Religious and Racial Anti-Semitism

Milton Meltzer

The history of the Jewish people has been marked by both accomplishment and persecution. Jews have always grappled with the problem of how to maintain their identity while living in diverse larger cultures. There is much to learn in understanding why Jews have been the subject of so much historic prejudice.

Christian anti-Semitism which is almost as old as Christianity, stems from the refusal of Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah and from the accusation that the Jews killed Christ. In recent times, many church bodies have stressed that guilt for the death of Jesus is to be borne by all humanity and that Jesus willingly gave his life. In addition, many Christian scholars such as Franklin Littell and Roy Eckardt have charged that the Gospels, especially the Book of John, helped to develop the idea that the Jews killed Christ. John wrote at a time of tension between Jewish and Christian communities, when the young Church wanted to improve its relations with the ruling Roman Empire. By the fourth century, Judaism became an unacceptable faith in the expanding Christian world. By the nineteenth century, anti-Semitism became a tool of the growing nationalist movements. From there it was a short step to racist anti-Semitism which described Jews as being racially inferior, unable to be "cured" by simple conversion to Christianity.

A knowledge of historic relations and tensions between the Jews and Christianity is important for an understanding of the Holocaust. The following selection by Milton Meltzer provides an overview of these relations since the time of Jesus.

Jude verracke...Jew perish...
How did it come to that? And why in Germany?
Germany is the country where modern anti-Semitism of the racist kind began. The term itself, anti-Semitism, was first used only a few years before Hitler was born. But the roots of anti-Semitism go much farther back in history. The religious basis for it in the Christian world is the accusation (it appears in the Gospels) that the Jews were to blame for the crucifixion of Jesus. "Christkiller" became a synonym for Jew. The anti-Semites took that charge as sanction for the persecution of the Jews.

In the early fourth century, Constantine the Great made Christianity the state religion of the Byzantine Empire. The Church insisted that Christianity was the true religion, the only religion, and demanded the conversion of the Jews. When the Jews would not easily give up their faith, the Church used the power of the State to make them outcasts. They were denied citizenship and its rights. By the end of the century, Jews were viewed as devils, cursed by God.

A popular and enduring hatred of the Jews built up. If Jews suffered misfortune, it was only divine punishment for Christ's crucifixion. But the punishment was not left to God alone. Both Church and State took legislative steps — later imitated in Hitler's edicts — to ensure Jewish misery. Among them were decrees that made it impossible for Jews to farm the land or to engage in the crafts. Trade was almost the only choice left, and many Jews became merchants, working with and through other Jews scattered throughout the world.

As the economy of the medieval world developed, the Church lifted the restrictions it had placed on commercial activity, and Christians replaced Jews. The Church still forbade Christians to receive interest on loans, so the Jews provided the service of banking. But when banking profits became attractive, the Church eased its restrictions, and Christians then competed with Jews in finance, too. Yet, even as Christians took over the same financial functions, they libeled the Jews as avaricious and heartless — the image perpetuated by

Shakespeare's Shylock.

The launching of the Crusades in 1096 marked the beginning of an oppression that for duration and intensity would be unmatched until Hitler's time. The hordes of nobles, knights, monks, and peasants who set off to free the Holy Land from the Moslem infidels began their bloody work with "the infidels at home"—the Jews. Offering the choice of baptism or death, the Crusaders slaughtered Jews on a stunning scale. Those Jews who refused baptism and sacrificed themselves "to sanctify the Name of God" became martyrs who set an example of heroism for centuries to come. What had been done in the name of Christianity made very few in the Church feel regret when the fury ended. Nestled in the popular mind was the conviction that such atrocities must have been deserved. Piety became a convenient excuse for plunder.

To make the Jew an ever easier target for mobs hunting down the "Christ-killer," the Church's Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 required Jews to wear a distinctive badge on their clothing. Now no Jews could escape humiliation. As public pariahs, they were blamed for everything that went wrong. "The guilty Jews"—the words were inseparable. Expulsion or extermination seemed to be the Jews' fate. What delayed their elimination was their usefulness. While their money could be diverted into the treasuries of king and noble, they were tolerated. When that value was gone, they were expelled. In England, it happened in 1290, in France in 1306, in Spain in 1492.

It was in these centuries that Europe began moving from the medieval into the modern world. Epochal changes were taking place in economic, political, cultural, and religious life. But the mass of Jews remained cut off from the mainstream and isolated. They were compelled to live behind ghetto walls. A new humanism induced more tolerance, but not for the Jews. Persecution continued, followed often by expulsion.

The Jews of Spain and Portugal fled into Turkey, the Balkans, Palestine, northern Italy, and Holland. Some migrated to the New World, settling in Brazil and the West Indies, and soon in North America, too. The Jews of Germany made new homes in Eastern Europe. The Polish rulers welcomed them because they needed Jewish enterprise. Jews were allowed to become traders and financiers.

The flow east was heightened by the founding of Martin Luther's new faith in the sixteenth century. In his youth, Luther had been a champion of the Jews. When he failed to win them to Protestantism, he raged at them in a language that exceeded even Hitler's for violence. He renewed all the old charges—the Jews were poisoners, ritual murderers, usurers, parasites, devils. He called for the burning of their synagogues, the seizure of their books, and their expulsion from all of Germany. (Centuries later, Hitler would find it helpful to circulate Luther's anti-Jewish writings in mass editions.)

New ideas about the rights of the common man emerged later, as the Industrial Revolution developed in Western Europe. A struggle for civil emancipation began. By then there were numbers of middle-class Jews eager to break free of the ghetto and to share in the civil rights promised by the movement for Enlightenment.

It was Germany's Jews who were the first to be touched by the Enlightenment. Frederick the Great, a despotic ruler and no lover of the Jews, realized that his Prussia could prosper by encouraging enterprising Jews to found new industries and build up commerce. Many Jews seized the opportunity offered and rose to prominence as manufacturers, merchants, and bankers.

Young Jews devoted themselves to modern education so that they could make a mark in Western culture. Cracks appeared in the ghetto walls even before the French Revolution of 1789, and Napoleon's armies finished the job, bearing the banners of freedom wherever they marched. They defeated the Prussians in 1806, and in 1812 Prussia issued the Edict of Emancipation, which made Jews citizens. Jews were to have all the rights of the dominant majority. But not for long. Napoleon's downfall brought powerful reaction in its wake. Emancipation was undone in many places. The ideals of the Enlightenment were drowned in a wave of German nationalism. To be a patriot now meant to be a product of German culture and a Christian. Again the Jew was defined as an outsider. He was viewed as a parasite feeding upon the German body, which could never absorb him. His political rights were cut down or taken away altogether. An endless stream of anti-Semitic books and pamphlets polluted the culture of Germany. Some of the most distinguished intellectuals contributed to it. Feeling against the Jews mounted to the point of violence. The old cry, "Heb, hep, death to the Jew!" echoed again in Germany's streets.

Popular writing dropped all distinctions between the "good" Jew and the "bad" Jew. Even the baptized and assimilated Jew was not spared, for the anti-Semite now condemned all Jews. No longer was it a question of religion. It was the Jew's "race," his
"blood," that damned him. A Jewish stereotype took shape in widely read novels. The Jew was depicted as puny and cowardly. The ugly features given the Jewish villain were said to be the outward signs of an evil soul.

The Germans built hatred of the Jews into what they considered to be an unchallengeable scientific system. A "theory" of anti-Semitism was created to lend scientific justification to their prejudice. Wilhelm Marr based his theory of anti-Semitism on racial identity. He said that Jews, or Semites, had an inborn character that made them a "slave race," while the Germans, or Aryans, were the "master race." The Jews couldn't help being morally and physically inferior because Nature had predetermined that. The lucky Aryans (he meant the Teutonic or Nordic peoples, such as the Germans, Austrians, Scandinavians, Dutch, English, and French) were by the same token born to be superior. The Aryans were the jewel of the world. Everything great and good was said to be the creation of this "master race."

The smashing victory over the French in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 made many Germans feel they truly belonged to a "master race." And when Otto von Bismarck's policy of "blood and iron" succeeded in molding the petty states into the German Empire in 1871, it intensified that feeling of superiority. Chancellor Bismarck proclaimed the State's highest duty was to increase its own power. Germany's destiny was to conquer the world; "lesser" peoples had to be subdued.

Militarism and the doctrine of "blood and iron" became the dominant forces in German life. Under Bismarck's leadership, the educated classes turned away from rationalism and liberalism. A new kind of pseudo-scholarship, useful to politicians who prosper on myths, held sway. Two foreign writers, the Frenchman Arthur de Gobineau and the Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain, contributed props for the myth of racial superiority. De Gobineau held that the Jews were a "mongrel race." Chamberlain wrote that "The Jewish race is altogether bastardized, and its existence is a crime against the holy laws of life." Both men won vast audiences in Germany by singing the praises of the "Aryan race."

Politicians began to draw upon the power of anti-Semitism for their propaganda arsenal. In 1878 speakers for a Christian Social Workers' Party fired up mass meetings by blaming Jews for business failures and profiteering. The party leader, Dr. Adolf Stocker (court preacher to the Kaiser), coined the slogan "Deutschland erwache!"; Hitler would borrow it later. And as Hitler would, Stocker directed his appeal to the lower middle classes — artisans, shopkeepers, clerks, petty officials — who yearned for better incomes and higher social status. In 1879 Wilhelm Marr founded the League of Anti-Semitism "to save the German fatherland from complete Judaization." A year later the anti-Semites were able to secure 300,000 signatures to a petition demanding that the government bar the Jews from all schools and universities and from holding public office.

By 1893 candidates of anti-Semitic political parties were able to muster 400,000 votes and elect many deputies to the Reichstag. A new slogan "The Jews Are Our Misfortune" appeared in print and on banners. Another philosopher, the anarchist Eugene Duhring, stepped forth to sound the final note in anti-Semitism. The Jews, he wrote, are "inferior and depraved." "The duty of the Nordic peoples is to exterminate such parasitic races as we exterminate snakes and beasts of prey."

His was a paranoid image of the Jew as the universal enemy. Entrenched as an article of German faith, it would have the destructive power of an atomic arsenal when Hitler triggered it.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Many people feel that a crucial part of growth is our response to uncomfortable new knowledge about things we cherish. How do you respond to the charge that organized Christianity might have played a major role in the historic mistreatment of Jews?

2. How did Constantine's decision to make Christianity a "state religion" affect attitudes toward Jews?

3. How could Jews avoid being killed during the Crusades?

4. How much do you think contemporary Jews and Christians know about each other's faith? How does this affect the relationship between Jews and Christians?

5. How was the Jew perceived in nineteenth-century Germany?

6. During the last few years, there has been a dramatic worldwide increase in acts of terror against Jews. Synagogues in Paris and in Vienna have been bombed and people murdered. And there are many examples of vandalism. Even in the United States, the number of anti-Jewish acts of desecrations of synagogues and cemeteries, has increased. Why?

DEFINITION

avaricious: greedy

THE THINGS THEY SAY BEHIND YOUR BACK: STEREOTYPES ABOUT JEWS

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Internationalists Plotting to Take Over the World

This myth developed because nineteenth-century anti-Semites needed an image of the Jew frightening enough to make the Russian peasant see him as the enemy rather than the Czar.

To give support to these accusations, Czar Nicholas II asked the monk Sergei Nilus to come up with "proof" of an international Jewish conspiracy. Nilus obligingly produced a set of forged documents in a book called Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The Protocols were partially based on an admittedly fictional work called Biarritz, written by Hermann Goedsche and published in 1868. It contains a rather imaginative chapter called "In the Jewish Cemetery in Prague." A secret meeting takes place in this cemetery between thirteen old, white-bearded Jews, each of whom is supposed to represent one of the twelve tribes of Israel, plus a thirteenth who speaks for "the unfortunates of the exiles." This is actually the latest in a series of meetings that have occurred once every century ever since the Jews were exiled from the land of Israel. The representatives report on how their activities, ranging from undermining the Church to fomenting revolution, have helped the Jews move toward their eventual goal of taking control of the world.

The Protocols was widely published, reprinted, and distributed. Millions throughout the world, including many Americans, accepted it as true. Despite its exposure as a fraud, it is today still widely disseminated in Russia, the Arab lands, and in Latin America. Billy Carter's Libyan guests quoted from the Protocols during interviews given to newsmen here several years ago and were apparently unaware that the documents have been widely discredited.

It is easy to dismiss such attitudes as the views of a small minority. Yet, as Cohn points out in his book, lies of this sort can have terrible consequences:

There exists a subterranean world where pathological fantasies disguised as ideas are churned out by crooks and half educated fanatics for the benefit of the ignorant and superstitious. There are times when this underworld emerges from the depths and suddenly fascinates, captures, and dominates multitudes of usually sane and responsible people, who thereupon take leave of sanity and responsibility. It is an incontestable fact that the forgotten eccentrics described in the first half of this book built up the myth which, years later, the masters of a great European nation were to use as a warrant for genocide.

Shrewd Businessmen

A Jewish agent in a Catholic insurance firm did exceptionally well for a number of years and was recommended for a top executive post. His religion posed a serious problem, however, because the company felt it would harm their relations with top members of other firms. After a good deal of agonizing, they decided to call in a leading priest to convert the Jew. A meeting was held in the private office of the company's president, during which the clergyman attempted to persuade the Jew to accept the Christian faith.

Finally, after almost three hours, the two emerged.

"Well, Father," asked the president. "How did you make out? Do we have a new


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Catholic?"

"No, we don't," replied the priest, "but he
did sell me a $50,000 policy."

Whether or not Jews are actually shrewder
businessmen than others is impossible to prove.
Certainly this is widely believed to be so, as can be
seen from such popular expressions as "Jew you
down." There are enough factors involved that would
suggest that they might indeed have an edge in this
area. For one thing, Jews have been in business for a
long time. The feudal system of the Middle Ages,
which lasted over a thousand years, excluded Jews.
Forbidden to own land by the Church, denied entry
into the various craft guilds that were so important
in those times, Jews were forced to turn to money
lending in order to survive. The Church forbade its
members to enter this occupation, since it regarded
the charging of interest, no matter how small the
amount, as sinful. The Talmud, on the other hand,
permitted the charging of interest on business loans,
so long as the rates were not excessive, taking the
position that money-lending was necessary in order
to stimulate trade and commerce. Since the Jews
were damned and money was damned, the Church
concluded that a marriage of the two was entirely
fitting and appropriate.

As matters turned out, the Jews became
indispensable to the feudal economy in this capacity.
It was they who supplied the necessary funds when
the farmer's crops failed or when his livestock were
killed off by disease. They also supplied the
necessary capital when the nobles wanted to build
castles, when they went off to war when the Church
purchased jewels, and so forth. Eventually the
Christian majority came to the conclusion that
money-lending wasn't such a bad idea, and when this
happened Jews found themselves forced out of the
industry which they had pioneered in so many
countries. Nevertheless, their experience in money
matters and continuing discrimination against them
made it inevitable that they would remain involved
in various forms of business. For example, it was
money-lending that was responsible for the entry of
Jews into the diamond trade. This occurred because
diamonds were often used as collateral for loans.
Thus, in the sixteenth century Jews controlled the
diamond trade in Portugal, which traded extensively
with India, then the chief source of uncut diamonds.
Later, when the Jews were forced to leave Portugal,
Holland, which welcomed the Jews, became the new
center of the diamond market.

The Jewish religion, with its emphasis on
abstract thinking, may also account for the Jews
interest and skill in business. It was not merely the
worship of an abstract God that could not be seen
and the rejection of idol worship, for Christianity
and Islam also shared such beliefs. Rather, it was the
study of the Talmud and the focus on abstract ideas
which make up so much of that work that sharpened
the mind of the Jew to the point where he was able
to transfer his intellectual acumen to the economic
sphere. From childhood on, when he was first
exposed to the Bible, the Jew's mind was geared
toward explaining the seemingly incomprehensible.
As an adolescent, he might spend hours discussing
the conditions under which the ancient rabbinic
sages would permit someone to purchase something
that had not yet come into existence. Could one, for
example, purchase a grove of palm trees even if there
were no trees, simply because past experience
indicated that they were certain to spring up in a
particular location? And, if so, was it permissible to
buy the wool from a sheep before the time had come
to shear it, or the as-yet-unborn calves of a cow?
Even those Jews who were not as educated developed
a profound respect and appreciation for such
thinking.

Thus, when capitalism became important in the
modern world, Jews were in a position to benefit
from it. After all, interest, futures, options, stocks
and, most importantly, money itself were
abstractions. They were representations of concrete
items, and the Jew, trained as he was to think in
analogies that spanned both time and space, was
equipped to function in a modern industrialized
society that increasingly depended upon commerce,
banking, and financial investment. In this sense it
was not so much a question of superior skills as
having the skills that modern society most needed.

In The Pawnbroker there is a famous scene in
which Rod Steiger, who plays the Jewish immigrant
pawnbroker, sternly lectures a young Puerto Rican
boy who works for him about the importance of
having and holding onto money. It is easy to see in
this film the caricature of the Jew as a greedy,
money-hungry man without taking into account the
experiences sometimes responsible for such
obsessions. Lacking a homeland for thousands of
years, always dependent on the whims of others,
never certain when persecution might strike, the Jew,
perhaps more than any other nationality, has come to

see money as a means of survival. In medieval times Jews often bartered their lives in exchange for money, which they gave to local overlords for protection from a hostile population. Unlike the Gentile, who could work the land and benefit from its use, the Jew owed his shelter, safety, food, and anything else of value he possessed to money. Small wonder that it became so important to many Jews. During the Nazi era, to take a case in point, many Jews survived because they were able to purchase protection from individual Gentiles in various occupied lands.

Jews today are far more likely to enter the professions than business-related fields. This is a natural outgrowth of the desire on the part of many Jews of a generation ago to have their children become doctors, lawyers, teachers, and so forth, because they wanted to raise both their own status ("my son, the doctor") and that of their offspring. As a result, the image of the Jew as a shrewd or good business man may, like other stereotypes in this area, be headed for extinction. Still, such views often die a slow death, as this observer discovered during a visit to a non-Jewish resort in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains in 1980. An Italian comedian regaled his audience with a story about how Jews and their preoccupation with money. In one joke a Jewish watchdog was described as one who says to the burglar, "Take anything you want. It's all insured."

**Have Horns**

This belief is not an exaggeration but rather a complete falsehood. It is clearly confined to those who have never seen a Jew. While few Americans fall into this category, the author was asked this question once while traveling through rural Iowa. Its roots can be traced to Aquila Ponticus, who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek during the second century. According to the Bible, Moses is described as descending from Mount Sinai carrying the tablets, with rays of light shining from his head. Unfortunately for the Jews, the word koren (shone) was incorrectly pronounced keren, the Hebrew word for horn. This was quite easy to do, since Hebrew relies on vowels beneath the letters for its pronunciation, and the vowels in the version consulted by Ponticus were probably missing.

This interpretation was given a powerful boost in popularity in the Renaissance. One of the greatest works during that time was Michelangelo’s sculpture of Moses, and perched on his head are two small horns. The stereotype was also enhanced by the association, among Christians, of the Jew with the devil.

**The “Chosen People”**

For you are a holy people unto the Lord your God: of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth the Lord your God has chosen you to be his treasured people. (Deut. 7:6)

The story is told of how God offered the Torah to several other nations before turning to the Jews, all of whom rejected it as too restrictive. The Jews, according to the legend, accepted it unquestioningly, agreeing to be bound by its commandments even before they knew what they were. Such acceptance implied a special responsibility but did not mean superiority. Thus one can understand the response to the English writer Hilaire Belloc’s quip, “How odd of God to choose the Jews” that “It was not odd—the Jews chose God.”

Regardless of who chose whom, there is certainly a kernel of truth to this theory. For many Jews, especially those who are observant, believe that God has a special relationship with “His people.” Many view their meticulous observance of the hundreds of Biblical commandments as meriting special consideration from God. In addition Jews have used the idea of being chosen to explain the suffering and cruelties to which they were so often subjected by other peoples. It was often only by seeing himself as destined to play a special role in the world or in the hereafter that the Jew was able to justify his suffering.

Support for the concept of chosenness comes also from Christian fundamentalists, who cite such evidence as the survival of the Jews through the ages despite the efforts of others to destroy them, their success in so many areas, and the rebirth of the State of Israel. In his book *Israel’s Final Holocaust* noted evangelist Dr. Jack Van Impe writes:

Frederick the Great said: "No nation ever persecuted the Jew and prospered." His correct observation is proof of God’s faithfulness in keeping His promise to Abraham. This tiny scattered people has had such a definite date with destiny that no power on earth could destroy them.

If the Jews are “chosen,” they are not unique in
this sense. After all, Christianity and Islam, as well as most other religions, hold out the promise of divine grace and salvation only to believers. By contrast Judaism believes that "all the righteous of the world have a place in the world to come." Nevertheless, it ought to be recognized that no faith or doctrine can demand the undivided loyalty of its adherents unless it believes its members occupy a special place in the scheme of life.

In modern times, as Jews have increased their contact with people outside their community, many leaders have become increasingly sensitive to this stereotype. Some have responded by asking, tongue in cheek, whether being chosen is such a great privilege when one considers that the Jews have been persecuted for so many centuries and have only recently been able to reestablish their homeland. Others have taken concrete steps to deal with the term by specifically denying its validity. The Reconstructionists, one of the denominations within the Jewish faith, have eliminated all such references from their prayer book while Orthodox Jews have repeatedly emphasized that the concept means service and accountability, not an elite status.

Killed Jesus Christ

Nearly every Jew in America has been exposed, at one time or another, to the charge that the Jews murdered Jesus. For some it has come up in innocent ways, a casual observation made by a neighbor or fellow worker; for others it was the taunt of "Christ killer!" often encountered in childhood days. Even the 1965 declaration by the Vatican that the Jews as a group could not be held responsible for what occurred did not lay the matter to rest. Here, then, in brief, is what happened.

The trouble began when Jesus entered the Temple in Jerusalem three days before his death and drove out the vendors and money-changers, predicted the destruction of the Temple, and attacked the Sadducean high priests. Followers of Jesus described him as a messiah or as "king of the Jews" and thus alarmed the Temple authorities. Fearful that such claims would bring the wrath of the Roman legions upon them (this had happened in the past with other messianic claimants), they paid one of Jesus' apostles, Judas Iscariot, to help them arrest Jesus. Why, as a loyal follower, Judas accepted the bribe is not known. In any case, Jesus was arrested at night and turned over to Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea, who ordered him executed.

One misconception about these events is that it was the Jewish high court, known as the Sanhedrin, that ordered his execution. This is highly unlikely for several reasons. First, it was illegal for the court to meet at night, nor could it do so on the eve of a holiday, which in this instance was Passover. In fact, the court had no power of arrest. Finally, according to the Gospels, Jesus was tried at the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. Yet the Sanhedrin never met any place but in their own court, known as the Chamber of Hewn Stone. For all of these reasons it seems far more likely that his arrest was arranged only by the aristocratic Sadducees, who were angered by his attacks upon them.

There is no evidence that the death sentence decreed by Pontius Pilate was instigated or supported by the Jews. In all likelihood the high priests merely wanted Jesus detained until after the Passover holiday. The Gospel according to John does say, however, that Pontius Pilate ordered Jesus' death because of pressure from the Jews. This seems rather improbable since Pontius Pilate was one of the most ruthless rulers in history and was, in any event, extremely unlikely to be afraid of an unarmed civilian population. This Gospel is, incidentally, the most pro-Roman, perhaps because, as the last Gospel, it was written at a time when the Christians had begun aiming their teachings at the Romans themselves. This last factor may account for the fact that it is the only Gospel to specifically blame the Jews for the crucifixion. Part of the problem here is that the Gospels are our only written record of these events and were only transcribed forty to ninety years after they occurred. They also contradict each other at various points.

Perhaps the greatest canard is the accusation that the Jews actually killed Jesus. To begin with, crucifixion was not permitted by Jewish law, even on the rare occasions when the Jewish courts sentenced someone to death. It was a Roman method of execution that was used on thousands of people, including many Jews. The flogging or scourging of Jesus prior to his crucifixion and forcing him to carry his own cross were also well-known Roman customs. In addition, executions were never carried out on Fridays by the Jews. Finally, according to Jewish law it was a requirement that as the accused was being led to his death a herald should walk before him and ask for any supporting witnesses to come forward and refute the charges. There is no record that this was done.

no one knows for certain what the Jewish population of Jerusalem was thinking as they watched Jesus being marched through the streets. Some may have felt his death justified because of his seemingly blasphemous messianic claims; others simply because the Temple priests opposed him. The majority, however, probably sympathized with him as just another Jewish victim of the Romans. It must be remembered that Jesus was a Jew, and his sect was only one of many Jewish groups. Moreover, he had never renounced the validity of Mosaic Law. In fact, according to the Gospels it was the Jews, not the Romans, who wept at the crucifixion site. Will Durant sums up the event in The Story of Civilization: "Quite clearly the condemnation did not have the approval of the Jewish people."

In the face of all this, it is interesting that the charge should have survived for so long. In fact, even if it were true, why blame those not alive at the time? Apart from all the psychological and social reasons for stereotyping that have been mentioned in the first chapter, there is the seriousness of the charge of deicide. The Jews are accused of having killed the Son of God. The perception of the Jews as guilty is undoubtedly heightened by the fact that they continue to refuse to accept Jesus as the Savior, and have the nerve to regard him as a fake messiah. The Church's declaration that the Jews, past or present, could not be held accountable for his death prompted a suggestion by the humorist Harry Golden that the Jews issue a statement of their own clearing today's Christians from complicity in all the crusades and pogroms of the past two thousand years.

Control Wall Street and the Banks

This stereotype was accurate around the turn of the century, when the major stock brokerage firms were both founded and run by Jews. As an example of their power, the financier Jacob Schiff was able to float a $200 million bond issue for the Japanese government on short notice. Jews are still well represented in Wall Street brokerage houses. A glance at the names listed in the New York Stock Exchange Directory indicates that perhaps a quarter of them are Jewish sounding. In addition, important companies such as Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb, Bear Stearns, and Lazard Freres were started by Jews. On the other hand, some of the largest firms on Wall Street today, such as Merrill Lynch, The First Boston Corporation, and Blythe Eastman Dillon are most definitely not "Jewish" firms. Furthermore, the so-called "Jewish houses" are often so in name 'only. Many of the children of the early founders intermarried and quite a few are, in fact, no longer Jewish. Finally, there are probably no firms of any size in existence today on Wall Street that are exclusively Jewish in terms of those who exercise power within them.

Jewish influence in banking today is virtually nonexistent. Several banks such as Bank Leumi and Republic National Bank of New York are under Jewish ownership, but the vast majority of banks are not only controlled by non-Jews but do not, in fact, employ Jews in high positions. For example, in New York City, where two million Jews live, there are almost no Jews among the top executives of the city's seven largest banks. Elsewhere in the country the proportion is even smaller. A 1978 study by Professor Stephen Slavin of Brooklyn College of the City University of New York found that schools with low Jewish enrollment received far more visits from corporate recruiters than those with large numbers of Jewish students.

IBM's recruiting manual, for example, lists hundreds of U.S. colleges that the company visits annually, but the list doesn't include Brandeis or Yeshiva. But the worst offenders, according to Slavin, were the large New York City banks, which send recruiters all over the country while ignoring the largely Jewish colleges in their own backyard.

(Dan Rottenberg, "How to Succeed In Business Without Being Gentile." Jewish Living December 1979:41)

In recent years some banks have begun to make a more concerted effort to attract Jews. There are, however, two major obstacles. The first is that, notwithstanding the increased acceptance of Jews in general, there are still many people who are simply not comfortable among Jews. American business has always been tied in with social connections, and many of these are made in private clubs that still discriminate against Jews. As a result, banks are often reluctant to hire or promote Jews because they fear it will affect their business. Naturally, they may use this argument as an excuse to perpetuate their own prejudices. A second problem is that the word is


New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education
already out among Jewish graduates of business schools that advancement is very difficult for Jews who enter banking. This means that many graduates who are highly qualified do not even bother to try. Recognizing this, some banks have sponsored meetings and seminars focusing on recruiting more Jews, but thus far banking is still a very closed field to Jews.

If there are so few Jews in banking, why and how did this stereotype emerge? It is here that we encounter the kernel of truth theory. Although the major role was probably played by the bankers of the Italian city-states, Jews became heavily involved in moneylending, which eventually became known as banking, in the late Middle Ages. During the nineteenth century their influence in banking increased with the rise of banking houses such as Rothschild, Marcus and Warburg, Salomon, Kuhn and Loeb, and others in America there was the well-known case of Haym Salomon, who helped finance the American Revolution. In the mid-nineteenth century numerous important banking houses were established in this country by German-Jewish immigrants. Moreover, families such as the Schiffs, Seligmans, Loeb, and others often acted together to offset the financial influence of the much larger Gentile concerns. This contributed to the feeling that Jews, as a group, "controlled things." Fueled by Populist politics, anti-Semitism increased. This, combined with the rise of large impersonal corporations, served to virtually eliminate the influence of Jews in banking. A B'nai Brith study done in 1939 found that less than one percent Of 211 bankers in the United States were Jewish.

Despite the fact that what was once true is no longer the case, the stereotype about Jewish control in these areas persists, all of which attest to the staying power of prejudice in general. Moreover, the perception of Jews as controlling Wall Street or the banks carries with it the belief that the Jew often acts to promote specific Jewish interests at the expense of those who do not belong to the faith. This is actually part of the anti-Semitic image of the Jew as a world conspirator. What better place to employ this stereotype than in money matters where Jews are, for various reasons, heavily involved? The fact that the world of finance and the reasons for the ups and downs of the economy are so poorly understood by the average person makes this a very convenient area in which to target Jews as scapegoats.

Rich and Ostentatious

Teaching a course on minority relations at City College of the City University of New York, I once spent an hour discussing the general view that "all Jews are rich." The class, predominantly Afro-Americans and Hispanic, had just seen a short film on the Holocaust when one Black student, a middle-aged man who had been an aide to former New York City Mayor John Lindsay, raised his hand and asked, "Why are we feeling so sorry for the Jews? Everyone knows that five years after the Holocaust they made all their money back." Others chimed in with comments such as, "Everybody knows that Jews are rich." "Money's in their blood," and so forth.

To what extent are such assertions true? On the one hand, only one of the ten wealthiest families in America is Jewish. They are the Pritzkers of Chicago, worth an estimated $850 million. Compared to the Mellons, worth between $3 and $5 billion, and the Gettys, whose wealth is well over $2 billion, the Pritzker fortune, large as it maybe, does not put them into the category of the super-rich. On the other hand, a 1979 survey of American wealth by writer Dan Rottenberg found ten Jews among the seventy-four families in this country whose net worth was $200 million or more. Thus Jews, who constitute but three percent of the population, are indeed overrepresented among the nation's richest families.

The majority of Jews in this country are not millionaires, being both solidly middle-class and earning more, on the average, than the average American. Studies by the National Opinion Research Center and United States Census Bureau reveal that the median income of Jews is significantly higher than that of non-Jews. Demographers have pointed out, however, that this is directly related to education. When Jews and others in the population with similar educational levels are compared, the differences are less than ten percent.

All but overlooked by many is the existence of large numbers of poor Jews, mostly elderly folk living on pensions and social security. In an article called "The Invisible Jewish Poor," which appeared in the Journal of Jewish Communal Service the number of American Jews living at or below the poverty level was estimated at between 700,000 and 800,000. The author, Ann Wolfe, a consultant to the American Jewish Committee, cited the case of a thirty-square-block area in "wealthy" Miami Beach's South Shore, where the average annual income in 1968 was

with yards of tapestry and lace. Diamonds shown from her ears, diamond rings sparked from every finger... typical wife of a Jewish nouveau riche."

*Jews Without Money; p. 217*

It is interesting that today the Orthodox Jewish community... seems most concerned about this issue. In an address given at the 1974 convention of the strictly Orthodox organization Agudath Israel of America. Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller, a prominent leader in the community, chastised his audience for such tendencies, saying:

Many of our people have suffered a warping of priorities, throwing themselves headlong into the pursuit of materialism. Unbelievable sums of money are spent for one night of a wedding celebration, while yeshivas (Hebrew schools) pay their teachers paltry wages for lack of funds. Plush carpets and ornate furnishings have become status symbols among a people whose aristocracy was always measured in terms of... learning and righteousness.

*Jewish Observer, January 1975; 10*

Generally speaking, as members of a group become more Americanized they will lose their cultural distinctiveness. Often this includes a conscious downplaying of certain traits associated with the group. One respondent whom I interviewed in a study of Jewish identity stated:

I am super conscious of being Jewish. I will overtip in a restaurant because I know people think Jews are cheap. I'll order in a soft voice, and my taste in cars, clothes, and the furniture I buy for our home is very conservative because I know what others think of Jews.

**Control the Media**

Jews play an important role in media industries in the United States. Some examples are CBS, chaired by William Paley, and ABC, headed by Leonard Goldenson, both Jews. NBC was founded by another Jew, David Sarnoff, who also created RCA. Lester Bernstein, editor of Newsweek, and Henry Grunwald, who occupies the post of editor-in-chief at Time magazine, are both Jews. The Newhouse chain of
newspapers, which, with a combined daily circulation of close to 3.3 million in 1978, is the third largest in the United States, is owned by the Newhouse family. Then, of course, there is the New York Times, owned by the Sulzbergers.

At the same time, it would be an exaggeration to say that Jews dominate this field. The Newhouse group includes only 31 out of a total of 291 chain-operated newspapers. A survey by political scientist Stephen Isaacs revealed that only 3.1 percent of the 1,007 newspapers in this country were owned by Jews. Moreover, the magazines with the second and third largest circulation, Reader's Digest and National Geographic, have relatively few Jews in top posts, as do the two major news services, AP and UPI. Morton Yarmon, public relations director at the American Jewish Committee, found only about half a dozen Jewish-sounding names among 200 chief editorial writers of newspapers around the country—hardly a scientific approach but interesting nonetheless.

One area where Jews have always had a major impact is Hollywood. In fact, it was Jews, for the most part, who founded the filmmaking industry. Men such as William Fox, Samuel Goldwyn, Louis Mayer, Adolph Zukor, the Selznicks, and many others got their start around the beginning of the century running nickelodeons where customers saw movies for a nickel while seated on wooden chairs. These men, known as "moguls," gravitated to filmmaking and distribution because it offered opportunities to the new immigrants unavailable in more established fields. They remained typically Jewish, often had accents, and, as a result, became identified in the public mind with the media in general.

For the anti-Semite looking for a scapegoat, the media and the Jews are a perfect match. Many people have a deep suspicion of both what they read in the papers and what TV and radio commentators tell them. "You can't trust what you read in the paper" or "Don't believe everything you see on the news" are common expressions even among those not prejudiced against Jews. (Jews also hold such views.) But for the anti-Semitic suspicion of the media in terms of credibility adds fuel to his feeling vis-à-vis Jews. It matters little that most news commentators are not Jewish. He may even see persons such as Walter Cronkite, Howard K. Smith, and John Chancellor as front people for the Jewish conspiracy he imagines must be behind the news.

Most studies have demonstrated that, notwithstanding the recent tilt to conservatism, Jews are generally liberal. The presence of substantial numbers of Jews in the media might be partially responsible for its seemingly liberal bias, but there is no evidence linking the two. In fact, the giant Newhouse chain is well known for its policy of not interfering with the positions taken by its newspapers, many of which are politically and ideologically conservative.

If Jews are well represented in the media, this does not mean that they work actively to promote Jewish interests. A good case in point is the State of Israel. The overwhelming majority of Jews in this country are pro-Israel. Yet the New York Times has certainly not been pro-Israel in its editorials over the years. At best it could be regarded as "even-handed." Columnists such as James Reston and Anthony Lewis, while occasionally sympathetic to Israel, have generally been highly critical of its policies. In a scathing article that appeared in The Village Voice, reporter Sol Stern charged:

Our most important newspaper (the New York Times) has turned its only page of outside opinion into an exclusive sounding board for the opposition to the democratically elected government of an allied country. This is unprecedented and scandalous.

(The Village Voice, October 1-7, 1980: 13)

According to Stern, the Op-Ed page of the New York Times has carried about forty "guest" columns and articles on the Middle East since Menachem Begin's election in May 1977. Not one has appeared that supports the Begin government. Stern cites three pieces that were submitted and rejected, including one by Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau. Interestingly, the New York Times published an article favorable to Begin on its Op-Ed page several days after Stern's attack.

The two major newsmagazines, Time magazine and Newsweek, have, over the years, published many stories favorable to the Arabs despite the involvement of Jews at the highest levels in both places. Surely it is possible for Jews to disagree with Israeli policies. The fact, however, that such disagreement or even neutrality is often expressed in the media indicates that there is a big difference

between saying that many Jews work in the media and that they made a concerted effort to promote the interests of Jews as a whole. Why are so many Jews found in this field? The major reasons are probably: their generally high level of education; their interest in intellectual and literary affairs; the fact that so many Jews live in New York and Los Angeles; the communications time centers of the country; and the fact that Jews were able to enter this profession from the ground floor many years ago as immigrants.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. What were the Protocols of the Elders of Zion? What was the purpose of the Protocols? Although exposed as a fraud, how do you account for the fact that the Protocols are still widely disseminated today in Russia, Arab lands and in Latin America?

2. Are there historic reasons why Jews may have been stereotyped as shrewd businesspeople? How has this stereotype been used against Jews? Is the stereotype valid today?

3. How has literature, interpretations of the Bible and art been used to promote stereotypes of Jewish people?

4. The article exposes the harmful myth that the Jews killed Jesus. This myth, now condemned by the Catholic and other Christian churches, is refuted in the article. Discuss some of the logical arguments presented by the author. How was this myth harmful to Jews and helpful to those who believed it was true?

5. Examine the remaining common stereotypes described in the article. (These include the myths that Jews control Wall Street, the banks and the media.) Write your conclusions about the origins, effects and current validity of these stereotypes.

6. Identify common stereotypes of two additional groups in our society. How are these stereotypes harmful? Who perceives them to be beneficial? What can be done to counteract such stereotypes?
WHAT IS A JEW?

Philip Rosen, Ph.D.

The Jewish people have a distinctive consciousness—a sense of sharing a common origin and fate and a unique religious, historical, and cultural heritage. Jews lived with and under many peoples—Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arab-Muslims and Christian Europeans—yet preserved their own identity.

The earliest tradition preserved in history relates to a self-image of a people chosen by God to obey Him alone and keep His commandments. Jews believe they are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. God made a covenant (sacred agreement) with the forefathers that Jews are to live by a book—the Five Books of Moses, known as the Torah—hence Jews enjoy God’s special protection. Two central ideas prevail down through the ages: election by God and the role of Jews to bring ethical monotheism to the peoples of the world. Jews are to live by commandments found in the Torah. These include, for Orthodox Jews, all ritual observances, celebration of all holidays and social-ethical behavior. The latter include defense of the weak, sympathy for the stranger, aiding the poor, and kindness to humans and animals. Non-Orthodox Jews accept the latter but are selective about rituals and manner of celebration of holidays.

While Orthodox Jews tend to define Jews and emphasize religious aspects, non-Orthodox stress cultural and historical aspects. Cultural aspects include attachment to organizations, Jewish charities, pro-Israel groups (Zionist), defense against anti-Semitism, and observing marriage and death traditions. Jews have a special feeling toward the Hebrew language, the Yiddish language (Judeo-German) and those from North Africa and Mediterranean areas, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish). There are eating customs. Pork products are avoided; many Jews eat only ritually accepted foods, kosher food, and enjoy special holiday foods such as matzoh on Passover.

Most Jews define a Jew by the Jewish law, one born of a Jewish mother, although Reform Jews also accept the father as transmitting identity. Judaism was the mother religion of both Christianity and Islam. However, if a Jew converts to one of these he/she is no longer considered a Jew. Jews are not members of any race; they are not strictly a biological people. Jews come in all colors, sizes, shapes and appearances. They tend to resemble the peoples among whom they live. Anti-Semites, Jew haters, falsely say Jews are a race and regardless of how absorbed into the population, they retain negative characteristics.

During the late eighteenth century Jews in Western Europe were emancipated, that is, they were allowed to mix freely, marry freely, live where they chose and enjoy equal citizenship and opportunities for education where they lived. Anti-Semites would like to turn the clock back and impose all sorts of economic, social and political restrictions on Jews. The Nazis wished to murder all of them, commit genocide.

In summary, Jews are an ethnic community, a historical people who can trace their roots back to biblical times over 4000 years ago. Although there are Jews who do not practice Judaism, Jews have a religion with rituals and rules of behavior governing many aspects of life, Jews have a common history, common customs, common language, folkways and literature. They can live in two worlds, two cultures—the Jewish one and the one where they reside.

Luther

In 1542 Martin Luther published his celebrated pamphlet: Against the Jews and Their Lies (307). In it he advised never entering into an argument with a Jew. If it was impossible to avoid, one was to say: "Listen, Jew, don't you know that Jerusalem and your kingdom, the Temple and your ministry, were destroyed over 1460 years ago?...Give this nut to the Jews and let them break their teeth on it and dispute as much as they like. For the cruelty of divine wrath shows all too clearly that they are surely in error and are on the wrong path; a child would understand this."

Then for nearly two hundred pages the reformer rails against the Jews in his powerful, lusty style, with a torrential outpouring of passion that makes the diatribes of his predecessors seem languid, and that no one else, perhaps, has matched to this day. Reproach and sarcasm addressed to the Jews alternate with transports of love and of faith in Christ; and between the lines we may glimpse a kind of anguished admiration. Sometimes Luther attacks the usurers and the parasites from foreign countries, and we see how, in forging the German language, he implanted at the same time a certain style of argument and thought. "In truth, the Jews, being foreigners, should possess nothing, and what they do possess should be ours. For they do not work, and we do not give them presents. Nonetheless, they keep our money and our goods and have become our masters in our own country and in their Dispersion. When a thief steals ten guldens, he is hanged; but when a Jew steals ten barrels of gold through his usury, he is prouder than the Lord himself. He boasts of it and strengthens his faith and his hatred of us, and thinks: 'See how the Lord does not abandon His people in the Dispersion. We do not work, we are idle, and we pass the time pleasantly; the cursed gentiles must work for us, and we have their money; thus we are their lords and they our servants!'"

"To this day we still do not know what devil brought them into our country; surely we did not go to seek them out in Jerusalem."

"No one wants them. The countryside and the roads are open to them; they may return to their country when they wish; we shall gladly give them presents to get rid of them, for they are a heavy burden on its, a scourge, a pestilence and misfortune for our country. This is proved by the fact that they have often been expelled by force: from France (which they call Tsarpath), where they had a downy nest; recently from Spain (which they call Sephard), their chosen roost; and even this year from Bohemia, where, in Prague, they had another cherished nest; finally, in my own lifetime, from Ratisbon (Regensburg), Magdeburg, and from many other places."

Sometimes Luther makes use of one of his unique and imaginative comparisons: "They did not live so well in their countries under David and Solomon as they live in our countries, where they steal and pillage every day. Yes, we hold them captive, just as I hold captive my stone [calculus], my ulcers, or any other disease I have caught and must endure: I would rather see [these miseries] in Jerusalem, with the Jews and their following!"

"Since assuredly we do not hold them captive, how have we provoked such enmity by such noble and saintly characters? We do not call their wives whores, as they do Mary, the mother of Jesus; we do not call their children sons of whores, as they do our Lord Jesus Christ."

"We do not curse them; we wish them all the good in the world, in flesh and in spirit. We give them shelter, let them eat and drink with us, we do not carry off and kill their children, nor poison their wells, we do not slake our thirst on their blood. Have we then deserved the fierce anger, the envy and hatred of these great and holy children of God?"

He then shifts to the religious level: to the defense and glorification of Christ, the only matter that really counts for Luther:

“Know, O adored Christ, and make no mistake, that aside from the Devil, you have no enemy more venomous, more desperate, more bitter, than a true Jew who truly seeks to be a Jew (als einen rechten Juden, der mit Ernst ein Jude sein will).

“Now, whoever wishes to accept venomous serpents, desperate enemies of the Lord, and to honor them, to let himself be robbed, pillaged, corrupted, and cursed by them, need only turn to the Jews. If this is not enough for him, he can do more: crawl up into their—and worship the sanctuary, so as to glorify himself afterward for having been merciful, for having fortified the Devil and his children, in order to blaspheme our beloved Lord and the precious blood that has redeemed us. He will then be a perfect Christian, filled with works of mercy, for which Christ will reward him on the Day of Judgment with the eternal fire of hell (where he will roast together) with the Jews...”

On a practical level, Luther proposes a series of measures against the Jews: that their synagogues be burned, their books confiscated, that they be forbidden to pray to God in their own way, and that they be made to work with their hands; or, better still, that the princes expel them from their lands and that the authorities-magistrates as well as clergy unite toward these ends. As for himself, having thus done his duty, Luther is “excused.” (Ich habe das meine gethan: ich bin entschuldigt!)

A few months later another pamphlet, appeared: Schem Hamphoras, in which Luther’s curses became even more frenzied. Here lie is not concerned with the Jews’ usury and graft, but only with their captious reasoning and their witchcraft. This is, then, a theological polemic, but in what a tone. In the preface, Luther specifies that he is not writing to convert the Jews but merely to edify the Germans: “...so that we Germans may know what a Jew is...for it is as easy to convert a Jew as to convert the Devil. A Jew, a Jewish heart are hard as wood, as stone, as iron, as the Devil him self. In short, they are children of the Devil, condemned to the flames of hell...” Later he contrasts the apocryphal gospels of the Jews, which are spurious and false, with the four canonical Gospels whose truth is evident. His exegesis is interspersed with remarks of this kind:

“Perhaps some merciful and holy soul among us Christians will be of the opinion that I am too rough with these poor and pitiable Jews, mocking and deriding them. O Lord, I am much too feeble to mock such devils. I would do so, but they are much stronger than I in raillery, and they have a God who is a past master in this art; he is called the Devil and the wicked spirit....”

In other passages Luther indulges in obscene buffoonery:

“...Cursed guy that I am, I cannot understand how they manage to be so skilful, unless I think that when Judas Iscariot hanged himself, his guts burst and emptied. Perhaps the Jews sent their servants with plates of silver and pots of gold to gather up Judas’ piss with the other treasures, and then they ate and drank his offal, and thereby acquired eyes so piercing that they discover in the Scriptures commentaries that neither Matthew nor Isaiah himself found there, not to mention the rest of its cursed goyim...

Elsewhere we seem to hear a cry from some deeper level of his tormented soul:

“I cannot understand it except by admitting that they have transformed God into the Devil, or rather into a servant of the Devil, accomplishing all the evil the Devil desires, corrupting unhappy souls, and raging against himself. In short, the Jews are worse than the devils. O God, my beloved father and creator, have pity on me who, in self-defense, must speak so scandalously of Thy divine and eternal Majesty, against Thy wicked enemies, the devils and the Jews. You know that I do so in the ardor of my faith, and in Thy Majesty’s honor; for in my case, the question is one that involves all my heart and all my life...”

Such are the depths into which Luther allowed himself to fall, wherein scatology that outraged his most faithful colleagues followed closely upon authentic religious anguish. He concluded this work by proclaiming:

“Here I break off, and I would have nothing further to do with the Jews, neither write upon them, nor against them. They have had enough of me. If there are some among them who would repent, may God take them into His mercy...” A drunkard’s promise: many letters attest to Luther’s efforts to have the Jews expelled or their privileges withdrawn. (He was successful in this respect in Saxony, Brandenburg, and Silesia. “Truly, he has made our position very perilous!” noted Yosel (Joseph) of Rosheim at this time in his Memoirs) (308). Luther’s last sermon at Eisleben, the city of his birth, four days before his death (February 18, 1546), was

entirely devoted to the obdurate Jews, whom it was a matter of great urgency to expel from all German territory.

It would be easy to explain these excesses in the light of what is known of the aging Luther, of his bitterness and inner conflicts, his hallucinations that made him see the Devil everywhere, and his incessant obsession with the end of the world. Such comparisons, which we have already made several times with respect to other prophets, would nowhere be better justified than in Luther's case. We might also, apropos of his verbal lack of restraint, cite some relevant psychopathological considerations. For instance, the reformer was a man who slipped into blasphemy, as in his stating that at certain moments and during certain temptations, he no longer knew who was God and who was the Devil and he actually wondered if the Devil was not God! At times he called God infinitely foolish (stultissimus) and described the Christian religion as the most absurd of any. On one occasion he proved that Christ must necessarily have been an adulterer, and on still another proclaimed the suppression of the Ten Commandments. One might describe him as an unbalanced genius and find in him astonishing anticipations of Freudian theory. We know, too, that he expressed himself about the pope, his archenemy, even more vehemently and obscenely than about the Jews. Such invectives, temptations, and outbursts of aggression certainly seem to combine quite naturally with the hatred of the chosen people. But Luther’s character is too rich and complex, and the imprint he left on the history of his country and of our whole civilization is too profound, for it to lie content with an over-simplified, unidimensional interpretation, limited to the level of individual psychology.

As we have said, Luther was not always the enemy of the Jews. At the zenith of his activity, during the heroic period when this rebellious monk, sustained and justified by his faith, defied pope and emperor and for some time attained the dizzy peaks of total freedom, he had a very different attitude toward the Jews. Apparently he hoped for some time to convert and rally to his cause the people of the Bible. This hope moved him to publish in 1523 a pamphlet with a significant title: *Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* (Das Jesus Christus ein geborener Jude sei). This was a missionary text intended to show the Jews, with the help of the exegesis of various verses from Genesis and Daniel, that Christ was indeed the true Messiah. Commentaries on the meaning of the Dispersion and the servitude of the Jews were cited in support of this view. The author sympathizes with the Jews and mocks their enemies: "Our imbeciles, the papists and the bishops, the sophists and the monks, have treated the Jews in such a way that a good Christian would seek to become a Jew. If I had been a Jew, I should have preferred to turn pig before I became a Christian, seeing how these imbeciles and ignorant louts govern and teach the Christian faith. They have treated the Jews as if they were dogs and not men. They have done nothing but persecute them. The Jews are the blood relatives, the cousins and brothers of Our Lord; if His blood and flesh could be boasted of, the Jews belong to Jesus Christ much more than we do. Hence I beg my dear papists to call me a Jew, when they are tired of calling me a heretic..."

"That is why I advise being considerate of them. So long as we use violence and lies and accuse them of using Christian blood to eradicate their own stink, and I do not know what other absurdities; so long as we keep them from living and working among us, in our communities, and force them to practice usury—how can they come to us? If we seek to aid them, it is the law of Christian love that we must apply to them, and not the papist law. We must welcome them in friendship, let them live and work with us; and they will be of one heart with us..."

To understand Luther’s complete reversal between 1523 and 1543, we may note primarily that his propaganda met with no success among the Jews. Although he had some discussions with them, there were very few who "came to him" and accepted conversion, and most of these seem to have recanted subsequently. "If I find a Jew to baptize, I shall lead him to the Elbe Bridge, hang a stone around his neck, and push him into the water, baptizing him with the name of Abraham!" he sneered one day in 1532. "These dogs mock us and our religion!" And when, five years later, the indefatigable Yosel of Rosheim tried to intercede with him apropos of the expulsion..."
of the Jews from Saxony, Luther refused to receive him and informed him in writing of his disappointment. His heart, he told the Jew, in substance, remained kindly disposed toward the Jews, but such kindness must serve to convert them, not to confirm them in their errors. Shortly thereafter, troubling news reached him from Bohemia. On the instigation of the Jews, some reformed Christians were Judaizing, celebrating the Sabbath, and even having themselves circumcised. This news seemed to upset Luther greatly; thereafter, in conversation, he referred more often to the Jews: “I hope I shall never be so stupid as to be circumcised!” he exclaimed one day. “I would rather cut off the left breast of my Catherine and of all women!” And he wrote a missive, “The Letter of Dr. Martin Luther against the Sabbatarians,” in which he polemicized against the Jewish law. On December 31, 1539, he announced to his friends: “I cannot convert the Jews. Our Lord Christ did not succeed in doing so; but I can close their mouths so that there will be nothing for them to do but lie upon the ground.” Three years later he put his plans into operation.

Such were the successive stages of Luther’s reversal. To be sure, the Jews had profoundly disappointed him. But there was something else: during these years he himself had changed a great deal.

Between 1521 and 1543 lay the gap that separates dream from reality. There had been the war of the knights, the bloody peasant revolts, the countless sects and heresies, put down by fire and sword, with Luther’s express approval. His very success had made him aware of the measure of human imperfection and of his own political responsibilities. Forced to choose, he had sided with the mighty of this world, the princes, since it was upon them that the future of the Reformation depended. Thus the splendour purity of his doctrine was tarnished. Blood was shed in his name, crimes were perpetrated to which he must accommodate himself, for better or worse. (“You do not acknowledge the peasants, but they acknowledge you!” Erasmus wrote him.) Certain aspects of his thought developed as a consequence: to inner freedom he opposed the immutable order of things established in the world by God. The necessity of obedience was emphasized: the Christian must remain loyal and submissive. Hence, by an inescapable dialectical reversal, the doctrine of total freedom becomes one of total servitude. The archangel of rebellion is transformed into an embittered and despotic bourgeois, excommunicated and banished from the empire, confined in the small territory where his prince protects him.

We can readily see that his failure among the Jews tormented Luther all the more since his rejection by the people of God was symbolic of the countless failures and disappointments that darkened his last years and which he attributed to the intervention of the Devil—and of the Jews. Did he not make them responsible (even if it was said jokingly) for the chill that, in 1546, was to carry him off in three weeks? The Devil tormented him only in dreams; the Jews were living scapegoats, within easy reach.

The consequences of Luther’s position with regard to the "Jewish question" were incalculable, less from the direct effect of his savage texts—which during his lifetime enjoyed only a limited circulation and which subsequently, until Hitler’s advent, were practically hidden under the bushes—than as a result of a certain internal logic of German Lutheranism. In that species of polyphonic passion which is anti-Semitism, the religious motif of justification by faith implies the rejection of justification by works, an essentially Jewish doctrine (judischer Glauben), wrote Luther; and we have seen that for him the "Jew who truly seeks to be a Jew" is the "enemy of Christ"). The social motif of unconditional obedience to the authorities, combined with identification with a national prophet—the reformer had specified many times that he was addressing himself to the Germans alone—paved the way for the Hitlerian heresy four centuries later. In all this, Luther’s ardent spirit had roused some secret yearning of his people, provoking a gradual crystallization of national awareness. In essence, "the Jewish problem was for Luther the reverse of the problem of Christ," as one of his German commentators has recently pointed out (309). This is an appalling contrast: for minds not trained to the subtleties of dialectics, but that look
Unit II: READING #20

upon moral questions as black or white, it inevitably comes down to contrasting "good" and "evil," "God" and "Devil," with consequences we have discussed at length." "If to be a good Christian is to detest the Jews, then we are all good Christians," Erasmus had said. Perhaps a true Christian who worshiped his God in the manner of a Martin Luther inevitably ended by detesting the Jews with all his soul and opposing them with all his strength.

Moreover, we must take the customs and usages of the period into consideration. We must consider the actual role of the Jews and the stereotyped notions about them. We have seen what these were before Luther; now we shall see how the question was to develop after him.

CANONICAL AND NAZI
ANTI-JEWSH MEASURES

Raul Hilberg

Destruction of the European Jews

† Canonical (Church) Law
+ Nazi Measure

† Prohibition of intermarriage and of sexual intercourse between Christians and Jews, Synod of Elvira, 306
+ Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, September 15, 1935

† Jews and Christians not permitted to eat together, Synod of Elvira, 306
+ Jews barred from dining cars (Transport Minister to Interior Minister, December 30, 1939)

† Jews not allowed to hold public office, Synod of Clermont, 535
+ Law for the Re-establishment of the Professional Civil Service, April 7, 1933

† Jews not allowed to employ Christian servants or possess Christian slaves, 3d Synod of Orleans, 538
+ Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, September 15, 1935

† Jews not permitted to show themselves in the streets during Passion Week, 3d Synod of Orleans, 538
+ Decree authorizing local authorities to bar Jews from the streets on certain days (i.e. Nazi holidays), December 3, 1938

† Burning of the Talmud and other books, 12th Synod of Toledo, 681
+ Book burnings in Nazi Germany

† Christians not permitted to patronize Jewish doctors, Trullan Synod, 692
+ Decree of July 25,1938

† Christians not permitted to live in Jewish homes, Synod of Narbonne, 1050
+ Directive by Goring providing for concentration of Jews in houses, Dec. 28, 1938

† Jews obliged to pay taxes for support of the Church to the same extent as Christians, Synod of Gerona, 1073
+ The “Sozialausgleichsabgabe” which provided that Jews pay a special income tax in lieu of donations for Party purposes imposed by Nazis, Dec. 24, 1940

† Jews not permitted to be plaintiffs, or witnesses against Christians in the Courts, 3d Lateran Council, 1179
+ Proposal by the Party Chancellery that Jews not be permitted to institute civil suits, September 9, 1942

Unit II: READING #21

† Jews not permitted to withhold inheritance from descendants who had accepted Christianity,
  3d Lateran Council, 2179
† Decree empowering the Justice Ministry to void wills offending the "sound judgment of the people,"
  July 31, 1938

† The marking of Jewish clothes with a badge, 4th Lateran Council. 1215, Cason 68 (Copied from the
  legislation by Caliph Omar 11 (634-44), who had decreed that Christians wear blue belts and Jews,
  yellow belts.)
† Decree of September 1, 1941

† Construction of new synagogues prohibited, Council of Oxford, 1722
† Destruction of synagogues in entire Reich, November 10, 1938

† Christians not permitted to attend Jewish ceremonies, Synod of Vienna, 1267
† Friendly relations with Jews prohibited, October 24, 1941

† Jews not permitted to dispute with simple Christian people about the tenets of the Catholic religion,
  Synod of Vienna, 1267

† Compulsory ghettos, Synod of Breslau, 1267
† Order by Heydrich, September 21, 1939

† Christians not permitted to sell or rent real estate to Jews, Synod of Ofen, 1279
† Decree providing for compulsory sale of Jewish real estate, December 3, 1938

† Adoption by a Christian of the Jewish religion or return by a baptized Jew to the Jewish religion defined
  as heresy, Synod of Mainz, 1310
† Adoption by a Christian of the Jewish religion places him in jeopardy of being treated as a Jew, June 26,
  1942

† Sale or transfer of Church articles to Jews prohibited, Synod of Lavour, 1368

† Jews not permitted to act as agents in the conclusion of contracts between Christians, especially
  marriage contracts, Council of Basel, 1434
† Decree of July 6, 1938, providing for liquidation of Jewish real estate agencies, brokerage agencies, and
  marriage agencies to non-Jews.

† Jews not permitted to obtain academic degrees, Council of Basel, 1434
† Law against overcrowding of German schools and universities, April 25, 1933

QUESTIONS:
1. What does the comparison between Church Law and Nazi Measures help us understand?
2. Which laws do you think were the most damaging to the Jews? Why?
3. At what point would you have realized that the Nazi Measures were getting to a serious level?
   What would you have done? What would you do today?
4. Which items in our Bill of Rights or in our Constitution protect us from these measures?

Source: Hilberg, Raul. “ Canonical and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures,” and “Pre-Nazi and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures.” The Destruction of
# Pre-Nazi and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures

## Pre-Nazi State Development

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<td>&quot;Fines&quot;: for example, the Regensburg fine for &quot;killing Christian child,&quot; 1421</td>
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ABOUT THE JEW

Adolf Hitler

The Jewish people, despite all apparent intellectual qualities, is without any true culture, and especially without any culture of its own. For what sham culture the Jew today possesses is the property of other peoples, and for the most part it is ruined in his bands.

Thus, the Jew lacks those qualities which distinguish the races that are creative and hence culturally blessed.

The Jew never possessed a state with definite territorial limits and therefore never called a culture his own...

He is, and remains, the typical parasite, a sponger who like a noxious bacillus keeps spreading as soon as a favorable medium invites him. And the effect of his existence is also like that of spongers: wherever he appears, the host people dies out after a shorter or longer period.

Thus, the Jew of all times has lived in the states of other peoples, and there formed his own state, which, to be sure, habitually sailed under the disguise of "religious community" as long as outward circumstances made a complete revelation of his nature seem inadvisable. But as soon as he felt strong enough to do without the protective cloak, he always dropped the veil and suddenly became what so many of the others previously did not want to believe and see: the Jew.

DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS

Learn about Hitler and his theories. The last document written by the Fuhrer just before his death was a plea to the German people to carry on the "struggle" against the Jews. The document that brought his philosophy to the attention of the world twenty years earlier, Mein Kampf (my Struggle), also uses that term in its title. Why did Hitler view the world in terms of struggle? What does that suggest about the individual? What were his racial theories? How did he become convinced that the Jews were the source of all evil? Relate these theories to the concept of scapegoating. What events in Hitler’s own life may have created the need for a scapegoat?


New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education
To understand their contempt for democracy it must be pointed out that neither Ford nor Hitler believed in human equality. Ford had no qualms about expressing his disdain: he said there could be "no greater absurdity and no greater disservice to humanity in general than to insist that all men are equal." If no two things in nature are alike and if each Ford automobile, which has completely identical parts, is unique in some way, then how can men be equal in any way?—this was Ford's rationale. Since men were "certainly not equal," any democratic effort to make them equal would only block progress. The crux of Ford's theory of inequality was the fact that "men cannot be of equal service." Because there are few men of great ability, it is possible for a mass of men with small ability to pull the greater ones down—"but in so doing they pull themselves down." "It is the greater men who give the leadership to the community and enable the smaller men to live with less effort," asserted Ford. With equal frankness, Hitler said that "men are not of equal value or of equal importance." He also spoke of the varying achievements of men and the obvious necessity to entrust the administration of economic and political affairs to the men who had proved themselves most capable.

Democracy is nothing but a "leveling down of ability" which makes for waste, complained Ford. It was described by the Dearborn Independent as a "tool" that the Jews used to raise themselves to the ordinary level in places where they were oppressed below it, and then gain special privileges to make themselves superior. But the very Jews who sponsored democracy publicly did not privately believe in the equality of men. This was revealed in the Protocols, which The International Jew quoted: "We were the first to shout the words, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' among the people. These words have been repeated many times since by unconscious poll-parrots, robbing from all sides to this bait with which they have ruined...true personal freedom. The presumably clever...Gentiles did not understand the symbolism of the uttered words... did not notice that in nature there is no equality." It was in the Protocols, claimed the Dearborn Independent, that the Jews admitted they had won their first victory over public opinion with the weapon of democracy. Hitler's explanation was almost identical: Democracy was "the mastery of the herd over the intelligentsia, the mastery over true energy through the dead weight of massed numbers. Therefore it was very simple for the Jewish rulers, small in number and completely invisible to the public eye, to propagandize and ultimately control the masses.

Both The International Jew and Mein Kampf use the term "Gentile fronts" to describe the politicians in a democracy. These are men with a "past" who can be easily discredited and thus must bow to the demands of the Jews or lose their position. In fact, the Dearborn Independent claimed the Jewish manipulation of the American election campaigns have been so skillfully handled that even if a good man would be elected, the Jews would have a sufficient amount of evidence to force him under their control. If he still refused to obey, then "scandals," "investigations," and "impeachments" would remove him easily. As to the election campaigns, The International Jew said that they are "staged as an entertainment, a diversion for the people." This charade allows the people to think and act as if they were really making their own government, but it is "always the Jews that win."

When The International Jew began to make its impact, a prominent American Jew, Isaac Landman, of the American Hebrew challenged Ford to prove that a Jewish plot existed. Landman said he would guarantee to provide sufficient money to hire the world's leading detectives and would agree to print their findings, whatever they might be, in at least one hundred leading newspapers. Henry Ford had always had a liking for detectives. His plant was infested with them. They spied on the workmen, the executives, and upon each other. This was a chance too good to miss. But naturally they had to be his
own detectives; he was afraid the Jews would find it very easy to corrupt any outside agency.

Ford set up an elaborate headquarters in New York and hired a group of agents to unmask the operation of the "Secret World Government." The agents themselves were an advanced lot: two were former senior members of the U.S. Secret Service, some were professional detectives, and some were just fanatical anti-Semites. They shadowed prominent Jews, investigated such improbable bodies as the War Finance Corporation, and carried on a melodramatic correspondence with headquarters in Detroit using code names as signatures. The detectives spent a great deal of time trying to trace a private telephone line from the home of justice Brandeis of the Supreme Court to the room in the White House where President Wilson lay gravely ill. Not surprisingly, they failed, since Justice Brandeis had no private phone.

Not only did Hitler specifically praise Henry Ford in Mein Kampf, but many of Hitler's ideas were also a direct reflection of Ford's racist philosophy. There is a great similarity between The International Jew and Hitler's Mein Kampf, and some passages are so identical that it has been said Hitler copied directly from Ford's publication. Hitler also read Ford's autobiography, My Life and Work, which was published in 1922 and was a best seller in Germany, as well as Ford's book entitled Today and Tomorrow. There can be no doubt as to the influence of Henry Ford's ideas on Hitler. Not only do Hitler's writings and practices reflect The International Jew, but one of his closest associates, Dietrich Eckart, specifically mentioned the Protocols and The International Jew as sources of inspiration for the Nazi leader.

Echoing Ford's concept of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons, Hitler described the "Aryans" as the only race capable of creating great civilizations. Interbreeding with the lower races caused the decline of these civilizations. North America, "the population of which consists far the greatest part of Germanic elements," was given as an example of Aryan conquest and civilization of a continent once inhabited only by an inferior race. "The Jew forms the strongest contrast to the Aryan," Hitler wrote. The Jewish people, despite their "apparent intellectual qualities," are nevertheless without any "true culture" of their own. The "sham culture" which the Jew possesses, Hitler said, is taken from other people and is mostly spoiled in his hands. But the alleged lack of a true Jewish culture was not the main thrust of either Ford or Hitler's anti-Semitism. Ford's primary complaint is clearly stated in The International Jew: "We meet the Jew everywhere in the upper circles, literally everywhere where there is power. And that is where the Jewish question begins in very simple terms. How does the Jew so habitually...gravitate to the highest places? Who puts him there...What does he do there...In any country, where the Jewish question has come to the forefront as a vital issue, you will discover that the principal cause is the outstanding of the Jewish genius to achieve the power of control. Here in the United States is the fact of this remarkable minority attaining in fifty years a degree of control that would be impossible to a ten times larger group of any other race."

Both Ford and Hitler believed in the existence of a Jewish conspiracy—that the Jews had a plan to destroy the Gentile world and then take it over through the power of an international super-government..."