

ANTISEMITISM:

From Part 2 of a video course on the Jewish Roots of Christianity.
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Purim fest, 1946!

**THAT WHICH IS HATEFUL TO YOU,
DO NOT DO TO ANOTHER. –HILLEL**

*Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully
as when they do it from religious conviction. -Pascal¹*

Read with this caution as you begin: The material to follow is repugnant and extensive, of that which is hateful being done with pleasure, and it requires profound, serious attention from anyone who claims to follow Jesus, as well as those who have suffered because Christians have gone so horribly astray from Jesus' clear teachings of love of God and others.

This is about the Jews.

Jews have been despised throughout history primarily for their refusal to abandon the God of Israel and accept the gods of their conquerors. This includes the Christian God, in

¹ From *Pensees*. There is some debate about the best translation of this into English, for reasons I won't go into. This is a reasonable version of it, and serves well the point this chapter makes about religious ideas and actions, especially actions in defense of religious propositions.

every way in which He has been misrepresented and used for subjugation.

If you are a Christian, you must learn this history, and the Church worldwide must learn this history, or both will fail to understand the *utter repulsion* of many Jewish people to Jesus, to the Christian faith, and *especially* to being evangelized. If you are Jewish, you may already know much of what is documented here. It can be studied and explained, but it can never be excused.

If you are like most of the Christians I've met, you have only a marginal comprehension of the depth and extent of this mistreatment of Jews by the Church *and others* over the centuries. Christians today still often view Jews with contempt—explicit or implicit (winks, jokes, social isolation, sarcasm, mistrust, gossip)—and seem oblivious to the teachings of Jesus as to how His followers are to treat and regard *all people*, including Jews. Even if you are not in this group, and you regard Jews with love or equanimity, you know that contempt is common and offers a thousand reasons for its prejudice.

This is not to suggest that Jews have been perfect or sinless and are therefore idealized innocent victims. Read the Bible! The prophets often railed against the sins of the people of Israel. But this does not negate the sins that the Church and the culture must face and confess. Rather, it is

necessary for Christians to confront what has been evil in the Church's dealings with the Jewish people, and to disavow it completely. It is not what Jesus called us to be, not what He taught, and though some of His followers over the centuries have committed unspeakable horrors in His name, we must now repudiate these acts and beliefs utterly, and commit never to repeat, ignore or excuse any of them.

If this seems to you like hyperbole, read on. It is likely far worse than you know.

JEWISH HATRED IN THE CULTURE

This is not only a Christian Church problem. The hatred and marginalization of Jews long predates Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity. In some centuries it was extreme. In others, it lurked in the background. By the time of Jesus it had become a normative part of the wider culture, and after Jesus' time the Church absorbed and incorporated the culture's hatred and marginalization into its daily operations and theology. What follows will help us understand how that happened, and happens.

PURIM

Most Christians have never heard of the Jewish holiday of Purim. Probably we know of Chanukkah. Perhaps Rosh

Hashanah or Yom Kippur. Certainly we've heard of Passover, since the Christian celebration of Communion is derived from Passover.² Passover is the celebration of the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They lived and prospered in the Promised Land for many centuries, but were then taken away into captivity to the land of the Babylonians (modern day Iraq) around the sixth century BCE. Some of them were still scattered throughout the Middle East a hundred years later, which brings us to Purim:

Purim is a festive, almost raucous, celebration of the salvation of the Jews from extermination at the hand of a man named Haman (Hay-mn), a narcissistic Persian (modern day Iran) court official, who sought the death of all Jews because one Jew, Mordecai, would not bow down and pay Haman reverence. This is recorded in the book of Esther, in

בְּנֵי הַמֶּזֶךְ בֶּן הַמִּזְרֵתָא צִרְרַי הַיְהוּדָיִם	וְאֵת	אִישׁ
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לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בְּשׁוֹשֵׁן הַבִּירָה הֲרָגוּ	וְאֵת	פּוּרְתָא
הַיְהוּדָיִם וְאֶבֶר חֲמוּשׁ מִזְרֵתָא אִישׁ וְאֵת	וְאֵת	אֲדִלְיָא
עֵשֶׂר בְּנֵי הַמֶּזֶךְ בְּשָׂאֵר מִדִּינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ	וְאֵת	אֲרִידָתָא
מִזְרֵתָא וְאֵת	וְאֵת	פֶּרְמִשְׁתָּא
בְּקִשְׁתֶּךָ עוֹד וְתֵלֵשׁ וְהֵאמֹר אֶסְתֵּר אִם	וְאֵת	אֲרִיסִי
עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִנָּתֶן גַּם מִחַר לַיהוּדָיִם	וְאֵת	אֲרִדִי
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וְאֵת עֵשֶׂר בְּנֵי הַמֶּזֶךְ הָלְכוּ זֵהָרָה		

FIGURE: From the Scroll of Esther – Naming Haman's Ten Sons

² “The disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal for you?” See Matthew 26:17-40

the Bible, and took place about 500 years before the birth of Jesus.

Because Mordecai would not bow down, Haman had a tall gallows erected and intended to hang Mordecai on it, and also kill all the Jews in the kingdom. The plot was discovered, and through the intervention of Queen Esther, the tables were turned, and Haman and his ten sons were hanged, and the Jews in the kingdom were able to kill those who had intended to kill them.

At the Festival of Purim, the entire story of Esther is read, and great celebration ensues, including bright costumes, food and deserts, general laughter and good spirits, and the collection of gifts for the poor. This happens in synagogues around the world each year.

It is also the origin of the slang expression “the whole megillah,” because *megillah* is the Hebrew word for scroll, and the whole Esther scroll is read at Purim. The scroll is written in Hebrew, with most of the text in a normal sized script, except the listing of the ten sons of Haman. These are written in very large letters, so that their names will remain large in their infamy. You can see this in the illustration above.

To jump forward to recent history, during World War II, the Nazi’s were more than aware of the Esther story and

Purimfest—after all it was about the *failure* of a plot to kill all the Jews. So Hitler *banned* the celebration of Purim, and timed public attacks *against* the Jews so they would fall on Purim.

The Nazis considered Haman a *hero* for *attempting* to kill all the Jews 2,400 years earlier, and so in *retribution for the death of the ten sons of Haman*, ten Jews were hanged on Purim 1942, another 10 shot on Purim 1943. A sick joke.

Hitler also made a connection between himself and Haman, and said that if the Nazis lost the war, the Jews would celebrate a “second Purim.”³

Thus we see an arc of hatred connecting events 2,400 years apart; not only does this ancient hatred persist in many parts of the world, but the years between have been filled with oppression and murder of Jews, almost wherever they were.

What follows is not a complete history, but a mere sampling. The purpose is to give a sense of the extent and pervasiveness of antisemitism over the last two millennia. You must read elsewhere to learn its full extent.

Also, and obviously, to study the suffering of one people is not to deny that others have also suffered persecution. Many have. But this is specifically about antisemitism, a

³ Elliott Horowitz (2006). *Reckless rites: Purim and the legacy of Jewish violence*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. p. 91

particularly invidious and long-lived hatred. It is *this* upon which we will focus. If you wish to learn in greater depth, see the sources listed at the end.

VITAL BACKGROUND

Think this through: Jesus was *Jewish*. His parents were *Jewish*. His disciples and followers were *Jewish*. The Scripture they knew and read was what Christians call the “Old” Testament. The *only* Scripture Jesus or His followers knew were these Hebrew Scriptures—Torah, prophets and writings. Tanakh.

Jesus and His disciples observed all of the feasts that God commanded there. They worshiped in the Temple in Jerusalem and in local synagogues. They kept the *Sabbath*.

The disciples followed Jesus as their rabbi, and eventually came to believe that He was the long-awaited *Messiah* of Israel.

Toward the end they also came to believe that Jesus was *divine*—more than just a wise human being—and someone actually sent from God to redeem the world.⁴

At the time of Jesus the local culture was Jewish, and the thousands who followed Jesus and heard Him teach were

⁴ As prophesied in Daniel 7:13-14 and Isaiah 53, among other places.

overwhelmingly Jewish. “The Way of Jesus” was a Jewish movement that followed a Jewish rabbi and His *halakha*, His path.

There was no separation of the Jewish followers of Jesus from the Jews who didn’t follow Jesus. In fact, the Jewish followers of Jesus continued to attend local synagogues with other Jews in every country where they lived. Together, they all celebrated all of the biblical Feasts and observed the Sabbath every week.

They were *observant Jews*, as were Jesus, the Apostles and Paul.

The Jewish believers in Jesus naturally continued to intermingle and live among Jewish neighbors, friends and families. While they may have invited their Jewish friends to accept their rabbi Jesus as Messiah, they didn’t separate themselves from them if they declined. They were one large, extended family. All of them.

These Jews came from many different Jewish religious movements, and none. Like Paul, a few of them were Pharisees (a holiness movement), a few were Sadducees (upper-class Jews and leaders in the Temple), some were Zealots, some Essenes, some Karaites and others, but most were uncommitted to any specific movement. They often disputed with each other over how to follow the Torah, or

which rabbi was the wisest, but they all remained Jews who continued to identify themselves and each other as *Jews*.

The first believers in Jesus were from all of these Jewish groups. It was not “Christians versus Jews.” Virtually all Christians *were* Jews; some Jews saw Jesus as Messiah, and some did not. An unremarkable divergence among Jews.

But over time this changed. Non-Jews began to hear about this rabbi, Jesus, and many of them also became his followers. Outside of Israel (in Northern Africa, Europe, Asia Minor and beyond), many small congregations of followers were founded among the Gentiles. These Gentiles (also called “Greeks” as a general label, though not all were actually of Greek origin) were *not* required to become Jews or to follow observant Jewish practices in order to be Jesus-followers.

As a result, those groups outside of Israel might have a majority of members who were Gentiles, and a smaller group of believing Jewish members—most all of whom continued to be observant, attend a local synagogue, and enjoy regular and normal ongoing fellowship with other Jews, while also gathering, learning and worshipping with Gentile followers of Jesus—that was the reality of the early Church. There were some disagreements about this, but a norm was set by the Jerusalem Council⁵ around 50 C.E., and

⁵ See Acts 15 for details.

it prevailed in most places that the followers of Jesus gathered.

GROWING ANTIPATHY TOWARD JEWS

In the early second century, the failure of the rebellion of Bar Kokhba, with his Messianic pretensions (the leading rabbi of the time, Akiva, had declared him to be the Messiah), and the resultant death of tens of thousands of Jews, led to an antipathy among the Jewish leadership for the idea of Messiah as a person. This is well known to scholars but virtually unknown among Christians and probably most Jews of today.

Though this was unrelated to Jesus (who had lived a century earlier), it strongly affected subsequent Jewish attitudes toward anyone who claimed to be the Messiah—and there had been many over the years. Jesus was just *one* of them.

Most “messiahs” failed, and many of them had instigated persecutions by the Romans.

The early split between the Jewish faith and the Christians was not really, as many have presumed, simply over Jesus and whether he was the messiah. It was compounded by the devastation inflicted when the Romans crushed the Bar Kokhba rebellion. Hence many Jews refused even to consider *anyone* as Messiah.

This refusal led Christian leaders—in the growing Gentile churches—to ever more deeply harden their attitudes toward Jews who didn't follow Jesus. This hardening spiraled into rejection, separation, antipathy and hatred—and then was *extended* toward Jewish Christians who *would not shun* other Jews!

In spite of Jesus' clear and consistent teachings about loving God, neighbor and even enemy, these Gentile Christians chose instead to hate, exclude and then persecute those who were Jewish, *and any others who would not agree to shun Jews!*

A reaction from Jewish leaders⁶ followed later—but the growing and deep separation of Christian from Jew fundamentally began with the antipathy of Gentile followers of Jesus toward any Jews (Christian or not) *who did not reject their Jewish friends, family and worship practices, and then fully assimilate and become Gentile-like in lifestyle and worship.* This is detailed and documented below.

ALEXANDER THE “GREAT”

Notably, this Gentile/Greek antipathy toward Jews actually preceded the coming of Jesus and the Church. Paul's statement that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there

⁶ There are some specious claims that the Talmud has negative things to say about Jesus. The topic is too broad to cover here, but these claims are largely due to invention, misreading and misunderstanding.

is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”⁷ is evidence of the *preexisting* division between Jews and the surrounding Greek culture.

When antisemitism infected the church it had already long been a part of Greek culture.

Recall that Israel, Asia Minor, Rome (Italy), Galatia (Turkey), North Africa and the entire Mediterranean area had been “Hellenized” (powerfully influenced by Greek culture) after being overrun by the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great from 338–323 B.C.E.⁸

Greek was therefore the common language throughout the area, and by Paul’s time Greek culture had dominated much of the known world for 300+ years. The Romans themselves, as a result, were fully Hellenized. Thus, when Paul says “Greek,” he refers to *all members of the non-Jewish cultures*, most of which were fully Hellenized; “Gentile” was a synonym. Both simply meant “not Jewish,” and the terms referred to all nations and peoples surrounding and commingling with the smaller and localized (in modern-day Israel) tribes of Jews.

In those times when an invader conquered a country, the country’s residents commonly adopted the invader’s gods as their own, thinking they must be more powerful than the local gods. After Alexander the Great invaded Israel, some

⁷ Galatians 3:28

⁸ Dates are listed as C.E. (Common Era) or B.C.E. (Before Common Era). These are equivalent to A.D. and B.C.

Jews assimilated—they embraced all things Greek, including Greek culture and Greek gods. But many Jews remained unassimilated.

Then, as now, Jews refused to adopt the gods of their conquerors.

This enraged the Greek conquerors, and led to the Jews being first vilified and then murdered. This pattern has been repeated in countless places and across the centuries, right up until our own day.

175–164 B.C.E.—ANTIOCHUS IV

One early example—long before Jesus or the Church were born—is the genocidal opposition to Jews by Antiochus IV, a Seleucid Syrian-Greek⁹ king who reigned from 175–164 B.C.E.—*almost two centuries* before Jesus began to teach and draw followers. Antiochus considered himself to be a god, and insisted he—a man—be worshiped as such. Many complied.

Jews refused, just as Mordecai had refused to reverence Haman in the story of Esther. Worship of a man violated the first and second commandments. It rejected the Shema.

⁹ Also known as the Seleucid Empire, which followed Alexander the Great.

And so Antiochus hated the Jews, their Temple and their God.

Intent on destroying those who would not worship him, in 167 B.C.E. he attacked Jerusalem. Here's the story in brief, from 2 Maccabees chapters 5 and 6 (RSV):

And he commanded his soldiers to cut down relentlessly every one they met and to slay those who went into the houses. Then there was killing of young and old, destruction of boys, women, and children, and slaughter of virgins and infants. Within the total of three days eighty thousand were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting; and as many were sold into slavery as were slain. (5:12–14)

...

Not long after this, the king [Antiochus IV] sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their fathers and cease to live by the laws of God, and also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Gerizim the temple of Zeus the Friend of Strangers, as did the people who dwelt in that place.

Harsh and utterly grievous was the onslaught of evil. For the temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with harlots and had

intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit. The altar was covered with abominable offerings which were forbidden by the laws.

A man could neither keep the Sabbath, nor observe the feasts of his fathers, nor so much as confess himself to be a Jew. On the monthly celebration of the king's birthday, the Jews were taken, under bitter constraint, to partake of the [Greek] sacrifices; and when the feast of Dionysus came, they were compelled to walk in the procession in honor of Dionysus, wearing wreaths of ivy.

At the suggestion of Ptolemy a decree was issued to the neighboring Greek cities, that they should adopt the same policy toward the Jews and make them partake of the sacrifices, and **should slay those who did not choose to change over to Greek customs.** One could see, therefore, the misery that had come upon them. For example, two women were brought in for having circumcised their children. These women they publicly paraded about the city, with their babies hung at their breasts, then hurled them down headlong from the wall. Others who had assembled in the caves near by, to observe the seventh day [the Sabbath] secretly, were betrayed to Philip [the governor Antiochus placed in Jerusalem] and were all burned together, because their

piety kept them from defending themselves, in view of their regard for that most holy day. (6:1–11)

The final sentence refers to those Jews who, despite the king's edicts against their worship, nevertheless kept the Sabbath and met secretly in caves nearby to pray together. This was reported, and they were found, and then burned to death. They refused to fight their attackers because it was the Sabbath.

(As we proceed, remember two key elements of this early holocaust: the imposition of Greek/Gentile customs upon the Jews, with the murder of those who would not embrace them, and the hubris of Antiochus IV, who considered himself a god, in the capture of the Temple in Jerusalem. We will see these again.)

This hatred of the Jews by the leaders of the surrounding culture has persisted without end. *It persists today.* One would have hoped that a lesson would be learned from this genocide, and that it would not be repeated. But it was not to be so.

40 C.E. - BLOOD LIBEL BEGINS WITH APION

As the Christian Church began to grow and spread from its Jewish origins into the surrounding Gentile culture and

countries, a dark rumor began to spread: The Jews were secretly killing Gentiles and *eating* them!

In 40 C.E., Apion, a Hellenized Egyptian writer in Rome, not a Christian, portrayed Antiochus IV as the *hero* of the massacre reported in 2 Maccabees (much as Hitler made Haman a hero), saying that when Antiochus entered the Jewish Temple, he found “the Jews placed an ass’s head in their holy place,” and further, that he found a Greek man held captive, who made “a lamentable complaint, and with sighs, and tears in his eyes,” because the Jews had kidnapped him, and were fattening him with “dainties,” fish and birds, and intended to “kill him, and sacrifice him with their accustomed solemnities, and taste of his entrails.”

This, Apion claimed, was the yearly practice of the Jews.

It is the first known instance of what is today called the “blood libel,” where Jews are claimed to each year kill a Gentile, or Gentile baby, and mix its blood into their unleavened bread for the Passover feast.

Jews are forbidden by the Torah to eat blood. This prohibition even governs how animals are killed and prepared as Kosher food—all of the blood is removed before any meat is consumed. Religious Jews will not even eat an egg if it has a spot of blood in it.

Thus the accusation that Jews consume the blood of a Gentile in their Passover bread is an *intentional and calculated lie*—a “blood libel.” Apion’s accusations—utterly

without foundation—set the stage in the Gentile world for suspicion and ongoing hatred of the Jews. After all, he said, *Jews eat Gentiles*.

It was a lie then, it has been a lie for centuries, yet it continues to be circulated today. Christians, Muslims and others, in many places and times—simply desiring to smear the Jewish people—repeat this nonsense loudly and intentionally.

This would be detestable by itself, but countless other accusations—equally without foundation and equally *intentionally* repugnant to actual Jewish belief and practice—have been made to vilify, degrade, oppress and then *murder* Jews.

Is it any mystery that Jews continue to be wary, not just of Christians, but of all Gentiles?

“CHRIST KILLER” ALLEGATIONS 50 C.E. THROUGH TODAY

You’ve heard the claim, and perhaps were taught as a child, that Jews are all “Christ killers.” Many a Jewish child has been beaten by Christian classmates, and many a Jew of every age and era has been beaten or murdered for their supposed “inherited guilt” for the death of Christ.

But since Christians affirm that “Christ died for our sins,”¹⁰ doesn’t this logically make *Christians* the true “Christ killers,” rather than the Jewish opponents of Jesus, or the Romans, or...?

Christian scriptures assert that it was “our sin” that He died for! But if instead we have the willfully illogical and ugly theory that all of the descendants of all of the Jews of Jesus’ day are to be held accountable for His death, shouldn’t we also hold equally accountable everyone of Italian descent? They are, after all, the descendants of the Romans! This whole line of reasoning is irrational, preposterous, flawed and evil—*regardless of who affirms it*. And yet...

THE GENTILE FATHERS ACCUSE THE JEWS

Look at what even the most revered of the Church fathers, all Gentiles, from the very earliest years of the Church, have said:

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 15:3

Ignatius of Antioch (Greek, ca. 50–117 C.E.): “Those who partake of the Passover are partakers with those who killed Jesus.”¹¹

Justin Martyr (born in Nablus, from a Roman Gentile family, 100–165 C.E.): “The persecution and dispersion of the Jews from Israel was ‘fairness and justice’ because they had ‘slain the Just One.’”

Irenaeus (Smyrna, modern Turkey, 130–202 C.E.): “The house of Jacob and the people of Israel are disinherited from the grace of God ... have rejected the Son of God ... slew Him.”

All of these, and others, spoke similarly of the guilt of the Jews and their rejection by God for the crime of the death of Christ:

- Melito of Sardis (Greek, died ca. 180)
- Clement of Alexandria (Greek, ca. 150–215)
- Hippolytus (Italian, 170–235)
- Tertullian (North African, ca. 160–225)
- Cyprian (North African, ca. 200–258)
- Origen (Egyptian, ca. 184–253)
- Eusebius (Greek, ca. 260–339)
- Hilary (French, ca. 300–368)

¹¹ With special thanks to Dr. David R. Reagan who compiled early versions of these lists and quotes. See *Sources* at the end of this chapter for additional detail.

- Chrysostom (Greek, ca. 349–407)
- Jerome (Illyrian, ca. 347–420)
- Ambrose (Italian, ca. 340–397)
- Augustine (North African, 354–430)
- Aquinas (Italian, 1225–1274)
- Luther (German, 1483–1546)

These writings are often so bitterly perverse as to shock any tender conscience. The ugly accusations—from *every one* on this list and countless others not included—are too extensive to detail here, but consider two further examples as illustrative of the whole list. They are two of the most beloved and honored of Christian leaders. (Martin Luther will follow later). Note that the Church considers these men to be *saints*:

Saint John Chrysostom (Greek/Syrian, 349–407 C.E.), a highly honored preacher and leader whose name means “golden-throated,” said, “The synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater, it is also a den of robbers and a lodging place for wild beasts ... Jews are inveterate murderers possessed by the Devil. Their debauchery and drunkenness gives them the manners of a pig. ... This is why I hate the Jews.” He further claimed that the Jews worshiped Satan and deserved to be hated by Christians.

Saint Ambrose (Italian, ca. 340–397 C.E.): “The Jews are the most worthless of all men. They are lecherous, greedy, rapacious. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the Devil. Their religion is a sickness. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ, and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. Christians may never cease vengeance, and the Jew must live in servitude forever. God always hated the Jews. It is essential that all Christians hate them.”

Could this be any more clear?

The hatred and blindness have spread unrelentingly:

Visigoth (Spain/Portugal) profession of faith required of a Jew converting to Christianity, from the 7th century C.E.:

“I do here and now renounce every rite and observance of the Jewish religion, detesting all its most solemn ceremonies and tenets that in former days I kept and held. In future I will practice no rite or celebration connected with it, nor any custom of my past error, promising neither to seek it out [nor to] perform it.

In the name of this [Nicene] Creed, which I truly believe and hold with all my heart, I promise that I will never return to the vomit of Jewish superstition. Never again

will I fulfill any of the offices of Jewish ceremonies to which I was addicted, nor ever more hold them dear. I altogether deny and reject the errors of the Jewish religion, casting forth whatever conflicts with the Christian Faith, and affirming that my belief in the Holy Trinity is strong enough to make me live the truly Christian life, shun all intercourse with other Jews and have the circle of my friends only among honest Christians. With them or apart from them I must always eat Christian food, and as a genuinely devout Christian go often and reverently to Church. I promise also to maintain and embrace with due love and reverence the observance of all the Lord's days or feasts for martyrs as declared by the piety of the Church, and upon those days to consort always with sincere Christians, as it behooves a pious and sincere Christian to do."¹²

From the Church at Constantinople:

“I renounce all customs, rites, legalisms, unleavened breads and sacrifices of lambs of the Hebrews, and all the other feasts of the Hebrews, sacrifices, prayers, aspersions, purifications, sanctifications and propitiations, and fasts, and new moons, and Sabbaths,

¹² *Professions of Faith Extracted From Jews on Baptism*, from the Medieval Sourcebook compiled by Prof. Paul Halsall of Fordham Univ., www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/jewish-oaths.asp

and superstitions, and hymns and chants and observances and synagogues, and the food and drink of the Hebrews; in one word, I renounce absolutely everything Jewish...”¹³

BLOOD LIBEL, AGAIN – 12TH CENTURY AND ON

If the accusations of being “Christ killers,” and the professions of faith (often required on pain of death) were not wretched enough, during the later Middle Ages, accusations of Jews killing Gentiles for their blood—the infamous “blood libel”—rose again.

It began with the death of a young boy in England, William of Norwich, whose dead body was found in the woods with stab wounds in 1144. It was darkly rumored that he had been killed by Jews. A local monk, Thomas of Monmouth, claimed a converted Jew had told him that every year an “international council of Jews” chooses a country in which to ritually murder a Christian child, believing this will restore the Holy Land to their possession.

He (unsuccessfully) promoted William of Norwich for sainthood, and invented a story of William’s crucifixion at Easter by the Jews. This story spread quickly in England and Europe, and led to the revenge murders of many Jews, and finally to their expulsion from England in 1290. In a similar

¹³ *ibid.*

incident in 1171, the accusation of the Jews using a Christian child's blood for Passover matzo led to 30–40 Jews being burned to death. See the illustration on the following page.



Woodcut supposedly naming the Jewish murderers of the child Simon of Trent, for the use of his blood for Passover. Printed by Anton Koberger in 1493. Many similar prints and sculptures were made and used as propaganda.

In all, some 150 or more accusations—and the murder of the Jews who were accused—transpired throughout Europe over the following centuries.

During the Black Plague in the 14th century, Jews were charged with using lepers to poison Christian wells in France. Thousands were murdered as a result. Fewer Jews died from the plague than Christians—likely because of their Kosher sanitary practices—and this high survival rate was taken as evidence that the Jews *created* the Plague. The killing of Jews for this charge spread throughout Europe.

CRUSADES – 11TH – 14TH CENTURY

Several crusades over the course of the eleventh through fourteenth centuries were aimed at conquering or reconquering Jerusalem and Israel from the Muslims. The movement of great armies of both nobility and peasantry across Europe and to Israel resulted in the death of thousands of Jews that lived in the cities along the route. Itinerant preachers and others stirred up the mobs “to kill those that had killed Christ,” though the motivation was often monetary: Christians were prohibited by the Church from lending money at interest, so the task fell to the Jews. Conveniently, many of the Jews to whom money was owed died at the hands of those who owed it.

There were however, both civic and religious Christian leaders who opposed any harm coming to the Jews, and who defended or hid the Jews in their towns as the armies came through. In many places Christians and Jews were friends and neighbors, and the Christians protected their friends from attack. But perhaps most telling was the defense of the Jews by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 C.E.), who said the Jews should be *preserved* in their dispersion as a *testament to guilt of the Jews* in the death of Jesus, and the redemption of Christians!

THE SPANISH INQUISITION – 13TH – 15TH CENTURY

The Inquisition began in the 13th century, as the Roman Catholic Church tried to root out heretics and schismatics throughout its realm. It was not a wide-spread effort and proceeded diocese by diocese, under the control of the local bishop and local monks.

Things took a different turn in Spain in the 15th century, when the concerns of the local church and monarchy focused not on Gentiles, but on *Conversos*—Jews who had converted to Christianity but were widely suspected of practicing their Jewish faith secretly.

Recall the 7th century oath upon conversion, “I promise that I will never return to the vomit of Jewish superstition. Never again will I fulfill any of the offices of Jewish

ceremonies to which I was addicted, nor ever more hold them dear.”

Recall also the persecution under Antiochus IV, who sought out the secretly worshipping Jews, and had them tortured and killed.

And so the inquisitors sought to discover, interrogate and punish, those Conversos who were alleged to, “daily return to the superstitious and perfidious sect of the Jews. . . . Not only have they persisted in their blind and obstinate heresy, but their children and descendants do likewise.”

Another synonym at the time for these converted Spanish Jews was *marrano*, a word which can mean either *deviant* or *pig*. So although these Jews had professed faith in Jesus Christ, and had begun to live and act like Gentile Christians, the attitude of the authorities toward them had not changed. They were seen as wolves in sheep’s clothing – still *deviant*, still *Jews*. Pigs

As the inquisition against them began, they were all given a brief period “of grace” to confess that they still practiced Judaism. Others who might know of or suspect them were required to turn them in, or themselves face excommunication.

After the period of grace expired, the Conversos were brought in and tortured until they confessed or died. This torture took many infamous forms, not least of which was intentional near (or actual) drowning, by pouring water into

the lungs of a bound Jew. Others were burned, hung, stabbed, and suspended.

Some two thousand were burned to death, and another seventeen thousand imprisoned, barred from employment, and had their property confiscated.



16TH CENTURY - LUTHER'S HATRED OF THE JEWS

Martin Luther (1483–1546 C.E.), the founder of Protestantism and highly revered by virtually all Protestant denominations, in his younger years was sweetly disposed

toward Jews, and believed that loving them would bring them readily into faith in Christ. When his hopes went largely unfulfilled, he grew bitter and raged against the Jews. Sadly, this is little-known and unreported among most Christian groups, but it is sadly true.

About a decoration on the outside of a local church, Luther wrote¹⁴:

“Here in Wittenberg, in our parish church, there is a sow carved into the stone under which lie young pigs and Jews who are sucking; behind the sow stands a rabbi who is lifting up the right leg of the sow, raises it behind the sow, bows down and looks with great effort into the Talmud under the sow, as if he wanted to read and see something most difficult and exceptional; no doubt they gained their *Shem Hamphoras* from that place.”

¹⁴ *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi (Of the Unknowable Name and the Generations of Christ)*, Martin Luther, 1543. A vicious attack on Jews.



“*Shem
Hamphoras*”
means “the
unspeakable name
of God” and can be
seen on the writing
above the sow. This
is just as sarcastic
and anti-Semitic as
it seems—both the

sculpture itself, and Luther’s remarks about it. Such depictions of Jews were (and are!) common in the cathedrals of Europe, and are known collectively as *Judensau*—Jewish pigs. The term is used both as an insult to Jews, who consider pigs unclean and unfit for consumption (and prohibited as food in the Torah), and as a label for Jews to show profound disrespect. A link to learn more of this particularly ugly history appears at the end of this chapter.

As he grew more bitter, Luther wrote a 65,000-word treatise, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, later one of the revered and most quoted texts of Nazism. Here is some of what he said:

“Accordingly, it must and dare not be considered a trifling matter but a most serious one to seek counsel against this and to save our souls from the Jews, that is, from the devil and from eternal death. My advice, as I said earlier, is: First, that their synagogues be burned down, and that all who are able toss sulfur and pitch; it would be good if someone could also throw in some hellfire... Second, that all their books—their prayer books, their Talmudic writings, also the entire Bible—be taken from them, not leaving them one leaf, and that these be preserved for those who may be converted... Third, that they be forbidden on pain of death to praise God, to give thanks, to pray, and to teach publicly among us and in our country... Fourth, that they be forbidden to utter the name of God within our hearing. For we cannot with a good conscience listen to this or tolerate it...”

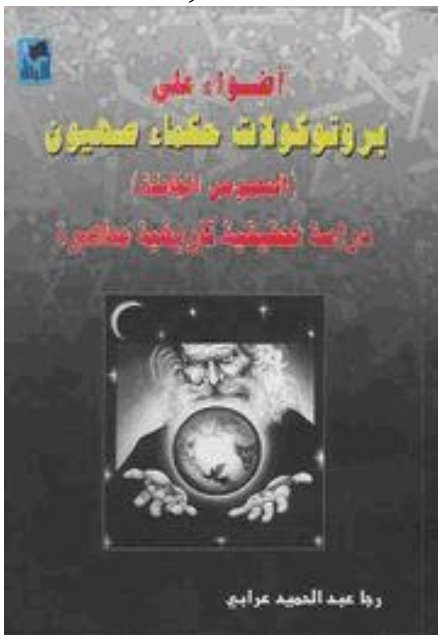


Luther’s words did not go unheeded. They were quoted constantly in Nazi propaganda, and after *Kristallnacht* (Nov. 9-10, 1938), when some 1000 synagogues were burned, 7000 Jewish businesses destroyed, and 30,000 Jews arrested, German Lutheran Bishop Martin Sasse approvingly wrote, “On Luther’s birthday, the synagogues are burning in

Germany.” He told the German people to listen to Luther’s words, calling him “the greatest anti-Semite of his time, the warner of his people against the Jews.”

Hitler used Luther’s writings and reputation, and the Church in Germany, to his own ends, and referred to Luther with admiration in his speeches and in *Mein Kampf*.

Hitler also referred to, admiringly and in defense of, an astonishing and awful forgery called *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It first appeared as a nine-part serial in the Russian newspaper *Znamya* in 1903. It was supposedly from a document titled *The Protocols of the Sessions of the World Alliance of Freemasons and of the Sages of Zion*. It alleges to be the master plan of the Jews for world domination. It is today widely quoted by anti-Semites, white supremacists, racists, anti-Jewish Christians and anti-Jewish Muslims.



Though this chapter is primarily focused on Christian anti-Semitism, there is also a vicious wave of widely promoted anti-Jewish propaganda in many Muslim areas of the world. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (see recent Syrian Edition at left) and Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, both translated into Arabic, are among the best-selling publications in the Middle East. Not all Muslims believe these things, of course,

but the promotion and prominence of these works in

Muslim-majority countries is disturbing. They reuse much of the centuries of Christian anti-Semitism to legitimize and reinforce hatred of the Jews, and particularly to call for the destruction of Israel.

PURIM ONCE AGAIN

One of Hitler's most ardent supporters was Julius Streicher (1885–1946), the founder of the viciously anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Stürmer* (“The Attacker”). It regularly accused the Jews of killing Christian children to make matzo—the blood libel invented by Apion and repeated especially in the Middle Ages. As a gift to Streicher, the city of Nuremberg gave him a first edition of Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies*, describing it approvingly as “the most radically antisemitic tract ever published.”

At the end of World War II, Streicher was tried and convicted by the court at Nuremberg of crimes against humanity, and was hanged with nine other Nazis. These were ten “sons” of Hitler, the modern Haman who had banned the celebration of Purim, and had attempted to kill all the Jews.¹⁵

¹⁵ The hanging of these men occurred on the final day of Sukkot, October 16, 1946.

Just before he was hung, Streicher shouted out,
“Purimfest, 1946!”

Hitler’s fear of a second Purim had come true, and Streicher knew it as he died.

CONCLUSION

The whole history of Christian anti-Semitism, and all of the Jews who have been maligned, beaten, herded into ghettos, prohibited from working, expelled from cities and countries, and killed *in the name of Christ*, is a most grievous sin. This history is so contrary to everything Jesus taught as to be beyond comprehension, yet it is true, and it continues to this day. Virtually all Jews know this history, either explicitly or in their guts. It is the legacy of hate from the Church.

Is it any wonder that Jews avoid Christian evangelists, or that their families consider conversion to Christianity to be a betrayal of all that they hold sacred? Or that Jewish families often bewail mixed marriages, where a Christian is married to one of their own? Or that they desire to learn nothing about this Jesus, knowing what His followers have done to them?

We cannot pretend this vicious history isn't important, or claim ignorance and innocence, and we cannot be insensitive to the painful weight of it upon Jewish neighbors and friends.

Have there been Christians, over the centuries, who have opposed this kind of hatred for Jews and others, and done all in their power, even given their lives, to protect them, as Jesus taught? Yes. But this does not excuse the damage the Church has done, the evil it has endorsed, or the ignorance and denial of many in our own day of this terrible legacy. We should be appalled at how little of this has been taught or acknowledged by the Church and its leaders. This *must* change.

Christians must *reveal* and *teach* of this in their history, *repudiate it* in the Church and in the world, and beg God's forgiveness.

Respect those of the tribe of Israel, the Jews. Jesus is one of them. Jesus *loves* them, and if you are one of His followers, so should you.

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