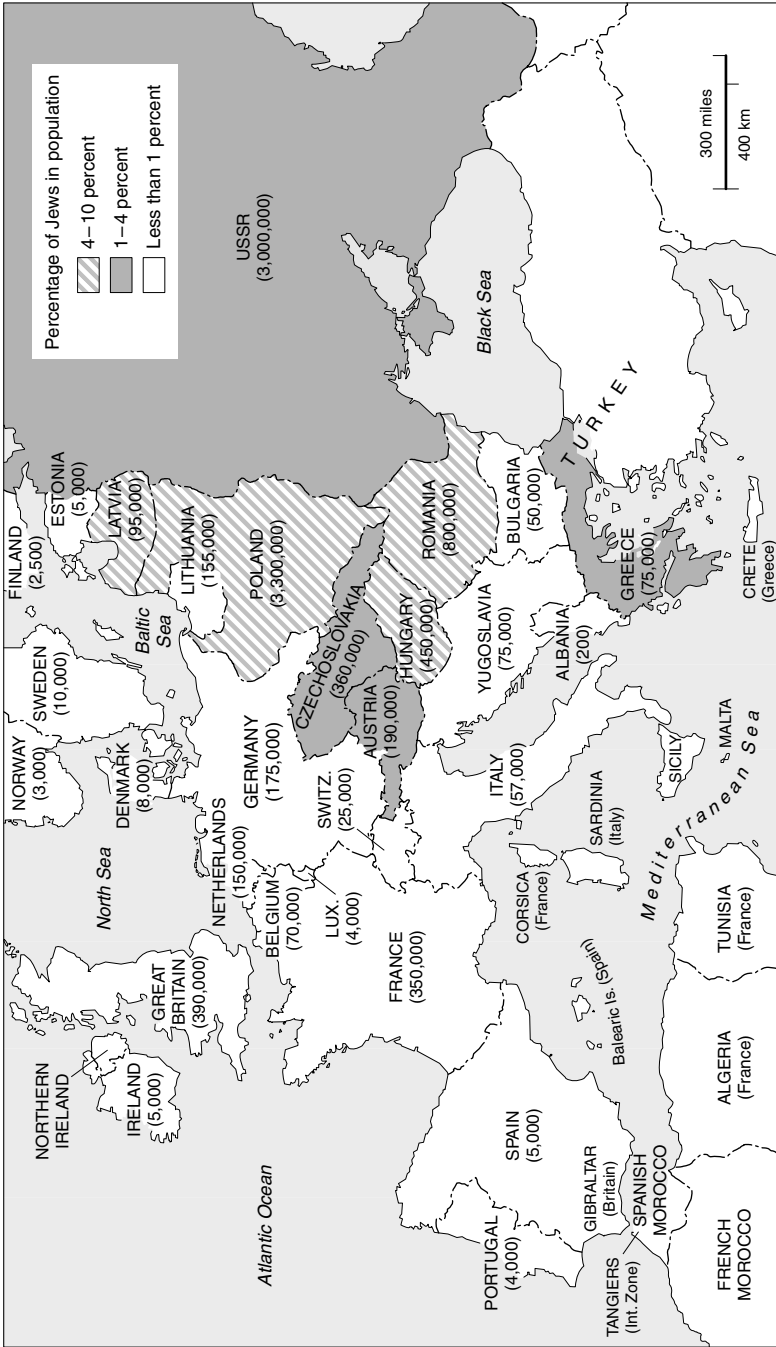


PART I

Preconditions: Nazism and
the Turn from Anti-Judaism
to Antisemitism



Map 1 Europe and its Jews, 1938

Preconditions: Nazism and the Turn from Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism

When discussing antisemitism as a central cause of the Holocaust, or what the Nazis termed “The Final Solution of the Jewish Question,” it is important to distinguish between types of antisemitism. Also important are the comparative contexts of antisemitism’s historical development and reception, and its expression throughout the Nazi regime’s political and racial re-organization of German society through laws, decrees, terror and violence from 1933, for example, in and after the “Night of Broken Glass” or *Kristallnacht* of November 9–10, 1938.

Historians have traced the ideological, cultural, and religious expressions of antisemitism in Europe to early and medieval Christian religious doctrine, the Crusades, and the Inquisition, to list some prominent examples. The development of a racial inflection to antisemitism was a departing point of the modern period, beginning with the early Enlightenment thought of John Locke. His essays on toleration and government stressed the civic equality of peoples irrespective of religious and racial difference.

Recently, some scholars have begun to identify the period from 1850 to 1950 as a “racial century.”¹ It was during this period that constructions and intersections of race, hygiene, biology and ethnic difference formed the basis of many debates among intellectual elites. These debates contributed to the practices of governments and their conception of the emerging nation state as dependent on boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and citizenship.

Decades of scholarly inquiry have still not delivered any general consensus about the origins of Nazi antisemitism. Clearly, antisemitism gave Nazism and the Third Reich its defining discriminatory character, but it was arguably insufficient by itself as the motivating cause for the persecution and mass murder of European Jewry. The Jewish victims in the Holocaust numbered millions; the perpetrators most directly involved in the tens of thousands. The immense disparity between the way in which such

persecution could be implemented in a modern and enlightened state with such a relatively small number of immediate perpetrators should not obscure other acts of massacre and their causes committed elsewhere and involving direct perpetrators on a larger scale. A review of recent (and pre-modern) world history shows that massacres sometimes amounting to genocide have occurred under the guises of religious domination, “discovery” expeditions and colonization, imparting “civilization” as a foundation of settler societies, and the suppression of political and ethnic self-determination. The phenomenon of antisemitism thus also carries the weight of a broader accumulated history of political oppression and violence. That it was radicalized to support a national undertaking of mass extermination in the Third Reich and its countries of occupation and influence should not remove it from the broader framework of historical atrocity.

Antisemitism thus needs to be examined as both a historically specific and cross-cultural phenomenon. While many studies examine the particularities of centuries-long prejudice in thought and action, the articles included in Part I consider the links between traditional anti-Judaic discrimination, and its transformation into racial, blood-based models of exclusion. Primarily, they re-consider the typical modern explanations of biological racism as emanating mainly from a combination of Enlightenment philosophy and often skewed Darwinian-influenced anthropology; an early marker of this appeared in the Catholic “purity of blood” statutes in fifteenth-century Spain. These statutes were used to distinguish “Old” from “New Christians” (*conversos*, or Jewish converts) and thus weed out or eliminate so-called “Judaizing” influences. In his discussion of “Anti-Semites,” Bernard Lewis provides a useful introduction to the antisemitism that evolved from the Crusades, moving subsequently from religious persecution to biological racism. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the nuances and complexities of toleration in legislation and in practice, and considers the American and French Revolutions, and their effects, in the late eighteenth century as testing grounds for debates on race and citizenship.

In Germany, the Jews were subjected to sustained Nazi prejudice and vitriolic discrimination from the earliest moments of the party’s formation in 1920. Robert Wistrich explores in “From Weimar to Hitler” the traumatic aftermath of World War I in Germany and how it contributed to the appeal of nationalist movements in a society rife with political and economic confusion. An extreme statement of this appeared in the 1920 Program of the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP, or Nazi Party), which emphasized themes of citizenship and biological belonging, national security and internal threats to German prosperity. Wistrich charts the emergence of Hitler’s belief systems through interactions with Jews, and Austrian and German politics and culture. He effectively

outlines the development of Hitler's thought in speeches, appeals and election platforms throughout the 1920s and after – including the Nazi party's success in the 1930 election which prompted a temporary reorientation of their political agenda to focus on the economic and national restoration of Germany.

Hitler's statements, political writings and speeches themselves illuminate certain interpretive dilemmas historians face in analyzing the developing intensity of his thought and self-representation as tied to Germany's imminent decline and possible resurrection. Religious rhetoric as a pervasive feature of his writing should also be considered, as Michael Burleigh points out in *The Third Reich: A New History*, which sees Nazism as a political religion. The last two documents in Part I provide primary accounts of antisemitic thought: one by Hitler in his days of "instruction" in Vienna, and the other, a legalization of racial discrimination by the Nazi regime as the very basis of society.

In the selection from "Nation and Race" in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, we see an attempt at sympathetic self-representation, the urban instruction of Hitler's "path to antisemitism" or his process of "becoming" an antisemite. There is much value in this document not only in terms of content but also in seeing how Hitler represents himself as an objective interpreter of Vienna as a melting pot of cultural and ethnic diversity. Of note here are Hitler's constructions of Jews: their physical appearance, their corrupt spirituality, and their pervasive cultural and economic presence in Viennese society. Metaphors of sickness and health that will come to dominate the imagery of Nazi propaganda in the 1930s resonate profoundly: Jews are "pestilence." Hitler constructs Jews as a public and urban menace, responsible for crime and prostitution, a threat compounded by their aggressive sexuality which further adds to the moral and spiritual defilement of society. A dominant theme in this document is a racial struggle over moral values, driven by the visible and invisible power attributed to "the Jew."

Antisemitism radicalized in Germany from rhetorical usage into blistering and explosive reality during the 1930s, and there are several ways to interpret its development. It can be seen in its singular aspects, as an unprecedented state-organized assault on Jewish religion and ethnicity, and after 1939, as a genocide of unprecedented conceptual scope, physical loss and cultural devastation. The "Law for the Protection of the German Blood and of the German Honor" of 15 September 1935 represented an important development in Nazi anti-Jewish policy before 1939. It gave legal form to the regime's thinking on the racial question as a blood-based model of exclusion, and sought to define and construct in law the boundaries of citizenship in national and racial terms. In sexual relations, marriage and employment, contact was prohibited between Jews

and non-Jews. Important themes are suggested by the emphasis on such words as “blood” and “honor,” the latter often an appeal to resist defilement by contact with Jews. Also significant is the document’s expression of state power and its invasion of the social and sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews. In sum, the document serves as a crystallization of Nazi thinking on race, providing the basis for exclusion of Jews from civil society and a legalization of their social and racial “separateness” from Germans.

Antisemitism was a specific assault against Jews but it also promoted the view that degeneration from within was potentially “everywhere” in German society. In this sense, antisemitism provided a background for other forms of pathology, whether these were criminal, social or medical. Emphasis on the alleged threat of racial degeneration was part of a general social and bio-political cleansing project against groups the Nazis saw as alien to the national community. Thus, this attempt at cleansing defined and cast out other “asocial” and racially “degenerate” groups also along the lines of deviant biology, behavior or belief. Such groups included gypsies, homosexuals, blacks, the physically and mentally handicapped, Jehovah’s witnesses and political opponents. Excluding the gypsies and the handicapped, none of these other groups were targeted for systematic physical annihilation, although all of them were subjected to exclusionary treatment in decrees, laws and at times physical acts of segregation and violence. There was some ambiguity and inconsistency in the application of policies to some of these groups, such as homosexuals, as the Nazis could not decide if it was the person or the behavioral practice that required corrective action.

Precisely because the categories of behavior and belief were fluid, homosexuals could modify their behavior to avoid persecution, and Jehovah’s witnesses could swear allegiance to Hitler, the fixed category of “biology” required extra attention in propaganda and legislation to attack the groups regarded as most dangerous. In relation to the Jews, the Nazis constructed this ethnic group as an all-encompassing threat that required removal from German society. Jews were defined according to their bloodlines, an inheritance that contaminated Germany’s present and racially pure future through the possibility of physical intimacy, sexual relations and reproductive potential. The behavior of Jews was also cast in deviant terms, whether by economic or allegedly conspiratorial practices, or treachery; they could not be trusted as loyal patriots or citizens, while the practices of Judaism were invoked to revive classic religious antisemitism about Christ killing and blood libel accusations. The Nazi construction of these “incompatibilities” or threats was played out in a script of epic proportions. It was supported by Josef Goebbels, head of the Ministry of Propaganda from April 1933, in an enormous production of manufactured stereotypes in newspapers, films, theater scripts, radio and school

syllabi that cast Jews as subhuman. The aim of this conglomerate of depictions was to cultivate a lack of compassion for Jews among members of society, to condition a generation of Germans to become indifferent to, and if not to support, the persecution and eventual disappearance of Jewish friends, neighbors and fellow citizens.

The 1930s then provide a “causal ground” from which to interpret subsequent phases in Nazi anti-Jewish policy and to explain how Hitler was able to implement his policy of persecution and, ultimately, extermination. As a causal factor, antisemitism is relevant as an explanation in every phase of the Nazi destruction process, even in instances where historians may apply more “functionalist” or bureaucratic interpretations. Raul Hilberg’s now-classic *The Destruction of the European Jews*, published in 1961, offered an early structuralist interpretation of Nazi exclusion methods against Jews and the involvement of German civil service, bureaucracy, Nazi party and other functionaries. Hilberg’s sequence of escalating persecution – through identification, expropriation, concentration and annihilation – provided a model of the way the destruction process was applied initially in Germany and then to Jews in other countries of occupation. His account also stresses the importance of ideological motivation. In the process of identification, expropriation, concentration and annihilation of victims, the Nazis developed an effective method of concealing that motivation under bureaucratic language and orders; this provided a cover for the persecution of the Jews as justified even among sophisticated officials: judges, doctors, university professors, and civil servants, to name a few. Tacitly or more explicitly, these contributed collectively to the segregation, expulsion, economic deprivation, and ultimately to the annihilation as dictated by Hitler over the course of his regime.

NOTE

- 1 See particularly A. Dirk Moses, “Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the ‘Racial Century’: Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 36, 4, 2002: 7–36. The editors have extracted this article in Part VI of *The Reader*.

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Anti-Semites

BERNARD LEWIS

The term anti-Semitism was first used in 1879, and seems to have been invented by one Wilhelm Marr, a minor Jew-baiting journalist with no other claim to memory.¹ Significantly, it first appeared as a political program in Vienna, the capital of the sprawling and variegated Hapsburg monarchy, which was also the birthplace of Zionism and of many other nationalist movements, and the meeting place of traditional Eastern and secular Western Jews.

Though the name anti-Semitism was new, the special hatred of the Jews which it designated was very old, going back to the rise of Christianity. From the time when the Roman Emperor Constantine embraced the new faith and Christians obtained control of the apparatus of the state, there were few periods during which some Jews were not being persecuted in one or other part of the Christian world. Hostility to Jews was sometimes restrained, sometimes violent, sometimes epidemic, always endemic. But though hatred of the Jew was old, the term anti-Semitism did indeed denote a significant change – not the initiation but rather the culmination of a major shift in the way this hatred was felt, perceived, and expressed. In medieval times hostility to the Jew, whatever its underlying social or psychological motivations, was defined primarily in religious terms. From the fifteenth century onward this was no longer true, and Jew hatred was redefined, becoming at first partly, and then, at least in theory, wholly racial.

The earlier hostility was basically and indeed profoundly religious. It was concerned with the rejection by the Jew of the Christian redeemer and message, and was documented by the account in the Gospels of the Jewish role in the life and death of Christ. The Jew was denounced and at times persecuted as a Christ killer and as a denier of God's truths. While

Bernard Lewis, "Anti-Semites," from *Semites and Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice*, 2nd edn, New York: Norton, 1987, pp. 81–109.

this hatred might be stimulated and directed by the roles which Jews were compelled to play in medieval Christian society, their persecutors did not normally condemn them for being different in race and language. Conversion to Christianity, if sincere, was considered to confer full equality and acceptance. This seems to have been true in practice as well as in theory, in Eastern as well as in Western Europe. Indeed, it is said that in the medieval Duchy of Lithuania. Jews who adopted Christianity were accorded the status of noblemen, because of their kinship to the Mother of God.

This religious hostility acquired racial overtones when Jews were compelled, under penalty of death or exile, to adopt Christianity. A voluntary conversion may be accepted as sincere. A forced conversion inevitably arouses the suspicion, above all among the enforcers, that it may be insincere. This is particularly true where the converts are very numerous, where they tend to intermarry with the families of other converts, and where they continue to play the same role in society that brought them envy and hatred as Jews. There had been occasional forced conversions throughout the Middle Ages, but these were mostly minor and episodic. The only full-scale expulsion of Jews from a whole country was from England in 1290, but the numbers were few, and there seems to have been little or no aftereffect among the English.

A very different situation arose in Spain, where Jews were present in great numbers, and had been very prominent in the social, cultural, economic, and occasionally even the political life of the country. Their position had been profoundly affected, both for good and for evil, by the eight-centuries-long struggle between Islam and Christendom for the domination of the peninsula. While Muslims and Christians lived side by side, both were obliged, even in the intervals of warfare, to show some tolerance to one another, and Jews benefitted from this in both Christian and Muslim Spain. But as the final Christian victory grew nearer, there was less and less willingness to tolerate any presence that would flaw the unity of Catholic Spain. In 1492, with the defeat and conquest of the Emirate of Granada, the last Muslim state on Spanish soil, the reconquest and rechristianization of Spain was complete. In the same year an edict of expulsion was pronounced against Jews, followed some years later by a similar decree against Muslims. Followers of both religions were given the choice of exile, conversion, or death.

From this time onward no professing Jew or Muslim remained in Spain or – a few years later – in Portugal. Great numbers departed in exile, but many preferred to stay, and went through a form of baptism in order to qualify. Not surprisingly, they were regarded with some suspicion by their neighbors, and there can be no doubt that there were great numbers of crypto-Muslims and crypto-Jews masquerading as Catholics. The former were commonly known as *Morisco*, in allusion to their presumed

homeland in Africa. The latter, who had no homeland other than Spain, were called Marrano, a Spanish word meaning hog. A more polite designation for both groups was *nuevos Cristianos*, new Christians, in contrast to the *viejos Cristianos*, the old Christians, free from “any taint of Moorish or Jewish blood.”

Even before the expulsions, the absence or presence of such a taint had become an obsession, affecting the crown, the church, and much of Spanish society. The *converso* or convert was suspect to all three. The king needed loyalty against the ancient Moorish enemy. The Holy Office of the Inquisition was determined to extirpate heresy and unbelief – and where were these more likely to occur than among the *conversos* and their descendants? And the general population, delighted with the expulsion of unwelcome neighbors and competitors, were appalled to find that many of them were still around, lightly disguised as Christians. As far back as 1449, the first statute of purity of blood (*estatuto de limpieza de sangre*) was promulgated in Toledo. It declared *conversos* unworthy to hold positions of public or private trust in the city and dominions of Toledo. A series of other statutes to defend the purity of blood followed in the fifteenth century and after, by which Moriscos and Marranos were barred from various offices and orders and, incidentally, from the Inquisition itself, in which *conversos* had at an earlier stage been very active. In 1628 or shortly after, a Spanish inquisitor called Juan Escobar de Corro explained what was involved: “By *converso* we commonly understand any person descended from Jews or Saracens, be it in the most distant degree. . . . Similarly a New Christian is thus designated not because he has recently been converted to the Christian faith but rather because he is a descendant of those who first adopted the correct religion.”²

Several of the monastic orders adopted rules barring *conversos* and their descendants from membership. At first, the Papacy was opposed to such rules, insisting on the equality of all baptized Christians, but in 1495, a Spanish Pope, Alexander VI, formally ratified a statute passed by a Spanish order barring all *conversos* from membership. Thereafter, most such statutes were approved or at least tolerated by the popes. Thus, for example, in 1515 the archbishop of Seville, a former grand inquisitor, barred second generation descendants of “heretics” from holding any ecclesiastical office or benefice in the cathedral of that city. This statute was approved by the Pope, and subsequently extended to include the grandchildren and later the great-grandchildren of heretics. In 1530, the bishop of Cordova adopted a similar set of rules but went further, banning even the admission of New Christian choirboys. Describing the descendants of Jews and *conversos* as “a trouble-making tribe (*generación*), friends of novelties and dissensions, ambitious, presumptuous, restless, and such that wherever this tribe is found there is little peace,”³ the decree bars the

admission of such persons as prejudicial to the interests of the Church. The statute prescribed a procedure to establish the purity of a candidate's blood. He must swear a solemn oath that he is not of Jewish or Moorish descent, and must give the names of his parents and grandparents with the places of their birth. An investigator was to be sent to these places, and only after he had established that there were no New Christians among the candidate's ancestors could he be admitted.

In its origins, the concern with "purity of blood" is religious, not racial. It begins with the suspicion that the *converso* is a false and insincere Christian, and that he imparts these qualities to his descendants. The notion of purity of blood was not new, but in the past, in medieval Christian Europe, it had had a social rather than a racial connotation, being concerned more with aristocratic than with ethnic superiority. But the special circumstances of fifteenth and sixteenth century Spain – the old confrontation with the Moors, the new encounter with blacks and Indians in Africa and the Americas, and the presence in Spain of New Christians in such great numbers and in such active roles, brought in time an unmistakably racial content to the hostility directed against these groups.

But even while the Spanish Inquisition was completing its allotted task, to seek out and destroy the hidden remnants of Spanish Judaism and Islam, further north a new spirit was moving, and a new and radical idea was put forward – that religion was a private affair and no concern of the state, and that followers of all religions were equally entitled to the rights of citizenship. As a result of the terrible religious and quasi-religious wars which devastated France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Britain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a kind of war-weary tolerance, or perhaps rather lassitude, began to appear. The once universal religious fanaticism was by no means dead, but increasing numbers of people, both rulers and philosophers, began to seek for ways in which Catholics and Protestants of various denominations could live side by side in peace, instead of waging perpetual war.

One of the most influential was the English philosopher John Locke, whose *Letter Concerning Toleration* was published in both Latin and English in 1689. Many of the ideas expressed in it were already current among philosophers in Britain and on the Continent. In one respect, however, Locke went far beyond his predecessors, and that is in his conclusion that "neither Pagan nor Mahometan, nor Jew, ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion."⁴ There were no "Mahometans" in Western Europe and few who dared avow themselves pagans. There were however Jews, who gradually became aware of the new mood and the opportunities which it offered them.

The first European country to give civil emancipation to its Jews was Holland. It was followed within a short time by England, which granted

extensive though by no means equal rights to Jews both at home and in the English colonies beyond the seas. The ideas of Locke and other English libertarians spread both to the American colonies and to France, where they contributed significantly to the ideologies of both the American and French revolutions. Though neither revolution immediately accorded full equality to Jewish citizens, both took the first significant steps which ultimately led in that direction. In Germany, too, the eighteenth-century enlightenment brought a change in attitudes, though it was not until Germany was conquered by Napoleon's armies that the new revolutionary doctrines gave some measure of civil rights to the German Jews. Imposed by French bayonets, these were a cause of fierce controversy in the years that followed the French departure.

Even in revolutionary France, the path of freedom did not run smooth.⁵ The famous Declaration of the Rights of Man, passed by the French National Assembly at the end of August 1789, had significant gaps. For one thing, it did not apply to the black slave population of the French West Indies, whose fate became a subject of passionate debate. Their emancipation did not come until later. For Jews – present and visible in France – things went somewhat faster. In January 1790, after some argument, the status of “active citizens” was extended to the old established Sephardic community of Bordeaux. But the far more numerous Jews of Alsace-Lorraine, living among a rather more hostile population, were excluded and it was not until the end of September 1791 that the National Assembly passed a general law enfranchising all Jews.

Several of the interventions in the debate express in vivid terms the point of view of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and its philosophers. Thus, for example, a Protestant spokesman, pleading for his own people, added a word for the Jews as well:

I ask of you gentlemen, for the French Protestants, for all the non-Catholics of the Kingdom, that which you ask for yourselves, liberty, equality of rights; I ask them for this people torn from Asia, always wandering, always proscribed, always persecuted for more than eighteen centuries, which would adopt our manners and customs, if by our laws that people were incorporated with us, and to which we have no right to reproach its morals, because they are the fruit of our own barbarism and of the humiliation to which we have unjustly condemned them.⁶

And Robespierre himself adjured the Chamber:

The vices of the Jews derive from the degradation in which you have plunged them; they will be good when they can find some advantage in being good.⁷

Such statements in defense of the Jews and their rights did not begin with the French Revolution. They were part of a tradition which dates back to the late seventeenth century and which continued into the twentieth – a tradition which has been called philo-Semitism, which defended the Jews against their detractors, attributed their faults to persecution, and pleaded for their admission to equal rights and full citizenship. This was a new phenomenon, without precedent in the history of Christendom. It had a powerful effect on the Jews who, in this new atmosphere and thanks to new laws, began to emerge, at first warily, then more confidently, from their seclusion – from the physical ghettos in which their rulers and neighbors had for so long confined them, from the ghettos of the mind in which they had enclosed themselves.

But this new situation brought new enemies, or at least new forms of enmity. One kind came from the very circles that had been most helpful to Jewish emancipation – from some of the deists and liberal philosophers of the Enlightenment. For many of these, the Church was the main enemy of humanity, and the Bible – the Jewish Bible – was the instrument of the Church. Voltaire's famous phrase, "Ecrasez l'infâme," expressed succinctly what the deists thought of the Church, and what they wished to do to it. But in eighteenth-century Europe, even in the Protestant democracies, to attack the Church, or to question the Bible, was still hazardous if not impossible. It was safer and easier to tackle the enemy from the rear – to criticize and ridicule the Old, not the New Testament; to attack not Christianity but Judaism, the source from which Christianity sprang and of which it still retained many features. If, for Christians, the crime of the Jews was that they had killed Christ, for the new anti-Christians it was rather that they had nurtured him. This line of thought continued into the nineteenth century, when a favorite accusation levied against the Catholic Church by its enemies in Germany was that it was "penetrated through and through with Semitism." This reached new heights in Hitler's time.

One of the most vehement critics of the Jews, in these terms, was the great Voltaire, whose hostility to both Judaism and the Jews – allegedly due to some personal difficulties with individual Jews – finds frequent expression in his writings. Indeed, the question has been asked whether Voltaire was anti-Jewish because he was anti-clerical, or anti-Christian because he was anti-Jewish. An acute observer, the Prince de Ligne, after spending eight days as Voltaire's guest at Ferney and hearing his views at length, remarked: "The only reason why M. de Voltaire gave vent to such outbursts against Jesus Christ is that He was born among a nation whom he detested."⁸

Voltaire himself remarked, in one of his notebooks, in his own English: "When I see Christians cursing Jews, methinks I see children beating their fathers. Jewish religion is the mother of Christianity, and grand mother of

the mahometism.”⁹ There are other indications in Voltaire’s writings of a cast of thought which can fairly be described as racist, as when he remarks, quite wrongly, that in ancient Rome “the Jews were regarded in the same way as we regard Negroes, as an inferior species of men.”¹⁰ In another place, ironically, in his *Traité de Métaphysique*, his philosophical narrator observes that white men “seem to me superior to Negroes, just as Negroes are superior to monkeys and monkeys to oysters.”¹¹

Some clue to Voltaire’s antiblack racism may be found in a detail from his biography. The philosopher was engaged in a number of financial enterprises, some of them rather questionable. The most relevant was a large-scale investment in a slave trading enterprise out of the French port of Nantes, which according to contemporary witnesses made him “one of the twenty wealthiest (*les mieux rentés*) persons in the kingdom.”¹²

It was indeed against the blacks, and in defense of the enormously profitable slave trade, that the new form of racism first made its appearance. It was not until some time later that it was applied to the Jews. Both the American and French revolutions, despite their passionate love of liberty, had neglected to extend it to their black slaves, the one in the southern states, the other in the West Indies. This contradiction did not pass unnoticed, and before long the slave dealers and plantation owners found themselves on the defensive against the growing barrage of criticism, dating back to before the revolutions, in three of the major West European colonial powers – England, France, and Holland – and later also in the United States. For ordinary individuals, simple greed may suffice to justify their actions. For a society, however, formally at least committed to a religion or an ideology, some theoretical justification is required, for themselves as well as for others, to justify so fearsome an action as the enslavement of a whole race. When the Israelites, in accordance with the universal practice of the ancient world, enslaved the Canaanites whom they had conquered, they felt the need to legitimize this in terms of their own religious ethic, and found an answer in the story of the curse of Ham – Noah’s son, who committed an offense against his father and was punished by a curse of servitude falling upon him and his descendants. In the biblical story, it is only on one line of his descendants, Canaan, that the curse in fact fell. When the Muslim Arabs, advancing into tropical Africa from the Middle East and North Africa, initiated the great flow of black slaves into the outside world, they too felt the need to justify this action. The first answer was that the blacks were idolators and therefore liable to Holy War and enslavement; and when – with the spread of Islam among the blacks – this no longer sufficed, some of them adapted the story of the curse of Ham and, transferring it from the Canaanites to the Africans, amended the curse of servitude to a double curse of servitude and blackness.

Some of these ancient and medieval stories found their way, through Spain and Portugal and the Atlantic islands, to the slave plantations of the New World. But by the end of the eighteenth century – after the American and French Revolutions – the curse of Ham and similar arguments were no longer sufficient. A substitute, or rather a supplement, was found in the new science of anthropology, which had made impressive progress in this period. Scientists were now beginning to classify human beings according to their color, the size and shape of their bodies, the shape and measurements of their skulls. From the anthropologists, this new knowledge affected such major intellectual figures as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), both of whom gave great importance to ethnic and even racial factors in culture and history.

Herder and Kant, like the early anthropologists, were still men of the Enlightenment. Attached to their own races, they were nevertheless ready to respect some others, and did not develop a doctrine of racial superiority. But some of the writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries introduced a new idea, which was to have far-reaching and devastating consequences. Men had always known that those who were unlike them in race or other collective features were different, foreign, and probably hostile. They were now taught that the other was not only different but inferior, and therefore genetically doomed to a subordinate role to which he must be kept. Specifically, according to this doctrine, the blacks were not only uncivilized – a condition which could be ascribed to environmental and historical factors. They were also, unlike the white savages who roamed the forests of northern Europe in antiquity, incapable of becoming civilized, and therefore – and this was the crux – best suited to a life of useful servitude. A similar argument, for similar reasons, may be found in some medieval Islamic philosophers, with the difference that by them it was applied to the fair-skinned northerners as well as to the black southerners, both of whom differed from the light brown ideal of the Middle East and had therefore, in this perception, been created by God to serve them.

The application of this new kind of racism to Jews seems to date from the early years of the nineteenth century, and was encouraged by the German struggle against Napoleonic rule and French revolutionary ideas. In a pamphlet published in 1803 and entitled “Against the Jews: A Word of Warning to All Christian Fellow Citizens . . .,” the writer argues: “That the Jews are a very special race cannot be denied by historians or anthropologists, the formerly held but generally valid assertion that God punished the Jews with a particularly bad smell, and with several hereditary diseases, illnesses and other loathsome defects, cannot be thoroughly proved, but, on the other hand cannot be disproved, even with due regard to all teleological considerations.”¹³ In this sample, the characteristic

mixture of medieval bigotry and modern pseudoscience is unusually transparent. In the course of the nineteenth century, it became much more sophisticated.

The doctrine that races were unequal and could indeed be situated in a hierarchy from the highest to the lowest was not entirely new. It is already to be found in Aristotle and other ancient Greek writers, and reappears in the Islamic philosophers of the Middle Ages. For the ancient Greeks, the medieval Muslims, and the modern philosophers, it served the same purpose – to justify slavery. While even Herder and Kant at times betray their own principles, the former in his remarks against Negroes, the latter in his references to Jews, there were others who preferred the view expressed by the great German scientist and humanist Alexander von Humboldt: “In maintaining the unity of the human species, we reject, by a necessary consequence, the appalling distinction of superior and inferior races. . . . All are equally fit for freedom.” Quoting his brother, Wilhelm von Humboldt, he sought to “envisage mankind in its entirety, without distinction of religion, nation, or race, as a great family of brothers, as a single body, marching towards one and the same end, the free development of its moral powers.”¹⁴

Doctrines of racial inequality, though by no means absent, are a comparatively minor theme in anti-Jewish literature until well past the middle of the nineteenth century. Even the Count de Gobineau, whose *Essay on the Inequality of Races*, published in 1853–5, became a classic of modern racism, was not really concerned with Jews. Instead, the attack on the Jews concentrated on two new accusations, both of them consequences of the emancipation of the Jews in Western Europe and their entry into European society. One of them was that the Jew resisted assimilation; the other was that he practiced it too effectively.

The first was a modernized restatement of a charge familiar since antiquity, and paradigmatically formulated by the classic Jew hater, Haman, who said to King Ahasuerus: “There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all peoples; neither keep they the king’s laws: therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them.” (Esther 3:8). In a milder form, the same complaint is made by a number of Greek and Roman authors, who could not understand why the Jews persisted in worshipping and obeying their own peculiar God, at once exclusive and universal, and would not be content to let Him and His rites take their place in the mutually tolerant polytheism of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds.

The kings and prelates of medieval Christendom had a better understanding of the Jewish position, and insisted even more strongly than the Jews, if for somewhat different reasons, on their separateness. The Fourth

Lateran Council, convened by Pope Innocent III in 1215, decreed that Jews must wear a specific badge or mark on their outer garments, to distinguish them from Christians. This innovation, which was no doubt inspired by an earlier Islamic practice, spread very rapidly, and the “badge of infamy,” usually yellow, was enforced in many parts of Europe. The ghetto system began even earlier. Sporadic attempts were made by local authorities in Europe to segregate Jews in various places, and in 1179 the Third Lateran Council resolved that Christians “who will presume to live with them [Jews] be excommunicated.”¹⁵ With the growth of hostility, what began as Jewish neighborhoods became a form of enforced segregation. The word ghetto seems to have been first used in Venice, where in 1516 Jews were restricted to an area of the city called the Ghetto, a local word meaning gun foundry. The practice – and the name – spread rapidly to other Italian cities and then to other parts of Europe, and came to denote the walled quarters, with barred gates, to which Jews were legally confined, and from which they were only allowed to emerge at limited times and by special permission.

The post-Christian and sometimes anti-Christian deists and liberals saw no reason to maintain such distinctions, which they regarded as part of the old order that they were committed to overthrow. For them, Jewish separateness was an evil, above all for the Jews themselves, who were its principal victims. Some even gave this a quasi-racial content, agreeing to the list of evil qualities ascribed to the Jews, and attributing them not only to the environmental effects of persecution and repression, but to the genetic effects of excessive inbreeding. The Emperor Napoleon is a good example of the mixed and sometimes confused perceptions and intentions of the revolutionaries and their successors towards the Jews. Napoleon never singled out his Jewish subjects for oppression, and seems to have meant well toward them. As early as 1798, at the time of his expedition to Egypt, he even issued a proclamation to the Jews, inviting them to enlist in his forces and help reconquer their promised land.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, nothing came of this, but the Jewish question continued to engage his occasional attention. As with others of his time, Napoleon’s pronouncements on the Jewish question seem to combine the remnants of medieval ecclesiastical bigotry with the beginnings of the new pseudoscience. The Jews, for Napoleon, were a race, and vitiated by bad blood: “Good is done slowly, and a mass of vitiated blood can only be improved with time.” Napoleon’s solution was extensive intermarriage: “When, in every three marriages, there will be one between Jew and Frenchman, the blood of the Jews will cease to have a particular character.”¹⁷ It will be noted that for the emperor, the intermarriage which he desired was to be between Jews and Frenchmen, not between Jews and Christians, and the difference between them was blood not creed.

The Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre was expressing a common view when he urged the French National Assembly in December 1789 “to refuse everything to the Jews as a nation, to grant everything to Jews as individuals.” It was a common view among the philo-Semites that Jewish separateness was an anomaly and was the cause of all the many Jewish defects, the existence of which they readily admitted. The solution was to end that anomaly, for the Jews to emerge from their ghettos, become part of the general population in every way – in other words, to cease to be Jews in any meaningful sense. Lessing, perhaps the greatest of European philo-Semites, subtly ridicules this attitude. In one of his plays a vulgar and loud-mouthed anti-Semitic servant, suddenly discovering that his revered master is a Jew, tries to atone for his previous hostile remarks by observing, in defense of the Jews, that “there are Jews who are not at all Jewish.”¹⁸ Some Jews responded to this kind of defense, and the implied invitation, with eager enthusiasm; others with outrage. Both kinds of responses can still be found among Jews to the present day.

While those Jews who insisted on remaining in the ghetto aroused one kind of indignation, their brothers who accepted the invitation to come out soon found themselves confronted by another, far more serious and dangerous kind of resentment. Before long Jews began to appear in increasing numbers in the high schools, in the universities, and finally – when they were admitted – in the professions. As in the Middle Ages, they encountered fewest obstacles in the worlds of trade and finance. But while in the Middle Ages they had – with few exceptions – been mere hucksters or usurers, in nineteenth-century Europe the most successful among them became bankers and brokers, financiers and entrepreneurs. Very few, of course, ever reached such heights, but there were enough to provide raw material for new stereotypes. Nineteenth- and to some extent twentieth-century fiction, in English, French, and German, offers some interesting Jewish characters, reflecting the reaction of Christian Europe, sometimes positive, more often negative, to this new element that was penetrating into its midst. Such, for example, is the portrayal of the Jew, by Trollope in England and Balzac in France, as the greedy upstart, the ambitious and acquisitive parvenu who corrupts and dominates through his skill in acquiring wealth and using it to serve his ends. The figure of the corrupting parvenu is by no means exclusively, or even predominantly, Jewish, but there were always some writers who shared the perception expressed by T. S. Eliot in two famous lines:

The rat is underneath the piles.
The jew is underneath the lot.¹⁹

From the Middle Ages to the present time, the Jews have had defenders as well as accusers in Christendom.²⁰ If some Popes imposed the ghetto

and the yellow badge, others tried to alleviate the Jewish burden. Notable among them was Innocent IV, who denounced the blood libel as a lie and defended the Talmud against its traducers. The same causes were taken up by other Christian scholars, such as the sixteenth-century German canonist and Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin, and more recent scholars like Theodor Nöldeke and Franz Delitsch in Germany and Pavel Konstantinovich Kokovstov in Russia, who used their scholarly authority to refute charges of ritual murder. A noteworthy example was the "Declaration of the Notables," a condemnation of anti-Semitism published in Germany in 1880, and signed by such eminent scholars and scientists as Johann Gustav Droysen, Theodor Mommsen, Rudolf Virchow, and Ernst Werner von Siemens.²¹ There is also a literary philo-Semitism. Lessing in Germany, Gorki and Andreyev in Russia, Emile Zola and Anatole France in France, wrote and spoke in defense of the Jews in general as well as of individual Jews under attack. In England, Byron, Browning and George Eliot, in their writings, showed deep sympathy for Jewish sorrows and aspirations, and even Shakespeare, while presenting his Jew, Shylock, in terms obviously affected by traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes, nevertheless gave him some noble lines expressing the Jew's complaint against his persecutors and his appeal to their common humanity.

By the mid-nineteenth century anti-Semitism was underpinned by a new theoretical and polemical literature, portraying the Jew as an evil and dangerous intruder in European society, whose penetration and depredations must be stopped if that society was to survive. By now, the difference and the danger are defined, usually though not exclusively, in racial rather than religious terms. As anthropology had provided the pretext for the earlier wave of antiblack racism, so now philology provided a theory and a vocabulary for anti-Jewish racism. The peoples of Europe were Aryans; the Jews were Semites. As such, they were alien, inferior, and noxious.

For the new anti-Semites, the issue was not religion. Indeed Wilhelm Marr, the inventor of the term anti-Semitism, rejected religious polemics as "stupid" and said that he himself would defend the Jews against religious persecution. For him, the problem lay not in religion, which could be changed and was in any case unimportant, but in the ultimate reality, which was race. In his booklet *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism*, he even pays a kind of tribute to the Jews, whose "racial qualities" had enabled them to resist all their persecutors and maintain their struggle for eighteen centuries against the Western world. They had finally won their victory and had conquered and subjugated this Western world.²² While the philo-Semites in their discussion of the Jews often combine contempt with good will, the anti-Semites frequently display a mixture of respect, or even awe, with their malevolence.

An important element in the development of racial anti-Semitism was the growing number of Jewish converts to Christianity. The opening of the ghettos had created new ambitions among the Jews which the slow pace of emancipation could not satisfy. Some found a shortcut through the baptismal font. Benjamin Disraeli would never have become prime minister of England had his father not baptized him in childhood; Heinrich Heine would no doubt have written great poetry, but would hardly have attained his fame and influence without what he called “the entry certificate” of baptism. Once again, as in late medieval Spain, there was some suspicion about the genuineness of these conversions, which might be ascribed, not as in the past to constraint, but to ambition. In an era of religious persecution, the Jew had the option of changing sides. By the substitution of the immutable quality of race, the Jew would be deprived of this option, and even his descendants would be included in the curse.

In general, race was a major, often a dominant, theme in nineteenth-century European writing on national, social, cultural, and often even political questions. Most of these writings were not racist, in the sense that other races were regarded as inferior and to be treated accordingly, and much of it was concerned with identities and loyalties which would nowadays be termed ethnic rather than racial. But in the nineteenth century, and for many well into the twentieth, the two were not differentiated, and perceptions and discussions of these matters often reflect an unholy mixture of different things – the physical classification of the anthropologists, the linguistic classification of the philologists, the aesthetic preferences of romantics, and the realities of historical, cultural, and political identity, which might be tenuously if at all related.

Nineteenth-century Europe attached great importance to problems of nationality, which it often interpreted, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, in racial terms. The Italians, who had few Jews in their midst and no colonies abroad, developed no racist ideologies similar to those appearing further north, and were little affected by anti-Semitism until it was imposed on them in 1938 by the senior partner in the Axis. The fascist regime in Italy, the Italian Empire in Africa, and the Italo-German Axis all helped to foster its growth, and even after the Empire had crumbled, the Axis was broken, and fascism was overthrown, some of this new anti-Semitism remained, as was clear from certain Italian responses to events in the Middle East. In pre-fascist Italy, when Jews encountered anti-Jewish hostility, it was of the old-fashioned religious, not the modern racial kind.

They were the exception. In Eastern Europe, the Jews with their own separate language, culture, and way of life were self-evidently a race as the term was then used. In Central Europe, where problems of race and nationality were in the forefront of both philosophical and political concern,

the Jews were still seen as a distinct race, to be either assimilated or excluded, according to the two prevailing views on how to cope with the Jewish question. Only in England, France, and Holland, where Jewish communities were relatively small, and where political and national identity were equated, in contrast to the confusion of petty states and polyglot empires further east, Jews might hope for acceptance as citizens, as members of the nation. In France, this was taken to imply a renunciation of Jewishness in any but a narrowly defined religious sense. In Britain, where particularism rather than centralism was favored, and where a British nation of four races, English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish, provided a pattern of pluralism, that sacrifice was not required. In the variegated immigrant societies of the Americas, the Jews could reasonably figure as one group among many, all contributing to the pattern of national life.

Despite the volume and vehemence of anti-Semitic literature in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe, with one exception, it did no more than delay the advance of Jewish emancipation, and left nothing worse than some remaining educational, professional and social barriers. The one exception was the empire of the czars, where the ideas of the theoreticians of anti-Semitism were given both wider circulation and more practical effect. In Germany, Austria, and France, despite their occasional intellectual and academic successes, the anti-Semites rarely achieved any significant political results – and this despite the support of such prominent figures as the musician Richard Wagner and the historian Heinrich Treitschke, who was responsible for the phrase, much used in Nazi times, “The Jews are our misfortune.” The first politician to win an election on an anti-Semitic platform was the Austrian Catholic populist Karl Lueger, leader of the “Austrian Christian Social Party.” Opposed by the grande bourgeoisie, the Austrian upper clergy and bureaucracy, and the Court, but with the strong support of the Pope and the Papal Envoy, he was able to win election as mayor of Vienna with an overwhelming majority. But once installed as mayor, he did little to harm Jews, but on the contrary even dined in the homes of Jewish bankers and attended a synagogue service in his mayoral robes. When reproached by some of his more consistent followers, he answered with a phrase which later became famous, “Wer ein Jud ist, das bestimme ich” – I decide who is a Jew.²³

In France, the Dreyfus Affair seemed for a while to threaten the civic rights and even personal security of the Jews in France. That danger passed, however, and despite recurring anti-Semitic agitation, the threat of anti-Semitic action remained remote, until suddenly and devastatingly it was realized by the collaborationist government of Nazi-dominated France.

In the English-speaking countries, anti-Semitism never achieved the level of intellectual respectability which it at times enjoyed in France, Germany,

Austria, and Russia. The attempts by such figures as Goldwin Smith and E. A. Freeman to launch German-style racial anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century, like the later attempts by Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton to import the French clerical variety, had little or no success. This is the more remarkable in that English literature offers as rich a gallery of Jewish villains as any literature in Europe – a gallery that begins with the supposed murderers of Hugh of Lincoln in medieval legends and chronicles, and includes such varied figures as Barabas the Jew of Malta, Fagin, Svengali, the sophisticated stereotypes of Graham Greene and T. S. Eliot and the penny plain stereotypes of John Buchan and Agatha Christie.²⁴

Prejudice against Jews has of course always existed in these countries, and on occasion amounted to a factor of some, though never major political importance. Racist ideas in general, and anti-Semitism in particular, are clearly discernible in the American immigration law of 1924 and the manner of its administration. Significantly, the Jews figure as “the Hebrew race.” Restrictive quotas and exclusions of various kinds continued to operate against Jews in America, not only at the point of entry into the country but at various subsequent stages. This was particularly noticeable in the 1920s and 1930s, when racist ideas were prevalent. As late as the 1950s there were still numbers of colleges, clubs, hotels, and board rooms in which Hitler or Stalin would have been eligible and Einstein or Freud would not. I vividly remember a conversation, some thirty years ago, with a student, when as a newcomer to this country I was seeking information about the (to me) mysterious phenomenon of the student fraternity. This student, who incidentally, was the son of the dean of the college, explained how the fraternities were organized and functioned, and remarked that they did not normally admit Jews or blacks because “we feel they would be happier among their own kind.” Since the end of World War II, virtually all these barriers have disappeared in the English-speaking countries.

Despite the former prevalence of such attitudes, in modern times the growth of anti-Semitism in the English-speaking world never reached a point when it could be publicly avowed in intellectual or political circles. Anglo-Saxon anti-Semitism, where it exists, is on the whole furtive, disguised, and hypocritical. Both in Britain and the United States, as well as in the other English-speaking countries, the political rights that Jews won in the nineteenth century have never since been seriously challenged, and the Jews of these countries never had to face anything like the barrage of hostile propaganda and political campaigns, the legal restrictions and physical violence encountered by Jews in most countries of the Continent. As a contemporary German Jewish observer noted in 1890: “The Englishman is economically too advanced for anyone to dare to try delude him that he might be dominated by a handful of Jews. He would also be too

proud to believe anything of the sort.”²⁵ The Yankee, as Mark Twain has attested, would be even less subject to these Middle and East European nightmares of domination by cleverer businessmen and more astute financiers.²⁶ It was this same English self-confidence which made it possible for Benjamin Disraeli, a Jewish convert to Christianity, to tell the British Parliament that the Jews were a superior race and aristocrats by nature. This was received with nothing worse than “cries of Oh! Oh! at intervals, and many other signs of general impatience.” Disraeli’s speech also brought some comments outside Parliament, but the most important – among them a parody published by Thackeray in *Punch* – expressed amusement rather than anger.²⁷

Disraeli’s own writings are an interesting example of how the assimilated Jew or the ex-Jew could be affected by the notions of the time. Traditional Jews, nourished on traditional literature, might still see themselves as custodians of the Jewish faith and as members of a Jewish community defined by rabbinic law. Jews who stepped outside and became part of Europe were inevitably affected by current European ideas, even those specifically hostile to themselves. While English liberals like William Hazlitt and Lord Macaulay defended Jewish emancipation by arguing that Jewishness was nothing but an accident of birth, no more significant than red hair or blue eyes, Disraeli took the opposite position, proclaiming that “all is race: there is no other truth.” Disraeli’s obsession with race, and his dithyrambs on Jewish power and greatness, have no basis in Jewish religious or historical tradition. His view of the role of the Jews does not differ greatly from that of the anti-Semites, but is simply reversed – presented in positive instead of negative terms, with pride instead of hate. One characteristic which Disraeli, curiously, shared with the anti-Semites is the attribution of Jewish origins to many people who in fact had no Jewish connections whatever. The difference of course was that whereas the anti-Semites turn those whom they hate into Jews, Disraeli annexed those whom he most admired. Disraeli’s fantasies were eagerly picked up and used by anti-Semites, who have always shown an inclination to cite Jewish sources when they can find them, and invent them when they cannot.

The same kind of awestruck belief in Jewish power can be found in some gentile sympathizers with Zionism – even, for example, among some of the promoters of the Balfour Declaration, who saw in it a device to win “international Jewry” to the Allied cause. This belief still appears occasionally even at the present day, though it has lost most of its cogency in view of the manifest inability of “international Jewry” to do anything against either Hitler or his successors in enmity to Judaism. Awe for the mysterious power of Jewry has given place to respect for the political and military power of Israel – but this is not a racial consideration.

Disraeli was probably alone among Jews and ex-Jews in his enthusiastic acceptance and transformation of anti-Semitic fantasies about Jewish power. But other baptized Jews were convinced by what they read of Jewish inferiority and Jewish iniquity, and drew the appropriate conclusions. The prototype, perhaps the archetype, of the phenomenon of Jewish self-hate was a young Viennese Jew called Otto Weininger, who wrote a long and rambling book about the moral and intellectual inferiority of women and of Jews, the latter being far more serious, and who then, logically, committed suicide at the age of twenty-four. Another baptized Jew, Karl Marx, did not commit suicide, but in his anti-Jewish tirade "On the Jewish Question" seems to recommend this as a collective solution.

The basic themes of anti-Judaism were established at the very beginning of the Christian Era. The first, and by far the gravest, charge in the indictment was deicide. Jews had rejected Christ. They had not only rejected him, but they had killed him, and since Christ was God, they had killed God. Modern scholarship and modern morality have both shed some doubt on the ancient and cherished theory of Jewish guilt for the death of Christ. The Romans were after all the unchallenged rulers of Judaea, and crucifixion was a Roman, never a Jewish, form of capital punishment. True, the Gospel according to St Matthew is unequivocal in placing the blood of Christ on the head of the Jews, but some modern historical critics have pointed out that the author of this Gospel might have been influenced by a desire to placate and exonerate the Romans, who were and for long remained the rulers of the world they knew. Recently, some Christian moralists have questioned the morality of extending the guilt from those Jews who were present to other Jews living at the time, all the more so to their remote descendants.

But such considerations and such questioning were far from the minds of the early Christians and most of their successors. For almost two thousand years the story of the betrayal, trial, and death of Christ has been imprinted on Christian minds from childhood, through prayer and preaching, through pictures and statuary, through literature and music, through all the rich complexities of Christian civilization. It was not until 1962, after almost two millennia, that the Second Vatican Council, convened and deeply influenced by Pope John XXIII, considered a resolution exonerating the Jews from the charge of deicide. The resolution was strongly resisted, especially by the Near Eastern bishops, and was adopted in a modified form.²⁸ It may yet be some time before the sermon and the Sunday School syllabus all over the Christian world are appropriately amended and the habits of mind which they inculcate are transformed.

Though the crucifixion was seen as necessary for the fulfillment of God's plan for human redemption, those who were held responsible for it

had nevertheless, in Christian perspective, committed a monstrous crime, and they, their compatriots, their coreligionists, and all their descendants in perpetuity were sometimes perceived as subject to a divine curse from which only baptism could save them. No less a person than St John Chrysostom, in the fourth century, spoke of the synagogue as “the temple of demons . . . the cavern of devils . . . a gulf and abyss of perdition,” while St Augustine explained how those who had once been God’s chosen people had now become the sons of Satan.²⁹

This curse was interpreted in many forms, the most important being the dispersion and oppression to which the Jews were subject. Those who distrusted and oppressed them were therefore doing God’s work. The legend of the wandering Jew, who must wander the earth, knowing neither death nor rest, until the time comes for him to witness the Second Coming, symbolizes this belief. Popular superstition added other details to the curse of the Jews, notably the evil smell – *foetor judaicus* – with which God is said to have afflicted them. This is perhaps an example of ordinary rather than extraordinary prejudice, since similar beliefs occur elsewhere, as for example among whites about blacks, and among yellow men about whites.

During the so-called Dark Ages, Jews in Europe enjoyed a relative tranquility. But the Crusades brought a new Christian militancy, and while this was directed primarily against the Muslims, the Crusaders found their first victims in their Jewish neighbors. This new hostility was aggravated by the relentless attack mounted by the Franciscan and Dominican orders against both Judaism and the Jews. From crusading times onward the Satanic element begins to dominate anti-Jewish polemic. Jews are now seen as children of the devil, whose assigned task was to combat Christianity and injure Christians. By the twelfth century they are accused of poisoning wells, ill-treating the consecrated Host (a somewhat pointless procedure for those who do not believe in it), and of murdering Christian children to use their blood for ritual purposes. The blood libel, as it is known, had originally been used by pagans against the early Christians. It was now used by Christians against Jews, with equal lack of justification, and with far more deadly effect. From time to time, these fantasies were denounced by popes and bishops, but they seem to have been widely accepted and disseminated by the lower clergy, who sometimes managed to convince their superiors. The notion of the Jews as possessing unlimited diabolic powers gained force with every private and public misfortune of Christendom. Before long, we find for the first time the story of a secret Jewish government, a sort of council of rabbis, which the Christians of course located in Muslim Spain, and which was directing a cosmic war against Christendom.

Against such dreadful enemies, only the most drastic measures could suffice. They had to be isolated, segregated, and if possible eliminated.

Excluded from agriculture, commerce, and handicrafts, the Jews were driven to the practice of usury, and a new stereotype was formed, of the Jew as the greedy, bloodsucking moneylender. Money was now added to sorcery as an instrument of the Jewish plot to rule the world.

With the growing intellectual sophistication of Christian Europe, such fantasies began to lose their hold, though they – and still more the attitudes resulting from them – have shown extraordinary persistence in some areas, and from time to time make a disconcerting reappearance. The myth of a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world, directed by a secret Jewish government of which all Jews are agents, reappeared toward the end of the eighteenth century, and has survived. This new accusation was first formulated by French émigré opponents of the Revolution and of the Napoleonic regime that followed it. A French Jesuit called Barruel published a lengthy book proving that the Revolution was the work of a secret conspiracy of Freemasons. Subsequently – no doubt anticipating the later prominence of Jews in continental European Masonic lodges – he made the further discovery that the Freemasons were themselves mere instruments of a deeper and more dangerous conspiracy – the invisible government of the Jews. It was the Jews, according to Father Barruel, who had founded the Freemasons, the Illuminati, and all the other anti-Christian groups. Some Jews tried to pass as Christians in order the better to achieve their deceitful purposes. They had even penetrated the Catholic Church, so that in Italy alone more than 800 priests, including some bishops and cardinals, were really secret Jewish agents. Their real purpose was “to be masters of the world, to abolish all other sects in order to make their own prevail, to turn the Christian churches into synagogues, and to reduce the remaining Christians to true slavery.”³⁰

Father Barruel, apparently recovering from his nightmares, made his peace with the new regime to which he had ascribed such evil origins, and accepted an appointment as canon of the Cathedral of Notre Dame. But others emerged to carry on his campaign. Such cataclysmic events as the French Revolution, the rise of Napoleon, the overthrow of most of the old regimes in Europe, and the installation of a new and radically different order in their place, could only be due, in the eyes of some of their less sophisticated opponents, to the working of evil and occult forces. The Freemasons, the Illuminati, the liberal philosophers, and the rest were all outward manifestations of the same underlying cause. The Jews, who had wrought so much evil at the time of the Crusades, had broken their bonds and were at work again. For some, Napoleon himself was a Jew. More commonly, he was an instrument in the hands of Jewish conspirators. Such arguments followed him even after his defeat and exile: according to one German pamphleteer, “although Napoleon is isolated on his rock in the ocean, his Jewish confidants hold the threads of a conspiracy which

stretches not only to France but also to Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, and with objectives consisting of nothing less than world revolution.”³¹ Another German writer, in a utopian tract published in Nuremberg in 1811, warns his readers against the “philanthropic madness” of emancipation, which could lead to the advent of “circumcised kings on the thrones of Europe.”³²

The enemies of Jewish emancipation could point to some telling evidence. Until the eighteenth century – later in the more backward parts of Europe – Jews had almost everywhere been despised outcasts, living on the fringes of European society, without rights or friends, without claims or hopes outside the limited circle of their own ghetto existence. With very few exceptions, they were excluded from all forms of participation, at the lowest as at the highest level, in the political life of the country where they lived; they made no contribution to its culture, and were excluded from all but specific and in the main, degraded occupations.

When, finally, in Western countries, they were permitted to emerge from the ghetto and enter into the life of European society, they displayed that additional energy and determination often found in penalized minorities that have to struggle to survive. In consequence, they did rather well. Jewish students thronged to the universities from which – with very few exceptions – they had been barred since the Middle Ages, and, not surprisingly, strove to excell. They tried harder, and often they did better than those other students for whom entry to the university required no special effort and was seen as no special privilege. Success breeds envy in any social situation, and it is the more resented when it is won by those previously regarded as inferiors and outcasts. The idea that Jews wielded some secret and diabolic power, which enabled them to triumph over good, honest Christians, now found new audiences even in the more advanced countries of northern and Western Europe. Only in this way could a few thousand inferior Jews impose themselves on many millions of superior Christians or gentiles.

In the Middle Ages, Jews had sometimes been accused of achieving their evil purposes by means of spells and incantations. The economic developments of the nineteenth century gave new scope to the idea of the other kind of sorcery, the power of money, which they used to conjure up immense forces to obey their commands and fulfill their Jewish purposes, and by which the Jews were able to possess and dominate the Christian world.

For a small but by no means insignificant number of European writers, the successes of the Jews could never have been won in fair competition, and could only be explained by the medieval stories of a dark and devious plot of the children of Satan, able to call on the powers of Hell at will, and seeking, as the French Catholic writer Bonald put it in 1806, “to reduce all

Christians until they are nothing more than their slaves.” A French sous-préfet in 1808 saw the problem as acute: “It would be better to drive the Jews out of Europe rather than be driven out by them.”³³ Such a conspiracy, and such a purpose, obviously required central direction, and in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a number of different ideas were advanced on the nature of “the secret Jewish government.”

To support these and other charges against the Jews, or at least to make them acceptable to those who did not share the presumptions of the anti-Semites, some sort of evidence was needed. The Jews were known to be a highly literary people, who practiced a very bookish religion. In their religious books, written in strange languages and locked in the secrecy of an unknown script, the evil truth might be found. For Christians, it was difficult to attack the Old Testament, since the Church had made it part of the canon. Hostile attention was therefore focused on those religious books which were distinctively Jewish, namely the rabbinic collections, and especially the most famous and important of them, the Talmud. This is the name given to two great collections of rabbinic law, exegesis, and debate, both compiled during the early centuries of the Christian era, one in Babylonia, the other in the Roman province of Palestine. They are regarded by Orthodox Jews as containing an authoritative formulation of *Halakha*, that is, the rabbinic law that regulates Jewish life and worship. Already in the Middle Ages, Dominican inquisitors staged public burnings of rabbinic writings, and notably of the great codices of the Talmud. The most famous was the burning in Paris in June 1242. Despite the efforts of some Christian scholars, including churchmen, to defend the Talmud, the practice was continued in other Catholic countries, and as late as September 1553 the Talmud and other books were burned by official order, in Rome, Venice, Cremona, and elsewhere in Italy.³⁴

A new phase began with Eisenmenger’s famous *Entdecktes Judentum*, published in 1711. Johann Andreas Eisenmenger was a professor of Oriental languages, and appears to have devoted some study to the Talmud. The result of his efforts was a massive two-volume work, in which by careful selection, occasional invention, and sweeping misinterpretation, due sometimes to ignorance and sometimes to malice, he presents the Talmud as a corpus of anti-Christian and indeed antihuman doctrines. The title of the book means Judaism (or Jewry) revealed (or unmasked), and indicates its author’s purpose. In the course of his book he resumes and attempts to confirm all the lies which had already by his time become standard in the anti-Semitic armory – the poisoning of wells, the Black Death, the ritual murder of children, and the rest. Eisenmenger’s book, though disproved again and again by both Christian and Jewish scholars, became a classic of anti-Semitic literature, and has remained a source book for anti-Semitic accusations until the present day. The use of the adjective “talmudical,” in

a variety of negative senses, became one of the characteristics of anti-Semitic writing, and to the present time, its use to denounce the actions or utterances of Israeli leaders is a generally reliable indication that the user is inspired by anti-Semitic prejudice and not merely by concern about the Middle East.

From the mid-nineteenth century some Christian theologians began to launch an attack against the Old Testament itself, despite its position as part of the Christian canon. A favorite approach was to contrast the harsh, vindictive, ruthless Jewish God of the Old Testament with the kind, gentle, forgiving Christian spirit of the New Testament. It is not difficult to refute this line of argument, by quoting injunctions to gentleness from the Old, and to severity from the New, but such refutations had little effect in halting this new line of attack. It was strengthened by the progress of archaeology and the decipherment of the ancient Middle Eastern languages, which enabled scholars, particularly in Germany, to find more ancient antecedents for some of the teachings of the Old Testament. The denigration of postbiblical, i.e., rabbinic, Judaism, already an established tradition in some Christian scholarship, continued; it was now buttressed by what was known as the Higher Criticism, which at once questioned the theology, the morality, and even the originality of the Hebrew Bible. The Greek New Testament, for the time being, remained immune to such criticism, and it was not surprising that some rabbis spoke of the Higher Criticism as a higher anti-Semitism. This accusation was no doubt unjust concerning many of the distinguished scholars of the time, some of whom indeed made great efforts to understand and interpret rabbinic literature, but it received some color from the practice of putting a distinguishing sign – a kind of bibliographical yellow star – against the names of Jewish authors whom they cited.³⁵

Eisenmenger's book served as the basis of one of the major classics of nineteenth-century anti-Semitic literature, *Der Talmudjude* (The Talmud Jew), by the Canon August Rohling, professor at the Imperial University of Prague. The numerous misrepresentations and falsifications in this book were at once challenged and disproved, not only by Jewish but also by Christian scholars, and in 1885 Canon Rohling, denounced in print as a liar, a faker, and an ignoramus, was forced to bring a libel action from which he withdrew in circumstances so scandalous that he was obliged to resign from his university chair. This in no way impeded, and perhaps encouraged, the enormous success of the book. Three French translations, by three different translators, were published in 1889. Many other editions and translations followed, especially during the Hitler years. The most recent editions have been in Arabic.

Canon Rohling's book, which was at first endorsed in Rome by the semi-official Vatican journal *Civiltà Cattolica*, devotes great attention to

the theme of ritual murder, and makes it one of his main charges against the Jews. The wide circulation and academic endorsement of the blood libel in this period had practical effects. Between 1867 and 1914, twelve charges of alleged ritual murder against Jews were tried by jury in German and Austro-Hungarian courts. It says much for the judicial systems of the two Germanic empires at the time that eleven of the twelve trials ended in acquittals; in the twelfth, in Austria, the accused was found guilty of murder, but without ritual implications. This verdict gave rise to many appeals, including one from Thomas Masaryk, and the accused was later pardoned by the emperor. The most famous of these cases occurred at a place called Tisza-Eszlar in Hungary, where in 1882 fifteen Jews were charged with the ritual murder of a Christian girl. The case became an international sensation before the final verdict of not guilty.

Another case, which lasted far longer and attracted far greater attention, was the arrest in 1911 of a Jewish brickmaker called Mendel Beilis, in Kiev in the Ukraine, for the ritual murder of a Christian boy. This followed after the temporary halting of the pogroms in Russia under both international and domestic liberal pressures, and represented a new effort and a new direction on the part of the anti-Semites, by now entrenched at the highest reaches of the imperial Russian government. Two years were spent in preparing the case, which was concocted by an anti-Semitic organization, in cooperation with the minister of justice and the police. It was opposed by an impressive array of Russian liberals and socialists, including such figures as the writer Maxim Gorki and the psychologist Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. The trial opened at the end of 1913, and, like the Dreyfus trial in France, became the focus for a conflict between opposing political forces in Russia, and the cause of widespread protests in the democratic countries of the West. It was no doubt partly because of the latter that the trial ended in an acquittal of the accused, "for lack of evidence," and with no decision on the question of ritual murder.³⁶

But if the charge of ritual murder was impeded and in some measure defeated by the courts and the law, the charge of secret conspiracy for world domination, less subject to judicial review, was making greater headway. As Jewish emancipation progressed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Jews became more prominent in business and banking, literature and the arts, journalism and politics, the doctrine that "the Jew is underneath the lot" began to seem, to many who were frustrated and angry, to provide the answer to their questions and to indicate the solution to their problems.

For this doctrine, too, a proof text was needed, and since none existed, not even with the kind of distortions used by the anti-Semitic Talmudists, it had to be invented. It was for this purpose that the famous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were devised. Any rational modern reader of the

Protocols cannot but wonder at the crudity of the inventors of this text, and the credulity of those who believed it. Among the many strange "secrets" revealed in the book is that the Jews make the sons of the nobility study Latin and Greek as the best way of undermining their morals, and that the Jews ordered the building of underground railways in the major cities of Europe so that when the time comes they can blow up any capital which resists their rule. Nor do those who believe in the *Protocols* find it odd that the Jews, in their own secret writings, should cast themselves in the role of agents of evil, and should moreover do so in the specific terminology of Christian anti-Semitism. Yet despite these and many other similar absurdities, the book has gone through countless editions, been distributed in millions of copies, and must rank very near to the Bible in the number of languages into which it has been translated.³⁷

The text has a curious history. In its earliest extant form, it has nothing whatever to do with either Jews or anti-Semites, but consisted of a pamphlet written in the 1860s against Napoleon III. The forgers took this pamphlet, substituted world Jewry for the French emperor, and added a number of picturesque details borrowed from an obscure German novel. The *Protocols* first appeared in about 1895, and were almost certainly the work of a group of members of the czarist Russian secret police stationed in Paris. For some time, the book was used only in Russia. It had little influence even there and none at all outside. Its worldwide fame began with the Russian Revolution of 1917. In the course of the bitter civil wars that raged across Russia in the years 1918–1921, the leaders of the White Russians used the *Protocols* extensively to persuade the Russian people that the so-called revolution was no more than a Jewish plot to impose a Jewish government on Russia, as a step toward the ultimate aim of Jewish world domination.

The *Protocols* and the doctrines which it was used to propagate had their effect in the brutal massacres of Jews during the Russian Civil War. At the same time, White Russian agents carried the *Protocols* to all the countries of Europe and the Americas, as evidence of their interpretation of the significance of the Revolution and the nature of the new government in Moscow. In this they achieved quite extraordinary success. In Britain, both the *Times* and the *Morning Post* gave the *Protocols* extensive treatment, and the *Spectator* even demanded a royal commission to decide whether British Jews were in fact "subjects of a secret government." In America, the *Protocols* were widely circulated under the title *The Jewish Peril* and were in particular publicized and distributed by the automobile magnate Henry Ford, an obsessive anti-Semite who wrote a series of articles on "The International Jew," which he later reprinted as a separate booklet.

In 1921, the *Times* newspaper of London published some articles by its Istanbul correspondent, who had discovered a copy of the original French

pamphlet and thus exposed the *Protocols* as a forgery;³⁸ in 1927 even Henry Ford admitted that his accusations were unfounded. From this time onward, in the English-speaking world, the *Protocols* were confined to the lunatic fringe. But in Hitler's Germany, they provided a major theme in Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda, and like the White Russian agents before them, Nazi peddlers of anti-Semitism were instrumental in distributing the *Protocols* all over the world.

The *Protocols*, though by far the most successful, were not the only anti-Semitic fabrication. Another, specially designed for an American audience, is a speech by Benjamin Franklin urging the Founding Fathers not to admit Jews to the new republic, and warning them of the dire consequences if they disregarded his words. The speech is a total fabrication, but was not without its effect. A less troublesome and widely used method was simply to assign a Jewish origin to anyone whom it was desired to discredit, and then to use that person to discredit the Jews.

NOTES

- 1 On Marr, see P. G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, London, 1964, pp. 47, 49–52; and Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1961–77), 3: 432, 466, 4: 29–30. On the history of anti-Semitism, see further Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), and Samuel Morag, ed. *Sinat Yisra'el le-doroteha* (Jerusalem, 1980).
- 2 See Albert Sicroff, *Les Controverses des statuts de "Pureté de sang" en Espagne du XV au XVII siècle* (Paris, 1960), pp. 223ff; and S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd edn. (New York, 1952 – vol. 8, 1969), p. 85.
- 3 Sicroff, pp. 90ff; Baron, 8: 88–9.
- 4 John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration with the Second Treatise of Civil Government*, ed. J. W. Gough (London, 1946), p. 160; cit. Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York and London, 1968), pp. 46–7, n. 3.
- 5 On anti-Semitic and antiblack sentiments and ideologies in eighteenth-century France, see Pierre Pluchon, *Nègres et juifs au XVIII siècle* (Paris, 1984).
- 6 Poliakov, 3: 233.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 3: 234.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 3: 107.
- 9 *Voltaire's Notebooks*, ed. Theodore Besterman (Geneva, 1952), pp. 31 and 233; Poliakov, 3: 114.
- 10 *Essai sur les mœurs*, ed. René Pomeau (Paris, 1963), 1: 478; Poliakov, 3: 106.
- 11 *Traité de métaphysique*, ed. Temple Patterson (Manchester, 1937), p. 33, cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.
- 12 Poliakov, 3: 115.

- 13 Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Grattenauer, *Wider die Juden: Ein Wort der Warnung an alle unsere christliche Mitbürger* (Berlin, 1803), 3: 29; cit. Poliakov, 3: 158.
- 14 Cited in Léon Poliakov, *Le Mythe aryen: Essai sur les sources du racisme et des nationalismes* (Paris, 1971), pp. 172–3.
- 15 Baron, 9: 32.
- 16 Poliakov, *Histoire*, 3: 243.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 3: 242–3.
- 18 Lessing, *Die Juden* (1749), scene 22, cf. Poliakov, *Histoire*, 3: 69, who interprets this remark differently.
- 19 T. S. Eliot, “Burbank with a Baedeker, Bleistein With a Cigar,” in *Poems 1909–1925* (London, 1925), p. 55. See further Edgar Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali; Jewish Stereotypes in English fiction* (London, 1961); Moses Debré, *Der Jude in der französischen Literatur von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart* (Ansbach, 1909); Montagu Frank Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England to the end of the 19th century* (New York-Philadelphia, 1939).
- 20 Solomon Rappaport, *Jew and Gentile, the Philo-Semitic Aspect* (New York, 1980).
- 21 Text in Pulzer, pp. 337–8.
- 22 Poliakov, *Histoire*, 4: 29–30.
- 23 Pulzer, p. 204. See further Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews: the Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (London and Toronto, 1982).
- 24 The curious reader may note that some of the more striking anti-Semitic phrases found in the English editions of Miss Christie’s detective stories were omitted from the American editions.
- 25 Poliakov, *Histoire*, 3: 336.
- 26 Mark Twain, *Concerning the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1985), reprinted from *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, September 1898.
- 27 William F. Moneypenny and George E. Buckle, *Life of Disraeli* (London, 1929), 1: 885; Poliakov, *Histoire*, 3: 345.
- 28 Poliakov, *Histoire*, 3: 301.
- 29 St John Chrysostom, cit. James Parke in *Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (London, 1934), pp. 163–6; John G. Gager *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1983), pp. 118–20; Norman Cohn, “The Myth of the Demonic Conspiracy of Jews in Medieval and Modern Europe,” in Anthony de Reuck and Julie Knight, eds., *Caste and Race: Comparative Approaches* (London, 1967), pp. 240ff. See further Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca and London, 1982).
- 30 Father Barruel, pp. 58–62, cit. Poliakov, *Histoire*, 3: 296.
- 31 From a German pamphlet of 1816, *Das Judenthum in der Maurerey* (Judaism in Freemasonry). This pamphlet was much used in later Nazi literature. Poliakov, *Histoire*, 3: 297–8.
- 32 Poliakov, *Histoire*, 3: 298.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 3: 299.
- 34 Jacob R. Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Source Book 1315–1791* (New York and Philadelphia, 1960), pp. 145ff, 161ff, 170ff.

- 35 Poliakov, *Histoire*, 4: 38, 39.
- 36 Rappoport, p. 180; S. Zeitlin in *Jewish Quarterly Review* (July 1968), pp. 76–80, review of *The Strange History of the Beiless Case* by Maurice Samuel.
- 37 Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*.
- 38 Anīs Manṣūr, an Egyptian journalist specializing in anti-Jewish polemics, has his own way of explaining the discoveries of the *Times* correspondent: “Anti-Semitism reached its peak with the publication of the secret plan to rule the world. The *Times* correspondent in Istanbul revealed in 1929 that the Jews had composed a book called the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, when their first Zionist Congress met in Bâle in Switzerland, and that at this Congress they had agreed on their devilish plan to rule the whole world. This book was translated in all the countries of the world. It was translated four times in Egypt, and I myself was the first to draw attention to it and translate parts of it 25 years ago” (Anīs Manṣūr, *Wajʿ fi qalb Isrāʿīl*, Cairo, 1977, p. 140).

Mr Manṣūr is wrong in every particular. The achievement of Philip Graves, the *Times* correspondent in Istanbul, was not to “reveal” the *Protocols*, which were already widely circulated at the time, but to expose them as a forgery. The year was not 1929 but 1921. (Philip Graves’s *Times* articles were reprinted in his little book *The Truth about the Protocols* [London: 1921].) Even Mr Manṣūr’s own claim to have been the first to draw attention to them in Arabic is unfounded. Arabic translations appeared in Palestine in 1926 and in Egypt in about 1927.

On the role of Eastern Christians in introducing anti-Semitism to the Middle East, Elie Kedourie aptly observes that they “had easier access to Western literature but not enough judgment to exercise critical and discriminating choice” (Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version*, London, 1970, p. 338).