths, rather than on their separate and internal histories’.² Inevitably, this was not entirely possible in a short monograph, but the invitation to contribute to the present series provides an opportunity to add one vital dimension to the earlier work, that is, the presentation of original documentary sources from the period concerned. Although many scholars have laboured to make such material available to a general readership, their efforts have, up to now, been scattered among various learned works. What has so far been lacking, as I have discovered during ten years’ teaching of an undergraduate course in medieval and, latterly, early modern Jewish history in the University of Birmingham, has been a convenient selection of documentary sources which might form the basis of such a course. The present work attempts to respond to that need.

The history and background of the Jewish presence in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe is discussed in the Introduction which follows, but it is necessary to state at the outset that the selection of texts which is offered here is inevitably just a small and arbitrary sample of the sources which are available. By the very nature of the surviving documents, a certain imbalance towards the Christian ‘side’ is unavoidable. History tends to be written by majorities and ‘winners’ rather than minorities and ‘losers’. It may also be observed that there is a certain weighting in favour of Southern European sources, and particularly those of Spain and Italy, in the selection of sources offered here. This matter will be discussed in the Introduction. At this stage, though, it is necessary only to note that the primary purpose of this collection of sources is to provide a working translation for the use of students of general, religious and Jewish history, and to help the general reader also to gain a better and more colourful picture of how Jews and Christians lived in Europe in this period, and how they did, or did not, get on together. The problems and pitfalls of the process of translation itself are discussed in the Note on the documents.

1 London, 1988; revised, paperback edition, 1991.

2 John Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe*, 1991 edn, p. ix.

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Moseley, Birmingham,
on the Feast of St Mary Magdalen, 1993.