

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

MISHKAN

Issue 85, 2022



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MISHKAN

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MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

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Dear *Mishkan* readers,

The topic for this issue of *Mishkan* is antisemitism: an ancient phenomenon that has lamentable ties to Christianity throughout history. Unfortunately, antisemitism has lifted its appalling head again in our days. Why is this so? This issue's contributors will not only look at historical antisemitism but also modern antisemitism, which can lead believers to conspiracies.

Happy reading,

Caspari Center staff

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Church Relations with the Jews during the German Occupation of Norway, 1940–45

Torleiv Austad

Questions

In the last three years there has been a heated discussion in Norway about the resistance movement's relationship with the Jews during the German occupation of 1940–45.¹ This discussion is also part of the history of the Church in Norway, including the Christian organizations and the small free churches. In this perspective, two questions are particularly important: What did the Church leaders know about the Nazi's plan for the deportation and annihilation of Norwegian Jews, and what did the Church do to protect them?

The Church of Norway is an Evangelical–Lutheran church. From the Reformation until 2012, the Church was organized by the state. The King (i.e., with the government, of which 50% or more of its ministers had to be members of the Church) appointed pastors, deans, and bishops. During the occupation, 96% of the population were members of the Church.

The Church Struggle

When the Germans invaded Norway on April 9, 1940, a small National Union Party—*Nasjonal Samling* (NS)—under the Nazi leadership of Vidkun Quisling (1887–1945) took control of the Church functions of the King and the state Church Department. At first, the Church was troubled. But in October of 1940, its leading bishop, Eivind Berggrav (1884–1959), succeeded in establishing a consultative council called the *Kristent Samråd* (The Christian Consultative Council), which was independent of the official state church. Until the middle of 1942, this consultative council functioned as a platform for the Church's resistance against the ideology of German National Socialism and the church politics of the occupiers and their Norwegian supporters in NS.

The resistance of the Church against Nazism, called the Church Struggle, began in earnest in January and February of 1941 when the seven bishops sent out a rather extensive pastoral letter to the congregations. This letter, *Hyrdebrevet* (the Pastoral Letter), was a sharp protest against a number of violations of justice in their society. The Gestapo confiscated the letter, of which 50,000 copies were printed to be spread among the people. Despite the ban, the letter was read out in most worship services on Sunday, February 9.

The central basis of the resistance was Bishop Berggrav's concept of "the just state" (*rettsstaten*).² By emphasizing this message, the Church became an important guardian of justice in the vacuum after the resignation of the Supreme Court in December of 1940. Consequently,

¹ This discussion started with Marte Michelet's book, *Hva visste Hjemmefronten? Holocaust i Norge: Varslene, unnvikelsen, hemmeligholdet* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2018).

² See Arne Hassing, *Church Resistance to Nazism in Norway 1940–1945* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2014), 78. The English word *just* does not convey the full complexity of the Norwegian word *right*, which connotes "the right," "right," "rights," "just," "justice," "the law," "law," "court," and "correct," each according to its context, while always retaining the full range of meanings. For Berggrav, a just state was one that upheld order, law, and justice.

the Church's view of the difference between right and wrong, the truth and lies, received great attention and became normative for many Norwegians.

It is important to note that the Church Struggle did not start with a protest against the interference of Nazi rulers in the inner life of the Church, although it gradually became necessary to also fight for the independence of the Church. The main concern of the Church was its commitment to elementary human rights. Because of this choice, the Church received the broad support of the population. Many people felt that the Church spoke and acted as their advocate. Bishop Berggrav described justice as holy and argued for civil disobedience and active opposition to an unjust state.

In the fight for justice, human rights, and church independence, the Church of Norway used its pulpits.³ The majority of pastors read out a wide range of protests, declarations, slogans, and pastoral letters in more than a thousand churches throughout the country. Several of the documents from Church leadership were also announced in free churches and prayer houses belonging to Christian organizations. In this way, the Church reached out to the people.

The Persecution of the Jews⁴

In 1940 there were about 2,000 Jews in Norway. Between 300 and 400 of them were refugees from various European countries. Some of them wanted to move to the USA.

A few weeks after the Nazi invasion, Norwegian Jews were harassed. They were soon deprived of their radio devices, and a number of their stores were ravaged. It was obvious that the new authorities had a fundamental contempt for and hatred of Jews and other groups of people who were not of Aryan descent. This new and frightening situation did not come as a surprise to Norwegians. The anti-Semitic politics in Germany after Hitler's takeover of power in 1933 were widely known in Norway. The *Kristallnacht* (the Crystal Night) between November 9 and 10 of 1938 gained worldwide attention and was clearly criticized in church journals. But the bishops did not put Hitler's threat to the Jews on their common agenda in the thirties.

In the first few months following the invasion, Jew-hostile politics were most evident in Trondheim and the surrounding area. NS campaigned against Jewish medical doctors, lawyers, artists, and merchants. In spring of 1941, the Jews in Trondheim were deprived of their synagogue. Real estate belonging to Jews was recorded. Dean Arne Fjellbu (1890–1962) of the Nidaros Cathedral supported the Jews and helped them as much as possible. He kept Bishop Berggrav informed about what was happening in the Trondheim area.

In early September 1941, Bishop Berggrav protested on behalf of his episcopal colleagues against the proposal from the Church Department to ban marriage between Norwegians and Jews and Norwegians and Sami people (Lapps). He clarified that racial biological injunctions that deprive certain peoples of their human dignity are in obvious conflict with the Christian church's fundamental view. After this protest, the proposal was put on hold until further notice.

³ Torleiv Austad, "Church Resistance against Nazism in Norway, 1940–1945," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte / Contemporary Church History* 28 (2015), 278–293, especially 283.

⁴ See Hassing, 205–215; Torleiv Austad, "Sviktet kirken jødene under okkupasjonen?," in *Dømmekraft i krise?* ed. Torleiv Austad, Ottar Berge, and Jan Ove Ulstein (Trondheim: Akademika Forlag, 2011), 17–109.

Registration

When the Ministry of Police announced on January 20, 1942 that all Jews must be registered and have a red *J* stamped in their identification papers, none of the Church leaders reacted publicly. They did not open up the question of what this registration might entail. About six weeks later, on March 7, 1942, four Jews in Trondheim were executed without a word from the central ecclesiastical position.

After some pressure from Germany, the Quisling Government⁵ adopted an amendment to Article 2 of the Constitution on March 12, 1942. It was a reintroduction of the Jewish clause from 1814, which was repealed in 1851: “Jews are excluded from the Kingdom (of Norway).”

The *Kirkens Grunn*: A Confessional Declaration

By this time, the *Kristent Samråd* had begun working on the theological and ecclesiastical basis for the forthcoming resignation of the clergy and the separation of the Church and the state in Norway. It was a confessional declaration named the *Kirkens Grunn* (the Foundation of the Church).⁶ Parish pastors in Bergen and Stavanger wrote to the *Kristent Samråd*, urging the Church leaders to protest against the reintroduction of the constitutional ban on Jews. But the protest was dropped for tactical reasons. As a justification for this, Bishop Berggrav said in 1948 that dragging “the most explosive Jew moment” into the declaration would have only made their “own lines” less simple and less clear. The bishop and his coworkers on the council thought that a protest regarding the state’s discrimination against the Jews would bring *Reichskommissar* Josef Terboven (1898–1945) and Minister President Quisling closer together. Therefore, the Church leaders’ main concern was to avoid a common reaction from Quisling and Terboven against the Church after the resignation of the clergy.

On Easter Sunday, April 5, 1942, the *Kirkens Grunn* was read out in most of Norway’s churches, and more than 92% of the parish pastors closed down their state offices but wanted to continue being pastors in their parishes on the basis of their ordinations.⁷ But the discrimination of the Norwegian Jews fell outside this important statement that marked the break of the Church of Norway with the Nazi state.

However, the *Kirkens Grunn* proclaims awareness of persons and groups who are under dangerous pressure:

If someone – without calling upon the court – is persecuted and tormented for the sake of his conviction, then the Church is the guardian of conscience and must stand with the persecuted. (Article III)

⁵ Quisling became Minister President on February 1, 1942 and established a government with ministers from his own political party, NS.

⁶ See the English translation of the *Kirkens Grunn*: “The Foundation of the Church: A Confession and Declaration,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte / Contemporary Church History* 28 (2015), 294–299; Torleiv Austad, *Kirkens Grunn: Analyse av en kirkelig bekjennelse fra okkupasjonstiden 1940–45* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1974).

⁷ The small free churches in Norway, the Christian organizations, and the theological faculties supported the confession, with one exception: The Salvation Army. See Hallgeir Elstad and Per Arne Krumsvik, “The Salvation Army and the Norwegian Church Resistance,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte / Contemporary Church History* 32 (2019), 379–404.

The Jews were undoubtedly among the persecuted, but they were not mentioned by name. However, some other endangered groups were mentioned and directly included in the Church Struggle.

German Informants

When Hitler's Germany decided at the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942 to exterminate the Jews, both in their own country and in the occupied territories, the persecution of Jews developed into genocide. What did the Norwegian Church leaders know about this?

A key figure in the dissemination of information on German politics to opposition groups in areas occupied by the Germans was the lawyer Count Helmuth James von Moltke (1907–1945). He was an intelligence officer on the staff of E-commander Admiral Wilhelm Canaris and was in Norway four times between 1942 and 1943. Von Moltke was also secretly the leader of the Kreisau Circle, a group of prominent anti-Nazis who fought for the humanistic and Christian tradition of European history. His contact in Norway was Lieutenant Colonel Theodor Steltzer (1885–1967), who was a transport officer at the *Wehrmacht*'s headquarters in Oslo from 1940 to 1944. He also belonged to the Kreisau Circle. He had a close relationship with Norwegian resistance fighters, among them Bishop Berggrav, the painter Henrik Sørensen (1882–1962), and the sociologist Arvid Brodersen (1904–1996). When Berggrav was imprisoned during Easter in 1942 and risked being sentenced to death by the People's Court, Steltzer sent a coded message to von Moltke. He came to Oslo in mid-April with another from the Kreisau Circle, the well-known theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1944), under the pretext of investigating whether Terboven's and Quisling's actions against Berggrav would create unnecessary difficulties for the German forces in the country. Von Moltke and Bonhoeffer also used their days in Oslo for secret talks with the Norwegian Church leaders.⁸

The Oslo visit in April took place just two and a half months after the Wannsee Conference's decision to exterminate the Jews. The son of the painter Henrik Sørensen, the physicist Sven Oluf Sørensen (1920–2017), who met von Moltke and Bonhoeffer, has written that by virtue of his position, von Moltke was “fully informed” of the plans to exterminate the Jews. In his conversations with Steltzer and Norwegian resistance fighters, von Moltke informed them and emphasized “that the Norwegian Jews had to be prepared.”⁹

In September of the same year von Moltke was back in Oslo. He had four nightly meetings with Steltzer, Church leaders, and other resistance fighters, confirming that a major action against the Norwegian Jews was imminent. However, he could not provide exact details on when the arrests and deportations would take place. For him, it was important to appeal to Norwegians to stand up for the Jews in this situation. At this time, it was probably not yet decided when and how the Norwegian Jews would be taken.

Among Steltzer's close associates at the German transport office in Oslo was a German pastor, Friedrich Schauer (1891–1958). He had contact with several ecclesiastical circles in Oslo. A book about his life revealed that he was engaged in saving Norwegian Jews. The author of the book, Friedrich Winter, emphasized that it was von Moltke who brought the message to Norway that the Jews would be imprisoned and deported. According to Winter, Schauer indicated that the

⁸ Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Eine Biographie* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1966), 844–848.

⁹ Sven Oluf Sørensen, *Søren: Henrik Sørensens liv og kunst* (Oslo: Andresen & Butenschøn Forlag, 2003), 178.

Norwegians did not trust the warning. Schauer's wife, Helga, recalled that her husband said: "*Das wollte man nicht sogleich glauben.*" ("They did not want to believe that immediately").¹⁰

Anti-Judaism in Norway?

It seems relevant to take a look at the Church leadership and their relationship to the Jews and ask: Were the leaders of the Church during the occupation influenced by the anti-Jewish movements of the interwar period, and are there any reasons for claiming that they were influenced by anti-Jewish attitudes?

In the interwar period many people in Europe were afraid of the Russian Bolsheviks and communism. A widespread conspiracy claimed that the Jews stood behind the Russian Revolution and that they wanted to assume dominion over the world. Among many, this fear of Jewish activity and communist infiltration was seen as a threat to Christian Europe. This way of thinking also came to the surface in Norwegian theological and ecclesiastical circles.

In the interwar period there were prominent theologians in Norway with very critical characterizations of the Jews in exile in Europe. The famous Old Testament scholar Professor Sigmund Mowinckel (1884–1965) wrote in 1924 that communism is "a real and unblemished effect of Jewish blood."¹¹ In his view, an unbroken line from Lenin to Marx goes back to the prophet Ezekiel, whom Mowinckel described as an ecstatic and cataleptic person.

In 1938 the young theologian Leiv Aalen (1906–1983), who later became a professor of systematic theology, wrote in the Christian newspaper *Dagen* that Jews, socially and culturally, have "a remarkably restless people's journey that seems spiritually and materially dissolving when they gain a decisive influence on the social and cultural development of another people." Aalen pointed out that the Jews had acquired tremendous political and economic power in Germany after the First World War and that they had extensively used their power to keep the country down both spiritually and materially. But he admitted that the nationalist revolution, based on "a more or less dubious racial theory," had gone too far and affected innocent people.¹² Such rhetoric of the restless and powerful Jews in exile stimulated anti-Jewish attitudes, which often led to anti-Semitism.

Those theologians and Church leaders who expressed anti-Jewish and even anti-Semitic reflections in the twenties and thirties seemed to have toned down their opinions, and they probably changed their minds when they experienced Nazi politics and anti-Semitism during the occupation. Mowinckel and Aalen are examples of influential theologians who did not express anti-Jewish opinions and attitudes after 1940.

The Mission to Israel

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, *Den norske Israelsmisjon* (the Mission to Israel) carried out missionary work among Jews in Romania and Hungary. The mission's aim was to convert the Jews in exile to Jesus Christ. It was a widespread perception that the "the Jewish question" could only be tackled by facilitating a transition to Christianity.

¹⁰ Friedrich Winter, *Friedrich Schauer 1891–1958: Seelsorger – Bekenner – Christ im Widerstand* (Berlin: Wichern-Verlag, 2011), 124.

¹¹ Sigmund Mowinckel, "Kommunismen som jødisk religionsdannelse," *Tidens Tegn* (August 2, 1924).

¹² Leiv Aalen, "Tysk uten-og innenrikspolitikk," *Dagen* I–IV, October 15, 18, 25, and 25, 1938.

At that time, the understanding of carrying out a mission to the Jews was strongly influenced by so-called replacement theology. The main idea of this theological movement is that the Christian Church has replaced the Jews as God's chosen people with distinctive promises. The covenant God made with Israel has lost its validity because the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, their prerogatives have been transferred to the Christian church. But if the Jews convert to Christianity, God's covenant and promises will embrace them again. Until that happens, Christians have replaced the Jews' position in the history of salvation.¹³

In 1923 one of the Mission to Israel's key missionaries in Romania and Hungary, pastor Gisle Carl Torsten Johnson (1876–1946), wrote four articles in the periodical *Kirke og Kultur* (Church and Culture) under the heading "From the World of Jews."¹⁴ According to him, there are no people on earth "who are so greedy for power like the Jews." "A Jew loves power and influence," he wrote; therefore, it is always a sign of illness in a people or in a period of time "when Jews become over-populated."¹⁵

Professor Christian Ihlen (1868–1958), a colleague of Mowinckel, was chairman of the board of the Mission to Israel from 1907 to 1948. In 1934 he wrote,

Along with Russia, Judaism is certainly the strongest and most dangerous anti-Christian power in our Christian Europe at the moment . . . There is a coldness coming from the unbelieving Israel which is an essential obstacle to the spread of the Kingdom of God and a major anti-Christian power.¹⁶

The Mission to Israel often repeated that Jews are a rootless people and create problems where they settle. This popular rhetoric was quite common in Norway during the interwar period and in ecclesiastical circles beyond the Mission to Israel. Such slogans unleashed anti-Jewish—and even anti-Semitic—attitudes.

Nonetheless, it should not be underestimated that this organization, to some extent, supported both Zionism and a somewhat more liberal attitude toward the immigration of Jewish refugees to Norway. But there was still a shadow over the Jewish people, mainly because they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah. God's promise to Abraham that the people of Israel would become a great people in their own land was dependent on repentance and faith in Jesus as the Messiah. That is why it was so important to bring a mission to the Jews.

Among those in Norway who supported the Jewish mission, there was unease over the growing anti-Semitism in Germany. They noticed how the persecution of the Jews had increased. The national assembly of the Mission to Israel in Stavanger in early autumn of 1933 adopted a statement, protesting against "the fundamental racial hatred and the lack of consideration and respect for human happiness and purely human qualities and work." The statement asserted that it was a shock to see the careless way in which the German authorities were advancing and expressed the deepest sympathy to those affected by the persecution of Jews. At the same time, the assembly would not interfere in the political affairs of the German people, nor would it dispute the justification of "certain political precautions against the Jews."¹⁷

¹³ See Oskar Skarsaune, *Israels Venner: Norsk arbeid for Israelsmisjonen 1844–1930* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1994), 218.

¹⁴ Gisle Carl Torsten Johnson, "Fra jødernes verden," *Kirke og Kultur* 30 (1923), 296–300, 513–518, 518–523, 619–625.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 513–518.

¹⁶ Christian Ihlen, "Jødefolket i fremtidsprofetienes lys," in *Det evige folk* (Oslo: Israelsmisjonen, 1934), 7–17, esp. 14–15.

¹⁷ *Luthersk Kirketidende* 70 (1934), 421; Austad 2012, 43.

From about the middle of the twentieth century onward, a new generation of leaders and missionaries for the Mission to Israel did not continue with the previous replacement theology understanding of mission work among the Jews. In 1949 the mission—called The Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel—began working in the new state of Israel, which was established in 1948. In this new context, Magne Solheim (1911–2000) and other Norwegian missionaries began developing a new theological approach to proclaiming the gospel to the Jews.¹⁸

The Silence of the Church

In the spring, summer, and early autumn of 1942 the Church leaders were silent on the threatened situation of the Jews, but it does not seem that the main reason was a strong influence by the anti-Jewish tendencies of the interwar period. This long silence was most likely because the leadership of the Church had enough of their own concerns after the resignation of the bishops at the end February and the parish pastors at the beginning of April. Those who led the Church Struggle after the breakup with the state were engaged in establishing a leadership body for the self-governing national Church called the people's church (*folkekirken*), which still claimed to be the Church of Norway. The new leading body was established at the end of June 1942 under the name of *Den Midlertidige Kirkeledelse* (the Provisional Church Leadership). Furthermore, on Easter of 1942, Bishop Berggrav was arrested, and from mid-April he was detained in his cabin in Asker, outside of Oslo, until 1945.

Because the Church leaders at that time were particularly concerned about the new organization of the Church, less care was available to the threatened Jewish minority. The Jews were left on the fringes of the Church's resistance strategy. Although the Norwegian people knew that Jews were being discriminated against in different ways, the Church's leadership did not prioritize their care. They were treated as strangers and did not receive the same attention, support, and protection as other non-Nazi groups in society who had a hard time, such as the youth and teachers in the public schools. The Church did not seem to have grasped how fateful anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews could be.

How specific the information from von Moltke was, and what words he used, may be difficult to prove. Such information was too sensitive to be conveyed on paper. It is also difficult to know exactly how the message from the Kreisau Circle was perceived by the Norwegian Church leaders. Was von Moltke's warning too unreal to be accepted?

After their meetings with von Moltke and their contact with Steltzer and Schauer, the Norwegians did not take any precautions in preparation for the possibility of a major action against the Norwegian Jews. The idea of a unified deportation of the Norwegian Jews and their extermination as a group of people may have been a message that seemed too unrealistic to deal with, especially because it was not known when and how it would happen.

The *Hebreerbrevet*

After the imprisonment of Jewish men over the age of fifteen in the night between October 25 and 26 of 1942, Secretary General Arnold T. Øhrn (1889–1963) of The Norwegian Baptist Society asked the Provisional Church Leadership to make a statement about the persecution of the Jews, including the Quisling government's decision to confiscate their wealth. This initiative resulted in a sharp protest letter from the Church leadership to Minister President

¹⁸ Magne Solheim, *Nybrott. 27 år i Israel – eit attersyn* (Oslo: Den norske Israelsmisjon / Luther Forlag, 1986).

Quisling, dated November 10, 1942. Among the people, the letter was named the *Hebreerbrevet* (the Hebrew Letter).¹⁹ Almost all churches in Norway endorsed the protest, including theological faculties, Christian organizations, and non-Lutheran denominations. The message was “Stop the persecution of Jews, and stop the racial hatred spreading through the press in our country!” The letter was read out in many Norwegian churches in December 1942 and attracted attention beyond the country’s borders.

When it was said that the Jews were not punished because they had done something wrong but “solely because they are Jews,” it was the imprisonment of Jewish men and the confiscation of their property that laid behind it. There was nothing in the protest letter that said that the Jews as a group of people were threatened by an upcoming deportation. If one had been fully aware of such a danger, one would hardly have failed to speak up. The fact that the letter was addressed to Quisling—not the German occupiers—underlined that the Church leaders at this time did not see that the Norwegian Jews were in danger of extinction. In other words, the warnings did not seem to convince the Church leaders that a major action of such dimensions would come.

The *Hebreerbrevet* attracted great attention, even beyond the borders of the country. It was the only public collective protest from one of the main institutions in Norway against the detention of the Jews during the war. But it came too late to create a strong and comprehensive opposition against the persecution of the Jews that might have made difficulties for Norwegian police becoming servants of the German occupiers in the mass deportation of the Jews in Norway. The deportation of 532 Jews on November 26, 1942 on the ship *Donau* to Stettin and on a train to Auschwitz came as a surprise to most of the Norwegian people. Altogether, 773 Norwegian Jews were sent to Hitler’s death camps. Only 38 of them survived. About 42% of the Norwegian Jews were killed.

The Church Network

We do not know what would have happened if the Church had tried to raise a public opinion and initiate a campaign to stop the Nazi’s actions against the Jews. But it is relevant to recall that the Church at that time had considerable moral authority among the people, especially because of its clear and direct stance on justice and human dignity. Together with the public school and the schoolchildren’s parents, the Church was active and crucial in the protest against Quisling’s attempts to Nazify the Norwegian people. The Church had a network that reached nearly every corner of the country. But this network was not used to protect the Jewish minority when it was still possible to impede the imprisonment and deportation of Norwegian Jews.

When the question is raised as to whether the Church failed in protecting the Jews, it is not sufficient to concentrate on the Church leaders’ knowledge regarding the Nazi plans about the notified great action. It is wise to establish a broader perspective. It is no doubt that the Church leaders in Norway knew a lot about the persecution of Jews in Germany and of anti-Semitic propaganda in NS.

Despite this common information, the Church was passive to the real threat that rested over the Jews. Church leaders, as well as most Norwegians, had the feeling that they could not prevent the propaganda of the German occupying forces and their Norwegian supporters, who looked down on the Jews and placed obstacles in their way to prevent their freedom to live and work as they chose.

¹⁹ For the Norwegian text of “the Hebrew Letter,” see Austad 2005, 222–224.

But we must not forget that a number of committed and responsible Christians engaged in supporting the Jews in their local communities and, in several cases, hid them and helped them to flee to Sweden. However, despite confirmed warnings of the extermination of the Jews, until the beginning of November 1942, the Church leadership did not take any initiative to encourage a public opinion that the endangered Jewish minority should be protected.

Altogether, it seems that the Church's attitude toward the Norwegian Jews during the occupation was a mixture of support and indifference. The Church criticized the harassment and persecution of Jews, but it did not take the warnings from German informants seriously enough when Nazi policy led to the mass deportation of Jews. The question as to whether the Church failed the Jews cannot be answered with a straight yes or no. It was both. But the failure stings. Norway could have done more for the Jews.

The Aftermath

Since the war, the question as to whether the leadership of the Church did their best to support and defend Norway's Jewish minority has been under discussion. Different opinions have surfaced. The historian H. O. Christophersen (1902–1980), who had been active on the home front, wrote in the *Aftenposten* (the Evening Post) on October 23, 1967, "It is certain that many of us, when the Norwegian police took action in the autumn of 1942, had a bitter feeling that we had failed."²⁰ Ten years later, he wrote,

The Jewish action by the Germans and Nazis in October 1942 is the saddest chapter in the history of the occupation. Rightly or unclearly, a large part of the Norwegian people was left with the impression that not enough had been done to save the very group of compatriots who had been under the most sinister pressure from the start. Many of us felt guilty.²¹

After the war, Alex Johnson (1910–1989), who had been a central and important person in the Church Struggle and some years later became a bishop, said to me in April of 1969, "We did not do enough for the Jews."²²

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²⁰ H. O. Christophersen, *Aftenposten* (the Evening Post), October 23, 1967.

²¹ H. O. Christophersen, *Av nød til seir: Bilder fra okkupasjonstiden i Norge* (Oslo: Grøndahl & Søn Forlag, 1977), 184.

²² Alex Johnson's family and others heard him saying the same to them.

Luther and the Jews: A Messianic Jewish Approach

Richard Harvey

Martin Luther's understanding of the Jews remains topical and much discussed. This article surveys the history of Luther's writings on Jews and Judaism, looking at resources available for such a study. It then considers Luther's personal knowledge of Jews and Judaism, references his key works dealing with the subject, and outlines his theology of Judaism. It asks how we can respond today to his legacy in the search for reconciliation and the promotion of improved Jewish-Christian relations.¹

My aim in presenting this topic is to be practically relevant. I write as a Jewish believer in Jesus looking to find something positive to say about Luther to Jewish people today. I want my family here in Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg, and those in the United Kingdom, Israel, and the United States, to hear the Good News, particularly from those in the Lutheran tradition and from all disciples of Jesus.

Martin Luther was engaged with the topic of Jews and Judaism all his life, from his earliest works until his last.² He was preoccupied with it because of his focus on the teaching and interpretation of Holy Scripture, predominantly in his extensive and detailed lectures on the Old Testament, beginning with the *Dictata Super Psalterium*, his first "Lectures on Psalms" (1513–1515), down to his "Lectures on the Book of Genesis" (1535–1545). In addition, he wrote several polemical treatises against the Jews, warning Christians how to treat Jewish people living amongst them. The most important of these were *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* (1523) and *On the Jews and Their Lives* (1543). These writings were, to a large extent, also exegetical works.

Luther's attitude toward the Jews and Judaism is characterized by both continuity and radical change. His theological statements on Jews and Judaism demonstrate a continuous interpretive model based on his Christo-centric hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The radical change in his program for treating Jews began with his conception of the two Kingdoms, where Jews could live alongside Christians. Later, he came back to the traditional idea of *Corpus Christianum*, in which the Jews would have no place. His changing practical and pastoral application produced two contradictory receptions in the later understanding of his views: one, that he changed his mind and went "against his better judgment";³ and the other, that he consistently applied an Augustinian model.⁴

¹ Much of what follows is taken from Richard S. Harvey, *Luther and the Jews: Putting Right the Lies* (Eugene: Cascade / Wipf and Stock, 2017). In addition to this volume—a heart cry, written from my own Messianic Jewish perspective—for further study, I would particularly recommend three other books: Thomas Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews: A Journey into Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), which sets Luther's writings in the context of his interactions, or lack of them, with the Jews in Germany in his time; Christopher J. Probst, *Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), which looks at the reception of Luther's writings on the Jews historically, up until the period of National Socialism; and Brooks Schramm and Kirs I. Stjerna, eds., *Martin Luther, the Bible, and the Jewish People: A Reader* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2012), which includes a representative selection of the extensive writings by Luther on the Jews and excerpts on the Jewish people from all of Luther's main works.

² A useful summary can be found in Dorothea Wendebourg, "Martin Luther, Jews, and Judaism," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, March 29, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.278>.

³ Eric W. Gritsch, *Martin Luther's Anti-Semitism: Against His Better Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

⁴ Thomas Kaufman, *Luther's Jews: A Journey into Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Approaching Luther and the Jews

Christine Helmer states, “The study of Luther is an intellectual exercise fraught with risk, not least the risk that any approach may present an embarrassment to religious movements stamped with Luther’s name.”⁵ In addition to the challenge of interpreting Luther, the use of the terms “Jew” and “Judaism” are problematic. The term “Jew” has become a theologically coded symbol, and the term “the Jews” is often a product of the Christian imagination, a fictional reality and theological construction.⁶ “The Jews” are often the imagined enemies of the gospel who are to be replaced by the church as the “New Israel.”⁷

Two other terms needing definition and differentiation are anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. Religious and ethnic identity cannot easily be separated, although the attempt is frequently made. Anti-Judaism may be understood as a theological position held against the Jews and Jewish religious practices found in the Old and New Testament and the ongoing religion of the Jewish people. This feeds into a social and political discrimination against the Jewish people that is identified today as anti-Semitism, a modern and imprecise term coined by Wilhelm Marr in the nineteenth century for a very ancient phenomenon.⁸ A distinction between the terms that has been adopted by German Lutherans states,

We use ‘anti-Judaism’ to name specifically theological formulations that denigrate Jews and their faith. Looking at the roots of anti-Judaism in Christian theology, it can be understood as a phenomenon of the separation of the church from Judaism. Later on, other motives (social, political, economic, racist) became dominant and led to exclusion and persecution of Jews through the centuries. In ‘anti-Semitism,’ we refer to a broader reality: the hatred of and hostility toward Jews, in reality and in rhetoric, that denies them legitimacy among the peoples of the world. This hatred and hostility is to be understood within the larger issues of racism and is countered by the affirmation of human rights that has been part of our heritage for more than 50 years.⁹

Whilst there are advantages in having a clear distinction between these terms, for most Jewish people it still feels the same, whether it is called anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism.

Myths about Luther and the Jews

There are several commonly held myths about Luther and his views on the Jewish people. Some argue that his views are an aberration “against his better judgment.”¹⁰ This is

⁵ Christine Helmer, “Introduction: Luther Beyond Luther,” in *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times*, ed. Christine Helmer (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2017), 1–10.

⁶ Cynthia M. Baker, *Jew*, Keywords in Jewish Studies (Lexington: Rutgers University Press, 2017); Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion*, Keywords in Jewish Studies (Lexington: Rutgers University Press, 2018).

⁷ R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

⁸ Moshe Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Antisemitism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 90. Zimmermann gives the date for the first meeting of the *Antisemitic League* as September 26, 1879, deliberately held on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, with the term used to avoid drawing attention and opposition to the meeting.

⁹ Lutheran World Federation, “Antisemitism and Anti-Judaism Today: Message of a Consultation of the Lutheran World Federation held at Dobogoko, Hungary, 9-13 September 2001,” (working paper, September 12, 2001), https://www.jcrelations.net/article/antisemitism-and-anti-judaism-today.html?tx_extension_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&tx_extension_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&cHash=f0d431225705ae589d2697cfe7f0d25e.

¹⁰ Gritsch, *Martin Luther’s Anti-Semitism*.

incorrect, as he held such views consistently throughout his life and career. His views were inseparably linked to his interpretation of Scripture, his understanding of Christology, the nature of the church, and of the gospel.

The second myth is that Luther's views got worse. This is not the case. His underlying theology stayed the same, whilst his practical and pastoral practice changed somewhat. According to Thomas Kaufmann, Luther was more liberal than others because he wanted the Jews to have freedom in the hope that they would convert.¹¹ While that may have been Luther's experimental tactic, he was not more liberal than others but was clearly much more hostile and intolerant toward the Jewish people than his contemporaries. Some argue that Luther was equally hostile to groups such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Turks, and followers of Servetus, using polemic, scatological language and invective. Although he adopted similar rhetorical strategies against his opponents, his opposition to the Jewish people was an overriding passion and obsession.¹²

Erikson and others argue that Luther's health and his psychological state are responsible for his views, or that his outbursts of anger came from his attacks of constipation or depression.¹³ Whilst his internal state of mind is clearly a contributory factor, we cannot reduce his theology to psychology and explain it away. His texts take on a life of their own.

A final myth to demolish is that of Luther's deathbed repentance. Some have argued that he repented and regretted his treatment of the Jews, but there is no evidence of this or of the parallel myth that he returned to the Roman Catholic Church. In my book, *Luther and the Jews*, I imagine what his deathbed repentance note might have said, but this, too, is a product of the imagination.¹⁴

The Reception of Luther's Views

In his own day, Luther's writings on the Jews were not received as well as his other works. His collaborator, Melancthon, repudiated them. The princes to whom he addressed his appeals to deprive the Jews of safe passage through their lands did not concede to his requests.¹⁵ In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the Pietists appealed to Luther's hopes for the conversion of the Jews to promote a mission program, which led to homes for converted Jews in Amsterdam and in Count Zinzendorf's community.¹⁶

Luther's anti-Jewish writings lay dormant until revived by the Nazis as a source for their own propaganda when his work *On the Jews and Their Lies* was re-printed and distributed.¹⁷ Then, positive readings of Luther's attitude toward the Jews were squelched as Nazi polemic against the Jews and Judaism developed into what would become the Final Solution, the attempted genocide of the Jewish people.

¹¹ Kaufman, *Luther's Jews*. "With his attitude towards the Jews, Luther was a special case amongst his contemporaries, because he was more firm, and successful, at first with advocating the *toleration* of the Jews, than with demanding their expulsion" (Kaufman, "Lecture in Hamburg 20.11.2013," 19, accessed September 10, 2018, https://www.luther2017.de/fileadmin/luther2017/material/Reden_Predigten_und_Diskussionsbeitraege/Lecture_thomas_kaufmann_luther_jews.pdf).

¹² Harry Loewen, *Ink Against the Devil: Luther and His Opponents*, 2nd ed. (Waterloo: Laurier University Press, 2015).

¹³ Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958).

¹⁴ Harvey, "What if Luther Had Written a Deathbed Confession?," in *Luther and the Jews*, 117–120.

¹⁵ Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews*, 21.

¹⁶ Wendebourg, *Luther and the Jews*, 14.

¹⁷ Probst, *Demonizing the Jews*, 18.

My personal engagement with the topic arises from this era. My father grew up in South Africa because he was sent from his school in Switzerland in the 1930s to be brought up by family in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Most of my family come from Essen in Germany, where they were active members of a synagogue.

Just after *Kristallnacht* on November 10, 1938, the bishop of the evangelical Lutheran Church in Thuringia, Martin Sasse, a leading member of the German Christians, published a compendium of Martin Luther's writings on the Jews. In it, he "applauded the burning of the synagogues" and the coincidence of the day, writing in the introduction, "On 10 November 1938, on Luther's birthday, the synagogues are burning in Germany." The German people, he urged, ought to heed these words "of the greatest anti-Semite of his time, the warner of his people against the Jews."¹⁸ Luther's 1543 pamphlet, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, had been the blueprint for *Kristallnacht*.

Julius Streicher, in his trial at Nuremberg, claimed, "Dr Martin Luther would sit here on the dock today in my stead, if the Prosecution Counsel are taking into account this book, *On the Jews and Their Lies*. Dr Martin Luther [wrote] that the Jews were a rabble of snakes, that their synagogues should be burnt down and that they ought to be annihilated."¹⁹

What Did Luther Know About the Jewish People?

Luther had very limited personal acquaintance with Jewish people. There are few recorded interactions between Luther and Jews, most of them converts to Christianity. He was irritated by an encounter with a group of Jews in 1525 or 1526, but little is known about it. It is referred to in several places in his *Table Talk*, but Luther did not share any details.²⁰

Luther refused to meet with Josel of Rosheim, the leader of the Jewish Community in Germany, who asked Luther to guarantee safe passage to Jews through Germany. In my book, I reconstruct what that meeting might have looked like and how events might have gone differently.²¹

Luther's knowledge of Jews and Judaism came from the negative information he received from Jewish converts to Christianity. I am ashamed to say that some of us who are Jewish and believe in Jesus do not always have pure motives and good character and can turn against our own people. This is true of any first-generation new believer. Luther was fed negative and distorted material by Antonius Margaritha and Bernhard (formerly Jakob Gipher).²² Luther therefore talked *about* Jewish people but not *with* them. He grew up in an environment saturated with popular prejudice against Jews and Judaism. The following is a list of the top ten anti-Semitic myths of his day:

1. Jews were responsible for poisoning the wells and causing the black death.
2. Jews were part man and part beast and not truly human.
3. Jews suckled pigs and had sexual relations with them.
4. Jewish doctors killed Christians in a very subtle and cunning way so that their patients would temporarily recover and then die.

¹⁸ ET in Probst, *Demonizing the Jews*, 129.

¹⁹ Probst, *Demonizing the Jews*, 137; Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews*, 7.

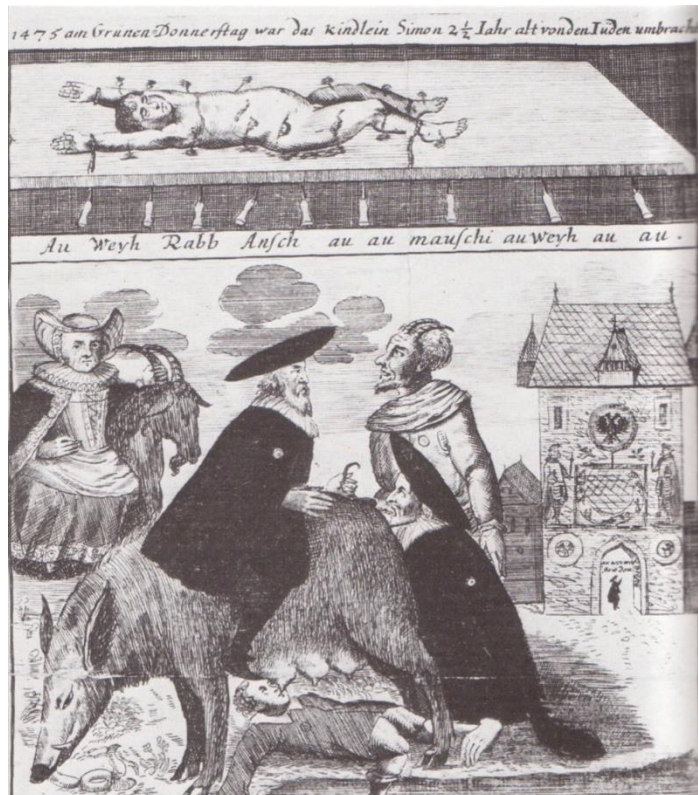
²⁰ Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews*, 26–30.

²¹ Harvey, *Luther and the Jews*, 111–115.

²² Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews*, 79. For Margaritha, see Michael T. Walton, *Anthionius Margaritha and the Jewish Faith: Jewish Life and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012).

5. Jews would create a monster, a Golem, to destroy their enemies.
6. Jews were condemned to wander the earth because of their rejection of Christ.
7. Jews were responsible for killing Jesus. Pope Innocent III stated, “The Jews by their own guilt are consigned to perpetual servitude because they crucified the Lord[;] as slaves rejected by God in whose death they wickedly conspired, they shall by the effect of this very action recognise themselves as the slaves of those whom Christ’s death set free.”²³
8. Jews were evil moneylenders who swindled Christians.
9. Jews would steal the communion wafers and desecrate them, using them for Passover services.
10. Jews would kidnap and murder Christian boys, using their blood for Passover rituals.²⁴

Whilst such myths are shocking to us today, this was the climate in which Luther grew up, and it was normal for him to believe these things. The Blood Libel, that Jews kidnapped a Christian child to use their blood for Passover rituals, which began in England with the account of William of Norwich, mutated and spread across Europe. Places of pilgrimage and religious devotion arose to honor the memory and celebrate the martyrdoms of St Simon of Trent and many others. Popular illustrations of the Blood Libel and the *Judensau*, the “Jew-Pig,” were printed alongside each other.



Frankfurt: the martyrdom of Simon of Trent and the *Judensau*,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Judensau_Frankfurt.jpg,
 accessed May 2017.

Luther's Writings on the Jews

Luther's main writings on the Jews are *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* (1523); *Against the Sabbatarians* (1538); *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543); *On the Fully Pronounced Name of God* (*Von Shem HaMephorash*; 1543); *The Last Words of David* (1543); and his final sermons and letters to his wife, Katharine von Bora (1546). In one of his letters to Spalatin, he states,

I've come to the conclusion that the Jews will always curse and blaspheme God and his King Christ as all the prophets have predicted. He who neither reads nor understands this as yet knows no theology in my opinion. And so, I presume the men of Cologne cannot understand the scripture because it is necessary that such things take place to fulfil prophecy. If they are trying to stop the Jews blaspheming by converting them for example, they are working to prove the Bible and God liars.²⁵

²³ Quoted in Rebekah Rist, *Popes and Jews, 1095–1291* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 220.

²⁴ “Top 10 Antisemitic Legends and Stereotypes,” CFCA, accessed February 6, 2019, <https://antisemitism.org.il/82166>.

²⁵ Schramm and Stjerna, *Martin Luther*, 52.

On the Jews and Their Lies (1543)

Luther's most outspoken attack on the Jewish people, both in its length and hostile tone, is *On the Jews and Their Lies*,²⁶ a work of violent incitement against Jews and Judaism. His friend, Count Schlick, requested a refutation of a Jewish apologetic pamphlet which was sent to Luther. Luther had already hinted he would write such a treatise and begins by saying, "I had made up my mind to write no more either about the Jews or against them."²⁷ But the tract he received persuaded him to change his mind, and the 65,000-word tirade, one of the most shocking anti-Semitic writings in the history of Jewish-Christian debate, is the result.

It is in four parts, dealing with "Lies against Doctrine" and "Lies against Persons." Luther attacks the Jews on three particular issues:

1. The Jews boast of being the sole people of God, and they hate all other peoples.
2. The Jews willfully resist the proper interpretation of the Old Testament texts that prove Jesus is the Messiah. (This is the longest section of his work, with many points repeated at the end.)
3. The Jews curse and blaspheme Jesus, Mary, and all Christians. This subject, in which Luther becomes increasingly irate, leads to the spine-chilling proposals in his conclusion, proposals which smack of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

First, Luther describes and pours scorn upon the "false boasts" of the Jews.²⁸ In the second section, he interprets significant biblical passages, showing how they prophesy and confirm the coming of Jesus as the Messiah, despite the alternative interpretations offered by the rabbis. In the third part, Luther repeats the Jewish traditions he claims to have heard which blaspheme against Jesus and Mary. In the fourth, final, and most notorious part, he makes recommendations and proposals to church and state leaders in regard to how the Jewish people should be treated: they should not be given safe passage through German lands, but rather thrown out of the country, their books destroyed and their synagogues burned. His chilling, scathing, and vitriolic tone adds to the hostilities expressed, and it is no wonder that this book was reprinted and circulated by the Nazi propaganda machine in its pursuit of the Final Solution, the elimination of the Jews from Germany and a systematic programme of genocide.

Luther's language throughout is violent, abusive, scatological (referring to urine or faeces in a deliberately disgusting way), and obscene. The Jews are described as "a defiled bride," "an incorrigible whore and an evil slut," a "whoring and murderous people," "bloodthirsty bloodhounds and murderers of all Christendom." They "curse, spit on and malign" the nations. They "are full of the devil's faeces . . . which they wallow in like swine."²⁹ Luther notes little difference between the Jews of the Bible and those of his day. They are "stiff-necked, disobedient, prophet-murderers, arrogant, usurers, and filled with every vice, as the whole of Scripture and their present conduct bear out." However, the Jews of Luther's day are more

²⁶ WA 53:412, 417–552; LW 47:121, 137–306; Schramm and Stjerna, *Martin Luther*, 164–167; Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, Luther's Werke, 47: 268–271; Trans. Martin H. Bertram, in *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

²⁷ Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, trans. Martin H. Bertram, 2, https://www.prchiz.pl/storage/app/media/pliki/Luther_On_Jews.pdf. Further page references are from this translation, which is readily available online. The standard English editions of Luther's works do not include this.

²⁸ Luther, *Jews and Their Lies*, 4.

²⁹ Luther, *Jews and their Lies*.

conceited. “Their present exile must be due to a more heinous sin than idolatry, the murder of the prophets, etc. – namely, the crucifixion of the Messiah.”

Luther also believed that the Jews practiced idolatry, witchcraft, and sorcery, casting spells using the Tetragrammaton (the holy name of God), which he would go on to describe in *On the Ineffable Name of God*, an accompaniment to *On the Jews and Their Lies*. According to Luther, the Jews defame Christ and Mary, calling Jesus a “sorcerer and a tool of the devil,” denigrating his name through Cabbalistic numerology, and even calling him a “whore’s son.” A “malicious rabbi” had allegedly called Mary a “dung heap.” The Jews had also been accused of poisoning wells and kidnapping and piercing children, “hacking them in pieces” and using the blood of Christian children (i.e., in ritual fashion) to “cool their wrath.” Luther argues that these accusations may have been true, despite Jewish denials: “Whether it is true or not, I do know that they do not lack the complete, full, and ready will to do such things either secretly or openly where possible. This you can assuredly expect from them, and you must govern yourself accordingly.”

Luther proposed his own programme for dealing with the Jews, with a series of recommendations for both civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The Jews’ synagogues and schools should be burned to the ground, their houses should be “razed and destroyed”; their “prayer books and Talmudic writings” should be confiscated; their rabbis should be “forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb”; they should be denied safe conduct on the highways; usury should be prohibited to them, and their gold, silver, and cash should be taken from them; finally, they should be subjected to harsh labor.³⁰

How could anyone have written such hateful literature, expressing so powerfully, with the full armory of rhetorical devices and with a clear logic and structure to their argument, such an impassioned call for the destruction of the lives, homes, places of worship, literature, and beliefs of the Jewish people in Germany? If such things were written and published today, the author would be arrested on charges of stirring up religious and ethnic hatred and incitement to violence. Luther’s determined, detailed, and dark writings chill the spine of anyone reading them, especially Jews and Jewish Christians. They stir up fear, prejudice, hatred, and violence. What can be done about them? I can only call on Christians, and especially Lutherans, to not only disassociate themselves from such works written by the founder of their denomination, but to get down on their knees before God and the Jewish people and humbly ask for forgiveness, whilst also being willing to make restitution in order to restore and renew relationships of love and trust whenever and wherever possible. But after 500 years, which have included the bitter fruits of the Holocaust as a result of the anti-Semitic tradition which Luther not only contributed to but gave a massive forward thrust, is it too late?

Luther’s most infamous work is written with venom. He liked to use “ink against the devil,” but here, he reserves his worst insults, his most scathing humour, his biting sarcasm, and all the obscenities he can think of, whether sexual or excremental, to lambast the Jewish people and their beliefs. This work can hardly be attributed to a sick old man, as Luther was in full possession of his faculties and knew exactly what he was doing. He was writing to get his enemies, the Jewish people, thrown out of Germany. He repeats all the stereotypes about Jews and adds theological spite and venom to popular prejudice and hatred.

He relied on previous anti-Jewish writings such as *Victoria Adversus Impios Hebreos* (*Victory Against the Godless Hebrews*) by Salvagus Porchetus and *Der Gantz Jüdisch Glaub* (*The Entire Jewish Faith*) by his own contemporary, Anthonius Margaritha, a Jewish convert

³⁰ LW 47:268.

who had turned against his own people.³¹ From the former, Luther learned about the medieval Jewish text, *Toledot Yeshu* (*The History of Jesus*), which contained extremely unflattering stories about Jesus' birth and his secret power. From the latter, he learned about Jewish rituals and prayers, which, according to Margaritha, contained slanderous claims about Jesus, his mother, and all Christians. Margaritha is an isolated but not unique example of a convert from Judaism who turned against his people and spread lies about them. Some Jews were under great pressure to convert to Christianity and show their loyalty to their new faith by attacking their own people at the demand of and in service of their new masters, the church.

Armed with this new knowledge, Luther took a definitive position on a major hot-button issue of the day: whether to tolerate or expel the Jews, whom he calls "our plague, our pestilence, and our misfortune." He states that his previous open stance toward the Jews was based on ignorance of their actual blasphemous practices: "What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming. If we do, we become sharers in their lies, cursing, and blasphemy."³² Here, Luther is indebted to what he had learned from the Jewish convert, Margaritha, who had written: "This is what I say, that the more friendly, brotherly, and kindly a Christian treats a Jew, the more the Jew curses the Christian and his faith, mocks, and despises, and thinks to himself, this Christian knows that I am an enemy both to his God and to his faith, and that I curse and despise it. Therefore it must be from God that he loves me."³³

Luther's preferred solution was that Jews should live "where there are no Christians," and he makes this position clear:

In my opinion the problem must be resolved thus: If we wish to wash our hands of the Jews' blasphemy and not share in their guilt, we have to part company with them. They must be driven from our country. Let them think of their fatherland; then they need no longer wail and lie before God against us that we are holding them captive, nor need we then any longer complain that they are burdening us with their blasphemy and their usury. This is the most natural and the best course of action, which will safeguard the interest of both parties.

If expulsion is not acceptable, then the civil authorities in Protestant territories must be urged to practice a sharp mercy toward the Jews so as to prevent them from continuing to blaspheme. This sharp mercy is itemized in two forms: one addressed to the civil authorities and one to the pastors and preachers, who are to encourage the authorities to do their jobs:

To the Civil Authorities:	To Pastors and Preachers:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Burn down synagogues 2. Destroy Jewish homes 3. Confiscate prayer books and Talmudic writings 4. Forbid rabbis to teach 5. Abolish safe conduct for Jews 6. Prohibit usury to the Jews 7. Enforce manual labor on the Jews 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Burn down synagogues 2. Confiscate prayer books, Talmudic writings, and Jewish Bibles 3. Prohibit Jewish prayer and teaching 4. Forbid Jews to utter the name of God publicly

³¹ Michael T. Walton, "Anthonius Margaritha: Honest Reporter?" *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 129–141.

³² Luther, *Jews and Their Lies*, 76.

³³ Anthonius Margaritha, *Der Ganz Jüdisch Glaub* (Augsburg, 1530).

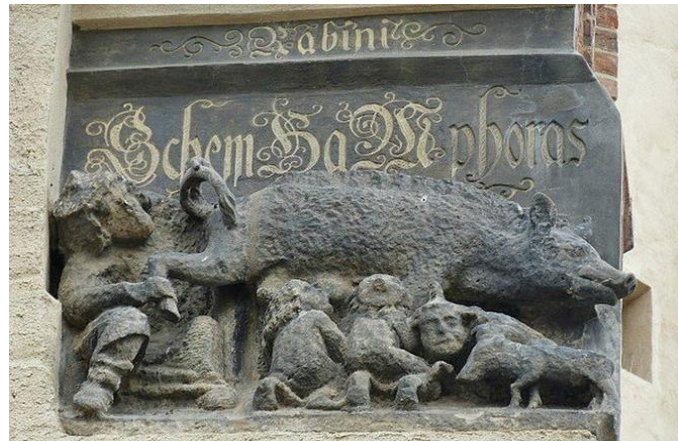
Luther's unmistakable intention was that the religious and social substructure of Jewish life in German Protestant lands be destroyed and that Jews be forced to leave as a result. Luther's rationale for the burning of synagogues is most obscene: "This is to be done in honour of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians, and do not condone or knowingly tolerate such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of his Son and of his Christians."³⁴ Though these proposals were not implemented, Luther had some success in persuading Elector John Frederick to reinstate the edict of expulsion from Saxony in May 1543, which had been partially lifted in 1539.

Did Luther really mean all this? Yes, he did. And not only did he mean it, but he made sure that this was one of his main publishing ventures. Luther always had an eye on the printing press and what was commercial.³⁵ But, like most of his anti-Jewish books, this book was not commercially successful. His defamatory genre of *Adversus Judaeos* was not taken up until the end of the nineteenth century during the growth of modern anti-Semitism. There is no critical English edition, and it is often excluded from collections of Luther's works.

On the Ineffable Name and on the Lineage of Christ (1543)

The next work to consider is *On the Ineffable Name and on the Lineage of Christ (1543)*.³⁶ Luther is not interested in debating with or trying to convert Jews. He writes to warn those in danger of becoming Jews. The treatise is saturated with faecal imagery, all of which is linked to the Jews. The Jews are "the Devil's children," they worship the Devil, the Devil is their God, and Jewish biblical interpretation is "Judas piss."

Luther gives prominence to the sandstone relief on the external wall of the Parish Church of Wittenberg, which remains to this day as a protected Unesco World



Wittenberg Judensau, <https://www.change.org/p/relocate-the-wittenberg-judensau>, accessed March 2017.

Heritage site. He asks how the Jews developed their mystical and mathematical interpretations of the numerical values of the letters in the name of God, the Tetragrammaton:

Well, I do not know exactly whence they got it, but I can make a guess. Here in Wittenberg on our parish church there is a sow carved in stone. Under her, young piglets and Jews lie sucking. Behind the sow stands a rabbi who lifts the sow's right leg and with his left hand he pulls her rear over himself. He bends down and looks most studiously under her rear at the Talmud inside, as if he wanted to read and see something difficult and special. This is most likely where they got their *Shem Ham-phoras* from. For previously there were very many Jews in these areas. This is proved by the names of towns and villages, and also of citizens and peasants, which are still in Hebrew today. So, an educated, honourable man, who

³⁴ Martin Luther, *The Christian in Society IV*. Vol. 47 of *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 268–293.

³⁵ See Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Centre of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe, and Started the Protestant Reformation* (London: Penguin, 2015).

³⁶ Text in Schramm and Stjertna, *Martin Luther*, 177–180.

was an enemy of the filthy lies of the Jews, had such an image made. Thus, even today among the Germans it is said (to put it rudely) of one who has great wisdom without cause: “Where did he read that? Out of the rear of a sow!”³⁷

Luther’s final sermons and admonitions against the Jews, preached a few weeks before his death, and his final letter to his wife say the same thing:

Now the way things stand with the Jews is this, that they daily blaspheme and slander our Lord Jesus Christ. Since they do this, and we know about it we should not tolerate it for if I tolerate in my midst someone who slanders, blasphemes and curses my Lord Christ then I make myself a participant in the sins of the other. But if I already have enough sins of my own then you Lord should not tolerate them but drive them away. If, however, they convert, give up usury and receive Christ then we will be glad, then we will gladly regard them as our brothers. I see that as little consolation to the incredible hostility.³⁸

Luther’s Theology of the Jews and Judaism

How do we summarize Luther’s views? His theology of Jews and Judaism followed from his guiding hermeneutical principle that Jesus Christ is the hinge and focus of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It was a matter of theological logic that the Jewish people, once Christ had come, would follow him as their long-expected Messiah and become the vanguard of the Christian Church. For the Jews to adhere to the Old Testament without accepting the gospel and remain Jews instead of becoming Christians was, to borrow a phrase from another great theologian, “an impossible possibility.”³⁹ On the very basis of the Old Testament itself, insisting on such an impossible possibility could only be regarded as an expression of sinful stubbornness, which would forfeit their salvation. Luther’s anti-Jewish teaching was rooted in and difficult to separate from his doctrine of justification, his understanding of Christology, the nature of Christ as a Jew, and the understanding of the nature of the church as the body of Christ. For Luther, the argument goes thus: (1) Jesus is the Messiah according to the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament; (2) Jews deny this; (3) they are wrong; (4) therefore, they must be argued with, persuaded, and converted; (5) if they are not converted, they must be resisted, rejected, and kept away from Christians.

This short summary of Luther’s position owes much to Augustine, who saw the Jews as “reluctant witnesses” to Christ.⁴⁰ Augustine argued that the Jews should be protected and preserved, not persecuted or put to death. Their continued survival, in exile from their homeland, and subjugation to Christians, is necessary as a witness to the truth of the Christian faith which they deny. To both Augustine and Luther, the Diaspora, the loss of the Land of Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple, confirms the truth of Christianity. Luther repeatedly argued that, because the Jews have been exiled from their land for 1,500 years, God has finished with them.

The theological ideas that Luther inherited from Augustine were then compounded with popular superstition and prejudice to give a rationale for hating and persecuting non-Christian Jews. Luther uses what R. Kendall Soulen calls “punitive supersessionism:” the Church has

³⁷ Schramm and Stjerna, *Martin Luther*, 180.

³⁸ Schramm and Stjerna, *Martin Luther*, 201.

³⁹ Karl Barth’s remark about sin in *Church Dogmatics*, trans. T. H. L. Parker et al., vol. 2, *The Doctrine of God. Part I* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 505.

⁴⁰ Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defence of Jews and Judaism* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2011); cf. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Chapter 12 on Psalm 58.

replaced Israel, and the former Israel needs to be punished for its disobedience in order to justify Christian claims to be the true (or the new) Israel.⁴¹

A Messianic Jewish Response

I want to respond first by forgiving Luther. As a Jew who believes in Jesus and who lost many family members in the Holocaust, I know that anger and bitterness will not change anything. How I long for reconciliation between Jews and Germans and for my people to hear the Good News from Christians! Reconciliation through real repentance, forgiveness, and restoration of relationships is needed wherever there are conflicts in which Christians are involved.⁴²

There is a prayer that Orthodox Jews pray every day before going to sleep: “I hereby forgive anyone who has angered or provoked me or sinned against me physically or financially or by failing to give me due respect or in any other matter relating to me involuntarily or willingly, inadvertently or deliberately, whether in word or deed, let no one incur punishment because of me.”⁴³ Jesus similarly prayed on the cross, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Luke 23:43), and taught us to pray, “forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us” (Luke 11:4).

I forgive Luther for this deeply flawed area of his teaching. Sadly, it is the only part that most Jewish people ever hear about. But I forgive him, and I am so looking forward to dancing a *hora* (Jewish dance) with him in heaven. If Luther had responded to Josel of Rosheim’s request for a meeting, it might have all been so different. If Luther had attended the Jewish wedding of Josel’s daughter or his son’s Bar Mitzvah, the legacy of Luther’s teaching might have been very different.

It is important for churches to take responsibility for their pasts through acts of ecclesial repentance, which Jeremy Bergen defines as “the act in which church / denominational bodies make official statements of repentance, apology, confession or requests for forgiveness for those things which were once official church policy or practice.”⁴⁴ I see the need for such repentance in Britain, in South Africa, in Germany, and—at a personal level—in myself.

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⁴¹ R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 28–33.

⁴² See Richard Harvey, *Towards a Messianic Jewish Theology of Reconciliation* (Lulu.com, 2012), https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Towards_a_Messianic_Jewish_Theology_of_R/2jGyAwAAQBAJ?hl=en.

⁴³ “Prayer of Forgiveness,” in Jonathan Sacks, *The Koren Siddur* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2009), 294.

⁴⁴ Jeremy M. Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 3.

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The Hermeneutics of the New Righteous Among the Nations¹

Olivier J. Melnick

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’ Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

- *Matthew 25:31–46*

Introduction

In this paper, I will attempt to describe a group of people that I am calling the New Righteous Among the Nations. I will look at the past for the identity of the Righteous Among the Nations who started being recognized after the Holocaust. I will also look at the future and identify the righteous Gentiles that Yeshua describes at the end of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 25:31–46. Finally, I will look at the present to understand the current challenge that Gentile Christians are faced with, considering the return of antisemitism in the last few decades and even the recent global spike connected to the 2021 Gaza conflict. It is not my intention to discuss the eschatological order, but rather to identify the New Righteous Among the Nations by the role they play and the model they present for us today.

The Storm before the Calm

This paper is written from a premillennial, pre-tribulation viewpoint that establishes the events of the last days in the following order: the Rapture of the Saints, the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming of Yeshua, the Millennial Kingdom, and the Eternal Order.

The Jewish people who have not yet placed their trust in the finished work of Yeshua will experience a seven-year period of great distress and persecution known as the Great Tribulation or the Time of Jacob’s Trouble. This will be a particularly difficult time for Israel and the Jewish people, although Gentiles who have been left behind will not be spared either. This will be an unparalleled time of trouble and intense suffering, as predicted in at least three of the prophets and one gospel account:

¹ This paper was originally prepared for the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism North American Conference in Dallas from June 7 to 9, 2021.

Blow a trumpet in Zion,
and sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the day of the LORD is coming;
Surely it is near,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness.
As the dawn is spread over the mountains,
so there is a great and mighty people;
There has never been anything like it,
Nor will there be again after it
To the years of many generations. (Joel 2:1–2)

Alas! for that day is great,
there is none like it;
And it is the time of Jacob's distress,
but he will be saved from it. (Jeremiah 30:7)

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. (Daniel 12:1)

For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. (Matthew 24:21)

There will be three possible outcomes for the Jewish people left behind: death without the Messiah in the lake of fire and brimstone as an eternal destination of torment (Revelation 19:20; 20:15), death as Tribulation martyrs after they have put their faith in the Messiah (Revelation 7:9–17), or survival of the Tribulation and entrance into the Millennial Kingdom (Matthew 25:31–40).

In this paper, I will concentrate on the third group of Jewish people who will survive the Great Tribulation by the grace of God and through the work of the New Righteous Gentiles. To understand how these people will interact with and affect the fate of the Jews, we must understand who the original Righteous Gentiles or Righteous Among the Nations were.

Defining the Righteous Among the Nations

During the years of the Holocaust, between 1938 and 1945, six million innocent Jewish victims died at the hands of the Nazi regime. Amid the deadliest organized genocide of mankind, there were people who went against the flow, at the risk of losing their lives, to help Jewish people. These people were heroes and needed to be recognized by the Israeli government.

In 1953, the Israeli Knesset passed a law that gave birth to the Yad Vashem Memorial Museum. It had several goals, all focusing on remembering the victims, the perpetrators, co-perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers of the Holocaust era. The Gentile rescuers became known as Righteous Among the Nations. The name is derived from the concept known as *ger toshav* or “resident alien,” which describes Gentiles who have placed themselves under the authority of the seven moral Noahide Laws. In Judaism, a *ger toshav* is commonly known as a “Righteous Gentile” or one of the *Hasid Umot Ha-Olam*, “pious people of the world,” and according to the Talmud, such a person is guaranteed a place in the world to come.

The Talmud speaks on saving lives in Sanhedrin 37a: “Whoever destroys a soul from Israel, the Scripture considers it as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life from Israel, the Scripture considers it as if he saved an entire world.”² Additionally, the Gospel of Luke reminds us that treating others well is part of Yeshua’s ultimate advice to His disciples: “But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him” (10:33–34).

In 1963, Yad Vashem started to award the honorary title of Righteous Among the Nations to Gentiles who had demonstrated kindness and compassion toward Jewish people during the Holocaust era. Originally, a tree was planted on the grounds at Yad Vashem, but eventually, for lack of space, their names were added to the Wall of Honor in the Garden of the Righteous. Outside of being a Gentile, three criteria must be met to qualify as one of the Righteous Among the Nations:

1. The individual must have been involved in actively helping Jewish people to avoid deportation to concentration camps or death camps.
2. The individual must have risked their freedom or their life to help Jewish people.
3. The individual’s original motive must have been to save Jews from the Holocaust, with no ulterior motives such as financial gain, conversion, or adoption.

There have never been any social status requirements for qualification by Yad Vashem. Famous people such as Raoul Wallenberg, Corrie ten Boom, and Oskar Schindler are joined by French Pastor Henri Trocmé and his wife Magda from the small village of Le Chambon Sur Lignon who saved over 3,000 Jews. Even simple farmers like Pierre and Ida Darricau were added to the Wall of Honor in 2011.³ They were the couple who rescued and hid my mother on their farm in the *zone libre* near the Southwest Pyrénées French mountain range for the last two years of the war after her father was taken by the Gestapo in front of her eyes and sent to his death in Auschwitz.

Yad Vashem established that there were various ways that these rescuers were able to make a difference: providing shelter and food, making or providing false papers, moving Jewish people away from dangerous Nazi-controlled areas, and saving Jewish children who had lost their parents in the camps. Additionally, Yad Vashem is allowed to confer honorary Israeli citizenship to deceased Righteous Gentiles.

As of January 1, 2020, Yad Vashem had recognized 27,712 Righteous Gentiles around the world, accounting for about 10,000 rescue stories. Over 20,000 of these individuals came from Poland, the Netherlands, France, Ukraine and Belgium.

Defining the New Righteous Among the Nations

While most Righteous Among the Nations have been identified and few are still alive today, an occasional rescuer still makes the list. Yad Vashem is committed to continuing their program for as long as they can keep identifying rescuers, and yet there is a future group of people who will play a critical role in the life of some Jewish people at a specific time in history.

² Sanhedrin 37a. The William Davidson digital edition of the Talmud.

<https://www.sefaria.org/Sanhedrin.37a.14?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>. See also Sanhedrin 4:1 (22a)

³ “Righteous Among the Nations Honored by Yad Vashem by 1 January 2020,” Yad Vashem, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/pdf-drupal/france.pdf>.

They are what I like to call the New Righteous Among the Nations and will be identified by the Messiah, Yeshua Himself, upon His Second Coming.

The main Scripture to validate this group of Gentiles is found in Matthew 25:31–46 in the Olivet Discourse passage about the sheep and the goats. To be sure, these individuals are never called the New Righteous Among the Nations in the Bible. This title was created by Yad Vashem, but it describes very well the spirit of the people who helped the Jewish community, and I find it appropriate to describe the generation of Gentile Christians who will come to the rescue of the Jews during the Great Tribulation.

The Role of the New Righteous Gentiles – Matthew 25:31–46

1. The Timeframe – Matthew 25:31

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

The reference to the Son of Man (Yeshua) coming in His glory is a reference to the Second Coming of Yeshua, at which time He will judge a certain group of people. This is different from the great white throne judgment that will take place at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:13–15) and also from the *bema seat* judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10). So which judgment is Yeshua speaking of?

This appears to be a judgment of Gentiles, as verse 32 speaks of “all the nations,” which will take place 1,000 years earlier, at the end of the Great Tribulation. It describes two subgroups within the nations: the goats and the sheep.

2. The Separation – Matthew 25:32–33

“All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

The next thing we find out is that Yeshua will separate these Gentiles into two groups that He names the goats and the sheep. The goats will be placed on his left and the sheep on His right. What happens next is purely based on the actions of each group.

3. The Rewards – Matthew 25:34

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

The sheep are promised to be blessed by God and inherit the kingdom. This is their guarantee that they will enter the 1,000-year Messianic kingdom prepared for believers. “Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Yeshua and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Messiah for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4).

4. The Reason – Matthew 25:35–36

“For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.”

Yeshua gives them the reason for their reward: when He was hungry, thirsty, ignored, naked, sick and imprisoned, they reached out to Him with compassion.

5. The Reaction – Matthew 25:37–39

“Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

These Gentiles, who are now called “righteous”, appear to be puzzled by Yeshua’s statement; they do not seem to recall having reached out to Him specifically, so they ask him to specify when such a thing might have occurred. The virtue of their good deeds does not even cross their minds. It is as if they were thinking what the old peasant woman in the French village of Le Chambon sur Lignon thought; when asked why she got involved in saving so many Jews during the Holocaust, she simply answered, “It was the most natural thing to do!”

6. The Response – Matthew 25:40

“The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’”

The answer given by Yeshua must be a surprise to these Righteous Gentiles. They are told that whenever they performed these compassionate acts toward “these brothers,” it was akin to reaching out in compassion to Yeshua.

A third group is now introduced and added to the sheep and the goats that appears to be related to Yeshua, who calls them “these brothers of Mine.” Paul speaks of his brethren according to the flesh in Romans 9:3 and 11:14, meaning the Jewish people: “For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Messiah for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:3).

In this context, we are to understand Yeshua’s statement as referring to the same group of people in Matthew 25:31–46. Being Jewish in His humanity, Yeshua’s brothers are the Jewish people. Specifically, the Jewish people that Gentiles would have encountered during the Great Tribulation. Yeshua means that whatever act of compassion that these Gentile Christians performed on behalf of the Jewish people they encountered during the tragic time of the Great Tribulation was akin to an act of compassion toward Him, and as a result, they are guaranteed entry into the Messianic kingdom.

The Fate of the Accursed Gentiles

1. A Different Reward – Matthew 25:41–46

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’

Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

To an extent, the rest of the passage is similar to the first part. It describes the fate of the goats, whom Yeshua calls “accursed ones.” They are the ones who will ignore the turmoil that the Jewish people will undergo during the Tribulation, and as a result, Yeshua promises that they will be cast “into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.” They might even be involved in helping to persecute the Jews. Their destination is eternal punishment away from the Messianic kingdom and from the presence of God, in an opposite direction from the Righteous Gentiles.

2. Not Salvation by Works

Some see this passage of the reward of entry into the Messianic kingdom as a result of performance in relation to the Jewish people during the Tribulation, but this is not to be misunderstood as salvation by works. This would go against the scriptural evidence that salvation is by the grace of God, through faith alone, in Yeshua alone: “Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6); “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). Rather, it is because these Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation that they will become righteous and be led to bless the Jewish people as they understand God’s promise in Genesis 12:3. They will act in various capacities, probably risking their own safety and that of their immediate families in the process.

During the most difficult days of the Great Tribulation, namely the second half of the seven-year period, all those left behind will suffer great persecution to the point of death. The Jewish people will possibly suffer even more because Israel will be chastised. The Gentiles who will be saved throughout that time will understand the necessity to reach out and help the persecuted Jews around them. Based on Yeshua’s description, it looks like the Righteous Gentiles of the Tribulation will have opportunities similar to those of the Righteous Among the Nations during the Holocaust era. Shelter, food, identification papers, and transportation will once again become necessities that the Jewish people might quickly become deprived of. Opportunities will abound for helping Jewish people in need.

The Need for the New Righteous Gentiles Prior to the Rapture

1. The Timing of the Rapture

As a premillennial, pre-tribulation follower of the Messiah, I believe that if I am still alive at that time, I will be raptured before the start of the Great Tribulation. As far as the timing of this event, although no one knows the day or the hour (Matthew 24:36), we understand the imminency of it. By this, I mean that nothing needs to happen on the biblical or prophetic timetable of end-times events prior to the Rapture. The Rapture is the next event on God’s prophetic timetable for mankind, and it could occur at any moment.

Nowhere in the Bible are we told that life will not get worse before the Great Tribulation.

As a matter of fact, life could become a lot more complicated before the Rapture for believers (Jews and Gentiles) as well as unbelievers as the whole world comes closer to being as it was in “the days of Noah” (Matthew 24:37–38).

2. The Urgency

The last two decades have seen a resurgence in global antisemitism. The longest hatred continues to affect Jewish communities. It is also guaranteed in the Scriptures that in the last days much of the world will turn against Israel and the Jewish people: “It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it” (Zechariah 12:3).

The phrase “that day” is mentioned fifteen times between chapters 12 and 14 of Zechariah and is a clear reference to the Campaign of Armageddon. We know from God’s counsel that the whole world will eventually turn on Israel and the Jewish people, but the “whole world” never means all individuals. Let us become anomalies today in the hope of leaving a legacy for those left behind.

Antisemitism does not have its origins in the second half of the Great Tribulation. As a matter of fact, the Jewish people have been the most persecuted people in human history. We are now seeing Jewish people being killed again. The archenemy of God is also the archenemy of the Jewish people because he hates all that God loves and loves all that God hates.

Satan is obsessively going after the Jews today, just as he was going after them in the 1930s and 40s and throughout the two millennia before then. There is no reason to believe that he will lessen his efforts during the second part of the Tribulation. His reason is simple: he knows that at the end of the Time of Jacob’s Trouble, the Jewish people will call upon Yeshua and cry out *Baruch haba b’shem Adonai*: “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10). This will trigger the Second Coming of Yeshua and will force Satan to retire into a location that he is in no hurry to reach: “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

3. Learning from the Past and Gleaning from the Future

We admire the bravery and compassion of the Yad Vashem “Righteous Among the Nations,” and we rejoice over the future courage and love that Tribulation Saints will have for the Jewish people, but the question arises: Why not start today? What keeps believers today from helping Jewish people in need? With the recent increase in global antisemitism, Gentile Christians have ample opportunities to put their faith in action. The time is now for reaching out to our Jewish friends, co-workers, schoolmates, neighbors, and family members.

There is a substantial number of evangelicals who love Israel and the Jewish people, and they have been praying for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6) and for their Jewish friends. That is biblical and very helpful, but I am convinced that now is the time to build on this foundation of prayer. Now is the time to let our respective Jewish community leaders, synagogues, and Jewish community centers know that we have their back. It is time to visit, call, or email these people and let them know that Christians today will not repeat the actions of many

during the Holocaust era. Tell your Jewish friends that you have their back. Tell them that you will not be a bystander. It is time for faith in action.

Conclusion

Elie Wiesel once said, “We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”⁴ A bystander who does nothing only facilitates the work of a perpetrator. The Jewish people need to know that Christians will not be bystanders. They need to know it by our actions, beyond our prayers and our words. It was once said that “nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” Let us follow the advice found in the Epistle of James: “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself” (2:17).

The day is nearing when Jewish people might need rescuing, feeding, hiding, and transportation. Do we care? Then let us show them. Yeshua has shown us how the New Righteous Among the Nations will rise to the occasion during the Time of Jacob’s Trouble. This should serve as a model for us ahead of time on how to respond to the needs of the Jewish people and how to put Genesis 12:3 into action today! Our actions will undoubtedly demonstrate the love of the Messiah to our Jewish friends. They are never to replace the message of the gospel, but rather to illustrate the power of the gospel to change lives—ours and theirs

Where will Christians be when Jews in need knock on their door in the middle of the night? The bridge between Christians and Jews that slowly started to rot in the first century and was finally burned during the Holocaust needs to be rebuilt now because, regardless of our view on eschatology, the Jewish people need their Christian friends more than ever. I will not be a bystander. What about you?

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⁴ Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1958), 118.

Hildegard of Bingen's Vision of *Synagoga*: A Philosemitic Polemic and Its Modern Jewish Reception

Judith Mendelsohn Rood

Hildegard von Bingen's portrayal of *Synagoga*, a Christian motif symbolizing the Jewish people, is both unusual and striking.¹ The miniature painting comes from an illuminated codex called *Scivias*, Latin for "Know the Way." The unique portrayal is one of the very few pieces of evidence that we have of a philosemitic, or positive attitude, towards the Jewish people during the twelfth century, an era known for its violent antisemitism. The miniature expresses a Christian acknowledgement of the Church's debt to the Jewish people at a time when they were so hated that a new code of laws protecting them had to be enacted.² Indeed, Hildegard went as far as writing that the Synagogue is the Mother of Christ! This is remarkable, especially because of the Church's veneration of Mary, herself an embodiment of Israel.

Hildegard is famed even today as a church leader, musical composer, healer, thinker, administrator, and mystic. Her ethereal choral music and her remarkable visions, which she described, painted, and interpreted, along with her copious writings, are windows into twelfth century Christendom and are a precious legacy to us.

In this article, I trace the history of the image and its interpretation from Hildegard's own writings, to *Synagoga*'s rediscovery, just as the First World War was breaking out, by a young Jewish doctor and his wife doing archival research on contagion in the Middle Ages. Charles and Dorothea Singer's discovery of *Synagoga* was shaped by the renewed waves of European antisemitism that was sweeping through Europe. The story of *Synagoga* traces the lachrymose history of Jewish suffering that stretched from the First Crusade in 1099 to 1937, when the Nazis were implementing their antisemitic Nuremberg Laws in Germany. The story of



Hildegard's *Synagoga*

¹ Doctor of the Church (Latin: *doctor*; "teacher"), also referred to as Doctor of the Universal Church (*Doctor Ecclesiae Universalis*), is a title given by the Catholic Church to saints recognized as having made a significant contribution to theology or doctrine through their research, study, or writing. The Vatican recognizes five women as Doctors of the Church: Catherine of Sienna (March 25, 1347–April 29, 1380), Hildegard of Bingen (1098–September 17, 1179), Therese of Avila (March 28, 1515–October 4 or 15, 1582), *Thérèse* of Lisieux (January 2, 1873–September 30, 1897), and Edith Stein (October 12, 1891–August 9, 1942). As of 2020, there are thirty-six Doctors of the Church recognized by the Vatican.

² Callixtus II issued the papal bull *Sicut Iudaeis* (the "Constitution for the Jews") in about 1120 to protect Jews who were suffering during the First Crusade. It was reaffirmed by many popes until the fifteenth century. According to Herbert Thurston ["The History of Toleration," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912).], the bull forbade Christians from forcing Jews to convert, harming them, taking their property, disturbing the celebration of their festivals, or interfering with their cemeteries, on pain of excommunication.

Synagoga highlights how that suffering ultimately gave rise to political Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel, written just as the plague of antisemitism is again afflicting us today.

Hildegard's philosophy of history, sanctioned by the religious authorities of the Church in her day,³ contains within it the seeds of Christian Zionism, that humanitarian movement that supported, and continues to support, the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and their right to self-determination. Christian Zionism teaches the redemption of the Jews at the end of history, when they accept Yeshua as their messiah, savior, and king. Hildegard simplified the history of salvation into three ages: the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the New Age. Each age ends in judgement and the next begins by a new outworking of God's providential care for his creation. This philosophy of history is at the heart of the good news for the nations of the Earth and for Israel. In this way, Hildegard of Bingen articulated a counterpoint to the populist polemic against the Jews of the Rhineland, one that affirms that God still has a purpose and a plan for the Jewish people.

The Rhineland in the Late Eleventh Century

The ancient Jewish communities along the Rhine in France and throughout the Holy Roman Empire were autonomous, but they were also limited by canon law, which discriminated against Jews by limiting the kinds of work they could do, preventing them from owning land, and restricting them to specific areas where they could live. They were distinguished by their dress and were the only people who were allowed to charge interest on loans. Church law prevented any religious interaction between Jews and Christians, except to pressure them to convert to Christianity. The ecclesiastical and monarchical authorities in France and the Holy Roman Empire extended their protection over Jewish communities in Europe, but the anti-Jewish teaching of contempt for them as deicides encouraged villagers and townspeople to loathe them.

In 1096, the Jewish communities along the Rhine were devastated in a series of massacres launched by participants of the First Crusade. The first phase of those wars is called "The People's Crusade" because mobs of peasants, rebelling against Church doctrine and policies regulating Jewish life in France and the Holy Roman Empire, massacred the Jews in Metz, Worms, and Trier. The Rhineland Massacres, also known as the "Persecutions of 1096" (*Gzerot Tatnó*, גזרות תתנ"ו, the "Edicts of 4856"), were condemned by the leaders and officials of the Catholic Church.

Hildegard's Life

Hildegard of Bingen was born at Bockelheim, at the confluence of the Nahe and the Rhine Rivers, in 1099, just three years after these horrors. In Bingen, a female recluse named Jutta had established a Benedictine convent on Mount St. Disibode, a few miles from Bingen on the Nahe River. As a child, Hildegard reported seeing waking visions and a brilliant light that made her soul tremble. Hildegard's parents sent their eight-year-old daughter to live with Jutta to train as a nun. Through long periods of illness, Hildegard worked for a decade on the text that would become *Scivias*. When Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard became the prioress of the abbey, living there until 1147, when she led some of her nuns down the Nahe to establish a second

³ It was in 1054 that the schism between the Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches occurred in the context of the Crusades.

convent at Rupertsberg. It was around this time that Benjamin of Tudela reported hearing of a Jewish community in Bingen. Hildegard served as abbess at St. Rupertsberg until her death in 1179 or 1180. Twenty years later, townspeople attacked the small Jewish quarter of Bingen on Rosh HaShanah in either 1198 or 1199 and drove them from the city.

Hildegard's studies of the Old and New Testaments, and especially the prophetic writings of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation, shaped her art and her music, giving her a cosmic worldview that incorporated all of the dimensions of human life. Hildegard designed the new convent, St. Rupertsberg, to represent the New Jerusalem and composed a liturgical work to be performed by her sisters at its dedication. The chorale *Sequentia* recorded a performance of this music under the label "Jerusalem," accompanied by its lyrics, in 1996. The lyrics of Hildegard's ode to its patron saint are these:

Sequence to St. Rupert: Jerusalem, city of gold, graced with royal purple, building of utmost bounty, you never-darkened light, you are made beautiful in the dawn, and in the sunlight's blaze. You blessed childhood, sparkling in the dawn, and you, admirable time of youth, burning in sunlight. In these, noble Rupert, you gleamed like a gem, so you cannot be obscured by foolish men: the valley cannot hide the mountain. Jerusalem, your windows are framed wondrously with topaz and sapphire. As your brightness, Rupert, gleams in them, you cannot be obscured by the apathy of men's ways: the valley cannot hide the mountain – crowned with roses, lilies and purple, in a true vision. Tender flower of the field, and sweet green of the apple, fruit with no bitter core, enticing no hearts into crimes! Noble urn that remains untarnished, not drunk to the dregs in the dance in the ancient cave, nor destroyed in the attacks of the ancient ravager – the Holy Spirit makes music over you, for you belong to the dances of angels, since in the Son of God you are made beautiful, having no flaw. What a glorious urn you are, Rupert, you who in your childhood and youth thirsted for God, in fear of God, in the embrace of love, and in the softest fragrance of holy works!

In creating the "harmonious Music of Celestial Revelations," the visionary abbess and healer, "whose spiritual compositions are among the most astonishing and unique creations from the dynamic milieu of 12th-century Benedictine monasticism," sought "to mirror the ineffable sounds of the heavenly spheres, the angelic choirs, and the human soul, as inspired by the Holy Spirit." To Hildegard, music is the highest form of human activity. Composed between 1151 and 1158, she collected these works so that the sisters of her convent could sing them to complement the masculine Gregorian chants featured in medieval liturgies. Those who have heard her compositions "know that it counts among the most sublime, virtuosic, and demanding vocal repertoires ever created. . . . Then, as now, Hildegard was admired for fearlessly exploring the soul's place in the cosmos and giving it voice."⁴

An able administrator and teacher, she was a brilliant artist as well. Acclaimed also for her knowledge of herbs and hygiene, she is often listed among the greatest proto-scientists of medieval Europe. She suffered from excruciating migraines, during which she had powerful hallucinations, which she was able to remember and to paint as religious visions. In her early forties, "the great pressure of [her] pains" propelled Hildegard to describe her visions. In 1148, she received papal approval to write theological works and subsequently attracted widespread fame as a visionary, preacher, and reformer. *Scivias* was completed in 1151; it is at once a work of orthodox theology and a remarkable record of Hildegard's prophetic visions.

Hildegard's illumination of *Synagoga* is found in the magnificent *Parchment of Scivias*, a volume of 235 folios containing 35 miniature paintings based upon her visions, along with her interpretations of them in Latin. Hildegard began to work on the manuscript in 1141, when she

⁴ "O Jerusalem! 1996," *Sequentia*, accessed May 20, 2021, Sequentia.org.

was 43 years old, to create a record of her religious visions at the request of Pope Eugene III. It is possible that she herself painted the illuminations. The original manuscript was kept in Rome for centuries, but eventually ended up in Wiesbaden in 1814, “where the great German Romantic poet Goethe saw it and wrote: ‘an old manuscript containing the visions of Saint Hildegard, is extraordinary.’”⁵ In 1942, during World War II, the original manuscript of *Scivias* was transferred to Dresden, which was hoped to be a safer place to keep it during the war. Since that city was not the site of military or industrial works and it was a civilian population center, it was thought to be safe from Allied bombing. Tragically, that was not the case. The manuscript disappeared in the firebombing and ensuing chaos in Dresden from February 12 to 15, 1945, and today it remains missing without a trace, available only as a facsimile and in photographs dating to 1925. These are held by the Nassauische Landesbibliothek in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Charles Singer

In 1915 *The Jewish Quarterly Review* published an article about Hildegard’s portrayal of *Synagoga*, accompanied by the Latin text and an English translation.⁶ Its author was the son of a renowned English rabbi who was yet to establish his reputation as a scholar. Charles Joseph Singer (November 2, 1876–June 10, 1960) would later rise to prominence as the greatest British historian of science and technology in the first half of the twentieth century. Singer is famous today thanks to the late renowned neuroscientist Oliver Sacks, who based his own 1970 study *Migraine* on Singer’s analysis of Hildegard’s visions as evidence that she suffered from migraines.



Charles Singer

Charles Singer was born in Camberwell in London to Charlotte and Rabbi Simeon Singer (1848–1906), an eminent Hebraist and historian. The Singer home was a hub of intellectual, social, political, philanthropic, and humanitarian activity. After serving as the headmaster of Jews’ College School, Rabbi Singer was appointed minister of the Borough New Synagogue in London and then, from 1879 until his death, ministered at the fashionable New East End Synagogue. Rabbi Singer, along with his friend Claude Joseph Goldsmid Montefiore (1858–1938), who, like his great-uncle Sir Moses Montefiore, was a renowned philanthropist, humanitarian, and educator, edited and translated into English the *Authorized Daily Prayer Book*, first published in 1890 and known since as “Singer’s Prayer Book.” Rabbi Singer’s historical studies were published posthumously in three volumes by his son-in-law Israel Abrahams in 1908. Young Charles was deeply influenced not only by his father but also by their friend, the scholar and humanitarian Claude Montefiore.

Montefiore was a graduate of Oxford and had studied at a reformed seminary in Berlin, where he was introduced to the methodology of biblical higher criticism and rabbinic literature. Montefiore’s controversial scholarship on the teachings of Jesus and Paul shaped his ethics and theology. He became highly influential and is considered the intellectual founder of Anglo-

⁵ “Scivias Summary and Images,” Healthy Hildegard, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.healthyhildegard.com/scivias-illustrations/>.

⁶ Charles Singer, “Allegorical Representation of the Synagogue in a Twelfth Century Illuminated MS. of Hildegard of Bingen,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s., 5, no. 3 (January 1915): 267–88.

Liberal Judaism. He was the founding president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism; president of the Jewish Religious Union, which represented all liberal Jewish groups in the United Kingdom; and president of the Jewish Historical Society of England from 1899 to 1900. In 1937 he published a two-volume commentary on the synoptic gospels. He was close to Rabbi Singer and was often a guest at his home, where young Charles soaked up his ideas.

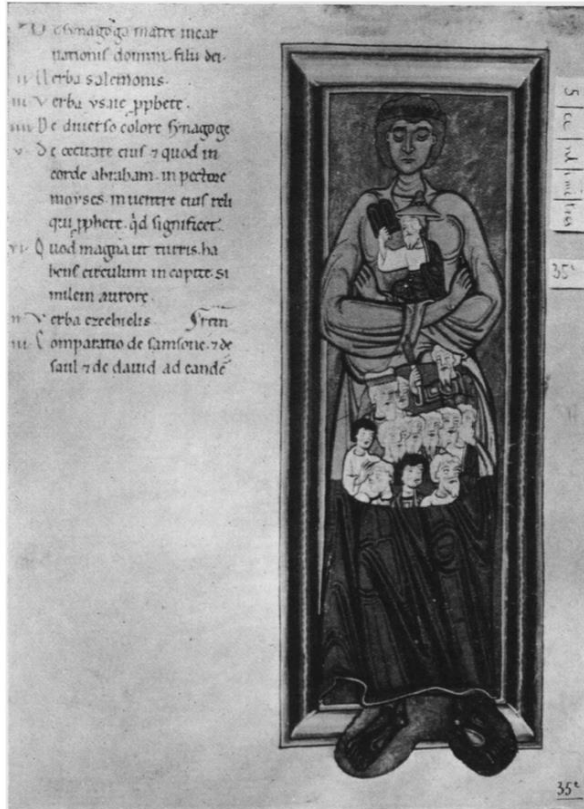


FIG. 1. THE VISION OF THE SYNAGOGUE

970

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From Singer's *Jewish Quarterly Review* article, showing the relationship of the image to the text of *Scivias*.

Singer helped Sir Samuel Montagu (later Lord Swaythling) in 1892 to draft a petition to Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid for the Hovevei Zion, a humanitarian organization founded in 1881 in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War to help victims of pogroms (state-sanctioned terror attacks against Jews) in Romania and Russia by resettling them in Transjordan, rather than in England.⁷ In 1882 Egypt had come under British administration, and the British Empire had reached its greatest extent. In the Ottoman Empire at that time, Jewish immigrants enjoyed British protection that dated back to 1848. Therefore, the thinking in Rabbi Singer's circle was that the British could assist Jewish refugees in resettling in the area east of the Jordan River, which was under Ottoman control at that time.

⁷ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism: 1600–1918* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1919; London: Forgotten Books, 2013), 231.

Most significantly for Charles, Montefiore specialized in the Jewish roots of the New Testament. As a layman, Montefiore served as a spiritual teacher and preacher and published a volume of sermons, in conjunction with Rabbi Singer's son-in-law Israel Abrahams, entitled *Aspects of Judaism* (1894). In 1886, Montefiore delivered a course of lectures on "The Origin of Religion as Illustrated by the Ancient Hebrews," making a permanent contribution to the field of religious studies. In 1896, Montefiore published the first volume of his *Bible for Home Reading*, a commentary on the Bible with moral reflections from the standpoint of higher criticism; the second volume appeared in 1899. In 1888 Montefiore founded and edited, in conjunction with Israel Abrahams, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, a journal that stood at the very highest level of contemporary Jewish scholarship and in which Charles Singer's article on Hildegard of Bingen's *Synagoga* would be published in 1915. Just before that, Montefiore published *Judaism and St. Paul* in 1914.

It was also in Rabbi Singer's home that Theodore Herzl first explained his idea for a Jewish state to Anglo-Jewry. According to Zionist historian Nahum Sokolow, Rabbi

According to Zionist historian Nahum Sokolow, Rabbi Singer and Montagu “in the most definite and clearest terms” that “we know as political Zionism” proposed that the “Lovers of Zion” in England should undertake philanthropic work to prepare to implement this plan. In 1893 Montagu presented a petition signed by the officers of the Executive Committee and the secretaries of each “tent” of the “Lovers of Zion” to Prime Minister Archibald Primrose, Earl of Rosebery, Gladstone’s newly elected successor, to be transmitted to Sultan Abdul Hamid. This project did not go forward, in part because of Lord Rosebery’s failure to intervene on behalf of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire in 1895–96. That government resigned; ultimately, Lord Alfred Balfour issued his eponymous declaration in 1917 as the Ottoman Empire was crumbling as a result of the first world war.

During this time, Montefiore had become president of the Anglo-Jewish Association and a member of the Council of the Jewish Colonization Association. The Anglo-Jewish Association was designed to promote “social, moral, and intellectual progress among the Jews; and the obtaining of protection for those who may suffer in consequence of being Jews, beginning with Romanian Jews in 1871” and was based upon the model of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in France. “It was thought . . . that it was time a body so prosperous, influential, and sympathetic as the English Jews should take its stand by the side of the other sections of Jewry, and share in a movement full of promise for the welfare of the Jewish race.”⁸

Montefiore also co-founded the Anglo-Jewish Anti-Zionist League of British Jews in November 1917 in opposition to the Balfour Declaration.⁹ Other prominent co-founders included Lionel Nathan de Rothschild, Sir Philip Magnus, and Louis Montagu. The League had only 18 members, but it was extremely influential until 1929, when it disbanded. The League opposed the idea of Jewish nationalism, which was in line with the position of Reform Judaism in the UK and the US at that time. However, it favored Anglo-Jewish settlement in Palestine, which, in 1917, included Transjordan and was under the control of the British Expeditionary Army out of Egypt.

However, the group was faced with a dilemma. Since the 1880s, Great Britain had given refuge to Romanian and Russian Jews fleeing persecution. Anti-immigrant and anti-Bolshevik hostility in England provoked members of the League to publish a highly controversial letter on April 13, 1919 in the London *Morning Post*, repudiating any connection between Jews and Bolshevism. The letter implied that the two leading Jewish newspapers, *The Jewish Chronicle* and *The Jewish World*, had endorsed the idea that Russian Jewish immigrants were Bolsheviks. The Board of Deputies of British Jews passed a resolution condemning the letter because it differentiated between English Jews and Jewish immigrants, who the letter referred to as “Foreign Jews.” Historian Sharman Kadish asserted that both Bolshevism and Zionism were

⁸ M. Duparc. “Anglo-Jewish Association,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, accessed May 20, 2021.

<https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1525-anglo-jewish-association#anchor4>. By “1900 the society had 36 branches; viz., 21 in the United Kingdom, 14 in the Colonies, British settlements, and foreign countries, and 1 in India. In this respect the Anglo-Jewish Association forms a powerful link between the Jews in all parts of the British dominions, for there is no other Jewish body in the United Kingdom with such extensive ramifications. The late Professor Jacob Waley was elected the first president of the association.” The Anglo-Jewish Association administered the Evelina de Rothschild School for Girls in Jerusalem.

⁹ “To Combat Zionism,” *The Modern View* (December 28, 1917); Thomas Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 17; Sharman Kadish, Jonathan Frankl, Peter Y. Medding, and Ezra Mendelsohn, eds., *The Jews and the European Crisis, 1914–1921*, Vol. 4 of *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (New York: Oxford University Press USA / Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988), 96–109.

regarded by the League as “alien imports . . . equally capable of undermining the loyalty of newcomers to Britain,” a charge that the deputies and the larger Jewish community viewed as playing into the hands of antisemites.¹⁰ In 1918 Montefiore published a book entitled *Race, Religion, Nation and the Jews*, in which he staked out the anti-Zionist position. Montefiore’s politics, humanitarian activities, and scholarship deeply influenced Charles throughout his life.

Charles Singer thus grew up in rarefied circumstances, steeped in history, politics, and Jewish culture and literature—the Old Testament, rabbinical writings, and the New Testament. He was educated at the City of London School, University College London, and Magdalen College, Oxford, majoring in zoology from 1896 to 1899. Trained in medicine, he qualified for medical practice in 1903 and was appointed medical officer on an expedition led by Sir John Harrington to the border region between Abyssinia and Sudan on the same day his medical qualification was announced. After this service, Singer returned to England and took a position at Sussex County Hospital in Brighton, and then, in 1907 he left for Singapore. Upon his father’s death in 1908, he returned to England and held positions at various hospitals in London.

In July 1910 he married Dorothea Cohen Waley Singer (December 17, 1882–June 24, 1964), daughter of Nathaniel Louis Cohen, a stock broker, and Julia Matilda Waley. Dorothea was a paleographer with an already distinguished reputation as a historian of medieval medicine. In 1912–13, Charles and Dorothea moved to Heidelberg, where together they searched for evidence documenting predecessors to modern medical concerns and ideas—in particular, theories of contagion.

The librarian at Wiesbaden allowed the Singers to consult the illuminated manuscript of *Scivias*.



Dorothea and Charles in retirement.

In the stars, shimmering points of light and crenellated figures of some of the 35 illuminations in *Scivias*, Singer thought that he recognized depictions of ‘scintillating scotoma’. Noting that Hildegard had admitted to long periods of illness, Singer diagnosed a functional nervous disorder, specifically migraine. Nearly a century later, medical ideas about migraine have changed a great deal. Nevertheless, Singer’s retrospective diagnosis of Hildegard’s migraine has persisted, gaining popularity in the late twentieth century as the abbess’ reputation has grown.¹¹

Singer observed that the “freedom and the terms with which Hildegard denounced the great ones of the earth, even the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa himself, as well as the character of some of her visions, and much of the setting of her life, recall the Hebrew prophets.” Katherine Foxhall observed that

Singer fit Hildegard into his larger story of scientific progress from the superstitious darkness of the Middle Ages to the light and reason of modern science. However, Singer’s work on Hildegard “served a particular purpose: it explained away her religion so that she could be fitted into a coherent account of medieval scientific progress. . . . By diagnosing Hildegard with a ‘scientific’ migraine that negated her theology . . .

¹⁰ Kadish et al., eds.

¹¹ Foxhall.

Singer could fit her into his *longue durée* history of scientific vision, genius, objective reason and intellectual power.”¹²

Upon the completion of their research in Wiesbaden, the couple moved to Oxford in 1914, where Charles worked with Sir William Osler, then Regius Professor of Medicine at the university. With Dorothea’s help, he published several papers which earned him a D.Litt. from Oxford. It was during this time that *The Jewish Quarterly Review* published the black and white photo of *Synagoga*, its reconstructed Latin text, an English translation, and a brief discussion of the text. It was almost certainly Dorothea who transcribed the Latin and wrote the translation of the manuscript, although her work was not acknowledged in the article. Hildegard’s vision of *Synagoga*, among the other miniatures, called for a separate treatment than their work on contagion, since its subject is entirely religious and could not be analyzed “scientifically.” Singer described the painting and Hildegard’s interpretation of it as a “polemic,” or an attack, on Jews and Judaism.

Singer’s brief article on antisemitism reflects the intense concerns of his father’s circle of friends and anticipates Charles’ actions on behalf of his persecuted people during the Nazi era. During that time, he defended Jewish scientists, organizing an international boycott of a major scientific conference at Heidelberg and assisting Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, revealing that, despite his endorsement of secularization and humanism, his Jewish identity was extremely important to him throughout his life. His grief over Christian antisemitism led him to publish two works on modern antisemitism: *The Christian Approach to Jews: Slightly Enlarged from A Memorandum Prepared for the International Missionary Council, June 1937* and *The Christian Failure* (1943). In these books, he chastised Christianity for its failure to protect the Jews and, most pointedly, Jewish Christians from the Nazis.

Charles Singer On the Fallacy of the Church and Christianity

Charles Singer condemned Christendom for its failure to defend human life, including the lives of Christians, in the face of Nazism. This failure, Singer believed, was caused by what he claimed to be the historical fallacy at the heart of Christian civilization: its failure to uphold the value of human life, a value that he found at the heart of the gospel, the prophetic religion of the Old Testament fulfilled by Christ. Singer wrote as a Jew, but recognized that the Jewish religion was sick because of antisemitism and that Christianity itself was sick and dying away because of its failure to protect human dignity and freedom. Whereas the humanitarian impulse of Jewish civilization, rooted in the ancient religion, was still a force to be reckoned with, Singer lamented that this impulse was missing from Christian civilization, and for that reason, he contended, Christianity as a religion had been replaced by the universal “religion of humanity.” He argued that it was not science that had destroyed Christianity but its embrace of power and entanglement with the State, which curtailed freedom and enserfed humanity. By making Jews (and Muslims) the enemy of Christendom, in his view, the Catholic Church and Protestantism had lost their claim to universality.

¹² Ibid.

Ecclesia and Synagoga: An Anti-Judaic Medieval Motif

The earliest depiction of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* appeared in Carolingian carved ivory relief panels for book covers dating from about 870.¹³ The Church is personified in this genre as *Ecclesia*, a beautiful woman carrying a lance; the Synagogue is also depicted as a beautiful woman, but with her head downcast and her eyes covered, carrying a broken lance. These representations of Jews and Christians began to be depicted in European art in the ninth century. The choice of the Synagogue to represent the collective Jewish people is drawn from the New Testament, where the institution figures prominently in the life of Jesus. The Temple, having been destroyed, represented Jewish sovereignty; thus, its representation of Israel and the Jewish people would be problematic. The motif of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* is therefore a trope depicting salvation history from the Old Testament period to the Church Age.

Ecclesia (left) and *Synagoga* (right) on either side of Christ, seated on the throne of judgement amongst the saved and above the damned.



The motif of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*, Portal of Strasbourg Cathedral. The construction of the Strasbourg Cathedral began in the year 1015, and its decorations may date to 1190 (now in the museum and replaced by replicas).



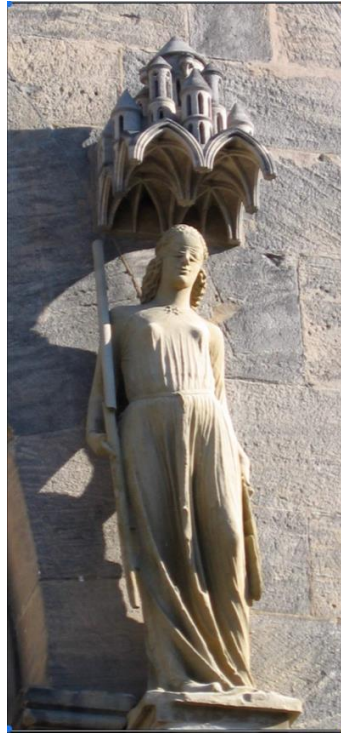
Exterior portal of Bamberg Cathedral on Main Square. Construction of the Bamberg Cathedral began and was consecrated in 1012. Photo by the author; August 24, 2007.

¹³ Nancy Bishop, *Jews in Medieval Christendom: Slay Them Not* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

Ecclesia with the New Jerusalem (the City of God) above her head, Bamberg Cathedral. Photo by the author.



Synagoga with the earthly Jerusalem (the City of Man) above her head. Photo by the author.



Hildegard's Philosemitism

Hildegard's depiction of *Synagoga* is stunning. There is nothing like it in medieval European art. It is a representation of the Christian debt to the Jewish people. Hildegard is paying tribute to the maligned Jewish people who were so reviled in her own town.

The background of the illumination is gold, against which is portrayed a woman, her eyes closed, her arms cradled at her breasts, and her hands folded under her armpits. Reading the image downwards, Moses is portrayed first, against her breast, wearing a red cloak over a pale blue tunic, his face lifted upwards. He wears the typical blue conical hat worn by Jews in the Rhineland in the twelfth century. His left hand is concealed by his cloak; his right hand holds the two tables of the Law, colored dark red and arranged in the traditional way. Singer notes that this is "probably one of the earliest manuscript representations of the double tables of the Law."¹⁴ Below Moses, on the figure's belly, is Abraham, holding the "circumcisional knife" in his right hand. Below him is Aaron, distinguished by his priestly white turban, from the front of which are suspended three small rings or jewels. The other ten prophets in the image are bareheaded, watching expectantly for the coming of the Messiah. Seven of these prophets are gray bearded and face to the right, while one is elderly and two beardless youth face left. We



Hildegard's Synagoga

¹⁴ Singer, "Allegorical Representation of the Synagogue," 286. The following discussion is based upon the translation of the Latin text that accompanies Singer's article on pages 280–287.

are not given an explanation for these three figures by Singer or Hildegard. Hildegard refers to an altar, but it is missing from the colored and black and white images used in this article.

Hildegard's portrayal of *Synagoga* and her interpretation of her vision is much more complex than a mere polemic, as charged by Singer, who recoiled at the negative descriptions of the Jewish people, missing her positive view of history and the future according to her understanding of the world. The Latin text has several layers: a description of the Jewish people before Christ during the Age of the Old Testament, their relationship to Him during the time of His Incarnation, their relationship to the Church in the Age of the New Testament, and their relationship to Christ in the New Age. Hildegard's Latin changes abruptly in the middle from the third-person narrative to a second-person exhortation in the voice of Christ, addressed directly to His people, and then shifts back to the third-person narrative at the end. There is a section in the voice of God the Father himself. The entire text is historiographical, moving in time from the past, through the present, and into the future. Charles Singer discerned that Hildegard's philosophy of history is divided, calling the three distinct ages mentioned in the text "dispensations," in the language of the evangelical scholarship of his day, as the ongoing presence of the Jewish people is the singular continuous characteristic of world history, emphasizing God's faithfulness.

Hildegard writes about *Synagoga* in what, today, we recognize as anti-Judaic or antisemitic terms: she is defiled, lying in sin, forsaken by God because she slew Christ—but, Hildegard points out, in that consummation she birthed the Church and spread her apostolic doctrine worldwide. The Synagogue betrayed the Son of God, unrepentantly despised Him, and rejected His doctrine. When the Church grew strong, this same Son of God, in His might, cast down the Synagogue and disinherited her children, so that the very heathen, ignorant of God, were moved by His anger.

The Church was not foreseen by the Synagogue, which holds Christ in contempt, obscuring her just works, concealing them as if they do not occur. While she accepts the Law of God in precept and theory and knows it externally, she fails to understand its inward meaning, neglecting the true sacrifice of prayer and rejecting it. The Synagogue thus wanders in iniquity and pollutes herself through idolatry, cleaving to the observance of the law with its evil customs and lying naked in her sins. The Synagogue lies in the errors of utter confusion and schism and defiles herself with the follies of sin. Hildegard writes, "In his incarnation, Christ was initially wedded to the Synagogue, but she, rejecting the grace of baptism, was lured by the devil. Satan ravished the Synagogue in her blindness, and betrayed her in her infidelity and error, and will not cease to act as a son of perdition." The blindness of *Synagoga* is due to the deceit of the devil.

In our post-Enlightenment, secularized world, making reference to Satan seems superstitious, but the New Testament's worldview rests upon the recognition of the Adversary as the lord of this world (Eph. 6:11–17). This association of the Jewish people with Satan and his worldly realm, along with the devastating charge of deicide, is perhaps the most dreaded aspect of medieval antisemitism. Yet, if Satan rules this world, all who do not know Christ are under his control! And so, Hildegard is evangelical, explaining the history of salvation to the Jews of her day in the voice of Christ. Addressing the Synagogue, Jesus charges,

[Y]ou wander in many iniquities and pollute yourself as though with Baal and his like, by cleaving to the observance of the law with its evil customs and by lying naked in your sins.

I, Son of the Most High, do cover thee, O Synagogue, by the will of my father with my Incarnation, that is for your health, and I do bear the sins which you have worked in the darkness.

And I have assured for you the means of salvation, and have shown you that path of my covenant when I revealed to you the true faith by apostolic doctrine, so that you would observe my precepts, even as a woman should submit herself to the rule of her husband.

For I removed from you the severity of the outward law, and gave you the grace of spiritual doctrine, and I revealed to you through myself all of the mysteries of my spiritual doctrine, but you have forsaken me, your rightful spouse, and joined yourself to the devil.

The Distinctive Philosemitic Elements of Hildegard's Vision of *Synagoga*

1. *Synagoga* has a circlet like the dawn around her head because, in her origin, she predestinated the miracle of the Incarnation and foretold those shining virtues and mysteries which followed, for she was, as it were, crowned by that first dawn when she accepted the divine precepts in the same manner as Adam, who first saw God. The Synagogue, disciplined by divine mercy, did indeed before the new day put away unbelief and did in truth attain to the knowledge of God; indeed, the old laws have not perished but have been changed into better ones. Thus, the Synagogue came first in the shadow of symbolism, and the Church followed in the full light of truth.

2. Hildegard therefore depicts *Synagoga* as the Mother of Jesus (i.e., Mary), who has seen the secrets of God, but not clearly or fully, and as His bride, to whom He was wedded when He first appeared.

3. Hildegard recognizes *Synagoga*'s multitude of good works, joined with shining virtues and words, and that, even in her unbelief, she leans upon Jesus, whose portion she is.

4. She pictures Abraham in the heart of *Synagoga*, for through him, circumcision was first in the Synagogue; Moses is in her bosom, for he brought the divine law to men's hearts; and the other prophets are in her belly, for that law descends by divine grace through her. These searchers after the divine precepts all display their proper emblems and adore the beauty of the Church, having foretold her wonders, for they had waited, adoring the glory of the new marriage.

5. *Synagoga* appears as tall a citadel because, containing the might of the divine precepts, she proclaims the provision and defense of the chosen city, the New Jerusalem, whose design is described in Revelation and upon which Hildegard modelled the architecture of the Convent of St. Rupertsberg.

Hildegard's Periodization of History

Woven throughout the Latin text is Hildegard's orthodox Christian philosophy of history. She sees the Old Testament as the history of God's actions on earth since the beginning of the world until the Incarnation and the New Testament as the history of Christ's salvific work, redeeming rebellious humanity. The Synagogue may have "died in her sin, thrusting Christ away in unbelief," but, in so doing, she opened salvation to all of humanity, ending the Old Testament Age/Dispensation (*Uetus testamentum*). The Church continues the work of the Synagogue in the New Testament Age/Dispensation (*Nouo testamento*). Ultimately, the Synagogue will believe and join the Church, ushering in the New Age (*Nouissimum tempus*). The Church has not replaced the Synagogue, for the gospel promises her future redemption. To make this point, Hildegard writes in the voice of God the Father:

The son of iniquity will attempt to expel my Son, but my Son, having thrown down the Antichrist, will call back the Synagogue to the true faith, and at length, in the New Age He will receive her when, abandoning her errors and unbelief, she will return to the light of truth. For in the New Age men will witness the overthrow of him by whom they were deceived and will rush to the paths of salvation.

God promises Israel redemption in a New Age when all will witness the overthrow of Satan and Christ will receive His people, who will rush to the paths of salvation. What a glorious promise, and what stirring hope!

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Biographical Note

Judith Mendelsohn Rood retired in 2018 from undergraduate teaching to Port Hueneme, CA. She is enjoying long walks on the beach, writing history, and grandparenting. She continues to supervise graduate students in Islamic and Middle Eastern history and consults on current issues in the Middle East. This article demonstrates the use of original sources in writing about the history of world civilizations. She invites graduate history and seminary students who seek to teach world history to contact her at judith.rood@biola.edu to learn the University of Chicago historiographical method online. Professor Rood's book on the Muslims of Jerusalem in the 1830s, *Sacred Law in the Holy City*, was reissued by Brill Academic Press in paperback in 2020.

Appendix

My paraphrase of Singer's translation from the Latin of Hildegard's interpretation of her vision of *Synagoga*.¹⁵

I saw the appearance of a woman, light in color from the head to the lap and black from the lap downward, but her feet were bloodstained, and a brilliant shining cloud was round about them. She was sightless and stood next to an altar which is before the eyes of God, yet she touched it not. In her heart stood Abraham, and in her bosom Moses, and in her belly were the other prophets, bearing each his own emblem and all adoring the beauty of the Church. She appeared tall as a citadel, and round her head a wreath like to the dawn.

And I heard a voice from heaven speaking to me, saying: God placed the burden of His law on His ancient people when He ordained them circumcision unto Abraham, but in after days by the grace of His mercy He changed this when, through His son, He gave the truth of His gospel to those who believed on Him. Thus, did He anoint with the oil of His mercy the chafing wounds caused by the yoke of His law.

Concerning the Synagogue as Mother of the Son of God in the Flesh.

This figure which you see as a woman, pale from head to lap, is the Synagogue, the true mother of the incarnate Son of God. [Mary as Synagogue!] As from the first when her sons arose with such strength as was in them, she has seen the secrets of God, but darkly and not in their fullness. Yet is she not that rosy dawn which was clearly prophesied, but she perceives it from afar. With great wonder she speaks of herself in the Song of Songs (8:5):

“Who is this that comes up from the wilderness overflowing with delights and leaning on her beloved?”

It is this new bride who raises herself by the multitude of her good works in the desert of unbelief, where men desiring laws rather than God's wisdom, worship idols. But rising to noble desire, and overflowing with the joys of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and filled with zeal, she leans upon her spouse, the Son of God. For she is His portion, and she is joined to Him in shining virtues, and she overflows with the rich springs of the Word.

And in great wonder concerning the offspring of that union, the Synagogue speaks through Isaiah, my servant (Isaiah 60:8):

“Who are these that fly as a cloud and as a dove to their windows?”

Who are those who abandoning earthly thoughts and carnal desires turn their whole yearning to heaven, and with the simplicity of doves and with no earthly bitterness they seek the fortress of the true rock, the only begotten Son, and aspire to good deeds with

¹⁵ Charles Singer, “Allegorical Representation of the Synagogue in a Twelfth Century Illuminated MS. of Hildegard of Bingen,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s., 5, no. 3 (January 1915): 280–285.

burning ardor? These are they who despise the kingdom of this world because of their love for the heavenly.

This Synagogue marvels concerning the Church, which is armed with virtues, and finds her not as she has foreseen. For the church is girt by guardian angels lest the devil injure her or cast her down, while the Synagogue lies in sin, forsaken of God.

Of the different colors used to depict *Synagoga*.

She is black from lap to feet, implying that she is defiled in her wide borders by her violation of the law and her transgression of the testament of her fathers, for she neglected the divine precepts to follow after the lusts of the flesh.

There is blood around her feet, yet they are surrounded by a most pure and shining cloud. This is because in her consummation she slew the prophet of prophets, and with that crime she fell. But in that very act did the true faith arise in the souls of those who believed, for when the Synagogue accepted her consummation the Church arose, and after the death of the Son she spread herself by her apostolic doctrine throughout the world.

Concerning the blindness of *Synagoga*.

She is sightless and has folded arms because she does not see the true light but holds the Only Begotten in contempt, and because, not putting away her torpor, she covers her just works under the pall of her sloth and conceals them as though they were not.

She stands by the altar but does not touch it, for she accepts the Law of God in precept and theory and knows it externally, yet she fails to understand its inward meaning, for neglecting the true sacrifice of prayer, she rejects rather than pursues it.

But Abraham is in her heart, for through him circumcision was first in the Synagogue; and Moses is in her bosom, for he brought the divine law to men's hearts; and the other prophets are in her belly, for that law descends by divine grace through her. These searchers after the divine precepts all display their proper emblems and adore the beauty of the Church, [having] foretold her wonders, [for] they [had] waited[,] adoring the glory of the new marriage.

She is tall as a tower and hath a circlet like the dawn around her head. She appears as tall as a citadel because, containing the might of the divine precepts, she proclaims the provision and defense of the chosen city.

She has a circlet like the dawn around her head, because in her origin she predesignated the miracle of the Incarnation and foretold those shining virtues and mysteries which followed. For she was, as it were, crowned by that first dawn when she accepted the divine precepts in the same manner as did Adam, who first saw God. But afterwards she died in her sin, for so the Jews have done who did receive the first divine law, but then

thrust away the Son in their unbelief, for man was delivered from perdition in the new age by the death of the Only Begotten One.

Thus, the Synagogue, disciplined by divine mercy, did indeed before the new day put away unbelief, and did in truth attain to the knowledge of God. What portends this? Does not the dawn appear before the sun? But the dawn fades and the light of day remains. What does this portend? The old dispensation [the Old Testament; *Uetus testamentum*] passes, the new Evangel remains. For the ancients observed the Law after the flesh, but the new people work by the spirit according to the new dispensation [*nouo testamento*].

[. . .] For circumcision was not abrogated but was changed into baptism, for the one acts as a single member alone, but the other on all the members. And similarly, the old laws have not perished but have been changed into better ones.

Thus, in the fulfilment of years the Synagogue will, believing, hand herself over to the church, for you, O Synagogue, wander in many iniquities and pollute yourself as though with Baal and his like, by cleaving to the observance of the law with its evil customs and by lying naked in your sins.

You do as commanded by my servant Ezekiel (16:8): “I spread my skirt over you and covered your shame. I swore to you and entered into a covenant with you” as though it was said, I, Son of the Most High, do cover thee, O Synagogue, by the will of my father with my Incarnation, that is for your health, and I do bear the sins which you have worked in the darkness.

And I have assured for you the means of salvation, and have shown you that path of my covenant when I revealed to you the true faith by apostolic doctrine, so that you would observe my precepts, even as a woman should submit herself to the rule of her husband.

For I removed from you the severity of the outward law, and gave you the grace of spiritual doctrine, and I revealed to you through myself all of the mysteries of my spiritual doctrine, but you have forsaken me, your rightful spouse, and joined yourself to the devil.

Comparison under the same head of Samson, Saul, and David.

But understand this, O humankind! Just as when his wife betrayed Samson, his light was put out, so has the Synagogue betrayed the Son of God, and unrepentantly despised Him and rejected His doctrine. But later, when His hair [was] grown again, as when the Church grew strong, this same Son of God in His might cast down the Synagogue and disinherited her children, so that the very heathen, ignorant of God, were moved by His anger.

But she lay in the errors of utter confusion and schism and defiled herself with the follies of sin. And so also David espoused a wife whom he at length reclaimed when she had defiled herself with another. Similarly, the Son was at first through His Incarnation

wedded to the Synagogue, but she, rejecting the grace of baptism, was lured by the devil. But at length, in the new age [*nouissimum tempus*] He will receive her when, abandoning her errors and unbelief, she will return to the light of truth. For Satan ravished the Synagogue in her blindness, and betrayed her in her infidelity and error, and will not cease to act as a son of perdition.

But in the exaltation of his pride, he will perish as Saul did, who drove David from his land, and was pierced through and died on Mount Gilboa. So also, the son of iniquity will attempt to expel my Son, but my Son, having thrown down the Antichrist, will call back the Synagogue to the true faith, as David took back his wife after Saul's death [2 Samuel 3:13–16].

And so, in the [The Last Days/New Age; *nouissimo tempore*] men will witness the overthrow of him by whom they were deceived and will rush to the paths of salvation. For it was not fitting that the truth of the Evangel should precede the gloom of the Law, but it was more fitting that the carnal should precede and the spiritual follow. For the servant predicts the coming of the master, but the master does not go before the servant. Thus, the Synagogue came first in the shadow of symbolism, and the church followed in the full light of truth.

Wherefore whoever has the knowledge of the Holy Spirit and the wings of faith in him, will not transgress my warning but will embrace it with joyful soul.

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Christian Antisemitism's Potent Recipe: Theological, Ethical, Ecclesiastical, and Political Ingredients in Historical Context¹

Brian Crawford

Introduction

Let us, then, speak reverently of the Jew . . . I mean the whole Jewish nation. There are indelible memories connected with them, which will ever, to anyone who believes in the Bible, prevent them from being contemned [treated with scorn]; nay, will cast around them a nobility and a dignity which no other nation has possessed or can attain to. To Him in whose purposes they occupy so large a space, they are still “beloved for their fathers’ sake” [Romans 11:28].

- *Horatius Bonar, a Nineteenth Century Presbyterian Minister*²

Since 2005, no pilgrimage to Jerusalem has been complete without visiting Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum that commemorates the deaths of millions of Jews at the hands of the Nazis. The museum’s narrow corridor descends lower and lower as the exhibits depict the descent of the Jewish people into greater and greater peril. Video testimonies of survivors punctuate a harrowing experience that forces the visitor to come face-to-face with innocent victims and unmitigated human evil.

At the beginning of this important memorial stands a significant, though understated, series of museum panels: quotes from centuries of church leaders advocating the oppression of Jews. These panels make it clear that the Holocaust was not an isolated phenomenon in Western history. Although the Third Reich may have been the worst example by several degrees, the Nazis’ antisemitism³ was a close cousin that was likely inspired by the scorn preached in churches in prior centuries.

When one considers the history of Jewish–Christian relations, it becomes apparent that believers in Jesus have often tarnished the name of the Jewish Messiah through their hatred, pressure, and violent persecution of Jewish people in supposed service of Christ. It is these attitudes and actions that Chosen People Ministries calls antisemitism, which we define as follows: a hostility against Jews that has morphed from disagreements over ideas to hatred of Jews themselves and the desire to act upon one’s hatred.⁴

¹ This article © Chosen People Ministries. Used with permission. A fuller version of this article is available at chosenpeopleanswers.com.

² Horatius Bonar, “The Jew,” in *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, ed. Horatius Bonar, vol. 22 (London: J. Nisbet, 1870), 209–19, http://bunyanministries.org/books/israel_and_millennialism/19_app_i_the_jew_bonar.pdf.

³ This article uses the term “antisemitism” rather than “anti-Semitism.” Jewish publication authorities differ on whether there should be a hyphen or not. I follow the trend in modern scholarship of dropping the hyphen, on the basis that there is no such thing as “Semitism” that can be opposed.

⁴ Some modern scholars see a difference between antisemitism (race-based opposition to Jews that emerged in the nineteenth century) and anti-Judaism (practice- and idea-based opposition that thrived in Christendom in much earlier times). This may be a helpful distinction, but in practice, the felt effects upon Jewish people are often the same under both: stereotypes, personal hostility, social distancing, coercion, and violence. Thus, this article retains the more commonly known word “antisemitism” and defines it with a broad meaning that includes both race-based and ideological opposition that results in hatred and coercion. This kind of wider definition is employed by the Anti-Defamation League, which defines antisemitism as “the belief or behavior hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish. It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, for instance, or political

While Christians today often share the message of Jesus in a loving way, few recognize how much church history has shattered the plausibility of that love before a watching Jewish world. The memory of the people of Israel is measured in centuries, and the centuries provide an overwhelming supply of tears at the hands of Gentile Christians who opposed Jewish people.

Nevertheless, when we survey the whole of history, we find that it is not necessary for a Christian to be an antisemite, and it is consistent with the New Testament for a Christian to be a philo-Semite. All streams of Christianity that harbor antisemitic views have in some way misinterpreted New Testament texts by taking them out of their Jewish context. In the process, Gentile Christians entered a Jewish family argument between the Jewish Messiah and the Jewish leadership of his day, and they misappropriated those words for harm against the Jewish people. Antisemitic Christians have deviated from the teaching of the New Testament, ultimately meaning that antisemitic Christians in history believed errors and lies in order to justify their oppression of Jews.

The purpose of this study is to explain that the antisemitic expressions of Christianity came about centuries after the New Testament was written through a complex process of political power, theological innovation, and Gentile-colored ignorance of the New Testament. By identifying the constituent parts that combust into antisemitism, we hope that believers today will be able to identify and correct these mistakes and prevent antisemitism from taking root in the church ever again.

A Recipe for Christian Antisemitism

Christian antisemitism has indisputably flourished in many places and many eras in the past 2,000 years, but this has not been a universal phenomenon. Christians are not uniformly antisemitic because Christian theology and political theory must have a particular recipe before it combusts into antisemitism. Simply put, not all Christians and not all forms of Christianity have had the required recipe. However, the more antisemitic ingredients are added to a Christian's worldview, so to speak, the more likely it is that the brew will turn toxic for the Jewish people. The following are among the key ingredients:

- An approach to the New Testament that overlooks its Jewish context
- A supersessionist theology
- An antisemitic attitude that develops from one's supersessionism, including jealousy, prejudice, pride, racism, and anger
- A desire to act on one's internal antisemitism
- An ability to act on internal antisemitism through the church or state, or both
- A catalyzing event, crisis, or disagreement to motivate antisemitic action

With all these features present, Christian antisemitism is inevitable. With only some of them present, Christian antisemitism is partially restrained. With all of them absent, Christian

efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews." For a helpful discussion on how to apply "antisemitism" and "anti-Judaism" to conversations about the New Testament, see Terence L. Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretations* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge / Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 13–20.

antisemitism is nonexistent. With this recipe for Christian antisemitism in mind, let us now investigate some of the finer theological, ethical, ecclesiastical, and political ingredients that have combined to make such a brew palatable to far too many Gentile Christians in church history.

Theological and Ethical Ingredients for Christian Antisemitism

Even the most intelligent people can go wrong if they start from false first principles.
- Anthony Kenny⁵

Central to any discussion of Christian antisemitism must be the theological worldview that accompanies it. In a religion that is supposedly built upon the love of God, something odd must happen in the minds of Christians for them to feel justified in hating Jewish people. The following sections will list tables of ingredients that must come about before antisemitism may truly take root within a Christian community. The ingredients will be labeled with abbreviations such as T1 and E5. In addition, the tables will indicate groups and New Testament passages that explicitly deny the ingredient in question, illustrating how some followers of Jesus have nullified the influence of the ingredient upon their perception of Jewish people. In addition, eras in which the ingredient was not present will be mentioned.

To begin, let us look at a matrix of theological and ethical ingredients that must be present in the worldview of Christians before they can self-justify their antisemitism:

#	Theological/Ethical Ingredient	Result	Rejected By
T1	The chosenness of the Jewish people is denied and replaced by the chosenness of Christians.	The basis for theological rejection of Jewish people.	T1 is rejected by Paul, ⁶ Messianic Jews, and many premillennialists. ⁷
T2	The Jewishness of Jewish people is seen as an irreconcilable obstacle to faith and/or obsolete.	The basis for de-Judaification of the church.	T2 is rejected by the New Testament, ⁸ early Eastern Christianity, ⁹ Messianic Jews, and many premillennialists.

⁵ Anthony Kenny, *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 263.

⁶ “As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” Romans 11:28–29 (ESV).

⁷ Premillennialism is the view that Jesus will return to earth before a 1000-year golden age. This was the earliest eschatological position in Christianity, because it stems from Judaism: in Judaism, the Messiah comes to earth before the Messianic era. Christians who are premillennialists often expect the restoration of the Jewish people during this golden era. An early example of this pro-Jewish hope is found in Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 80), who lived in the mid-second century. Nineteenth century examples of the denial of T1 are found in Horatius Bonar and William Blackstone. However, the most explicit repudiation of T1 comes from dispensationalism, a subset of premillennialism that denies that Israel and the church are the same thing.

⁸ John 4:22; Romans 3:1–2a, 9:4–5.

⁹ See especially Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007). In a chapter from that volume, Sten Hidal writes, “In the Greek speaking church and still more in the Western part of the Empire the Jewish heritage in the church gradually disappeared, as did knowledge of Hebrew. Justin Martyr is still acutely aware of Christianity’s Jewish roots, as is Origen, but later on the Jews mainly figure in the deplorable genre known as *Adversus Iudaeos*. The Old Testament of course is read, preached over, and commented upon, but contemporary Judaism tends to fade away or is reduced to a mere target of Christian hostility. East of Antioch this was not possible. The Jewish community was strong and the imperial decisions against the Jews were not always carried out with full efficiency. In Persia the Jews as a rule were favored over against the Christians. The majority view is that the Christian church in Syria has a Jewish background.”

T3	It is inferred that God's judgment of Israel in 70 and 135 CE implies irreversible divine rejection for killing Jesus.	The basis for Christian triumphalism or apathy toward Jews.	T3 is rejected by the New Testament, ¹⁰ the Hebrew prophets, many church fathers, ¹¹ Messianic Jews, many premillennialists, and the Catholic Church post-Vatican II (1965).
T4	It is believed that it is morally justifiable to use coercion (in general) to solve the problem of unbelief.	The ethical basis for the use of human force against Jews.	T4 was rejected by pre-fourth-century Christians ¹² and largely rejected by Protestants after the sixteenth century. ¹³
T5	It is believed that church or government leaders have legitimate authority to apply coercion to Jews to solve the problem of unbelief.	The ecclesiastical or political basis for legal coercion of Jews.	See T4.
T6	Once coercion is allowed as a justifiable solution, the ethical limits of coercion must be defined, including the morality of forced sermons, confiscations, imprisonments, kidnappings, book burnings, synagogue burnings, expulsions, and executions.	The working out of details relating to using force against Jews.	See T4.

The theological and ethical ingredients outlined above describe the thought-life and internal moral calculations that a Christian must have and make in order to arrive at an antisemitic theology. Let us discuss each one.

The replacement of the chosen people (T1) is the root idea behind theological antisemitism. However, there are many theological steps that a Christian must take before denying the chosenness of the Jewish people. They include denying the straightforward meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, which describe the continued relationship between God and Jewish people (Jer. 31:35–37; Hos. 3:4–5; Deut. 30:1–10; Rom. 11). A common method for reinterpreting these passages is the use of allegory to disinherit Jews from their promises and ignoring or misapplying Paul's use of the words "elect" and "irrevocable" in Romans 11:28–29.

"Evidence for Jewish Believers in the Syriac Fathers," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 579.

¹⁰ Romans 11; Matthew 23:39; Acts 3:21.

¹¹ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 80. Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 30. Tertullian (*On Modesty*, 8) states, "It will be fitting for the Christian to rejoice, and not to grieve, at the restoration of Israel, if it be true, (as it is), that the whole of our hope is intimately united with the remaining expectation of Israel." Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, trans. Frederick Crombie, The Ante-Nicene Fathers 4 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 82. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Romans 11:12. Theologian Michael Vlach cites many theologians through the twelfth century who expected a reversal of God's judgment on Israel: Hilary, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria, Prosper of Aquitaine, Cassiodorus, Prentiss, Gregory the Great, Isidore, Bede, Anselm, Damian, and Bernard; Michael J Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 42–50.

¹² Tertullian and Lactantius are primary examples. These will be discussed further below.

¹³ After the European wars of religion in the sixteenth century, Christian thinkers started recovering the ancient Christian value of "tolerance," especially in Great Britain and the Americas. This idea clearly did not take root in Protestant Germany during this time.

In many eras of church history, Christians believed in T1–T3 (replacement of Jews, Jewishness as obsolete, irreversible divine rejection of Jews), which form the basis of what is now called replacement theology or supersessionism. The basic idea is that the church replaces Israel in the plan of God (or that Israel was really the church all along), so Jewish people who do not believe in Jesus are orphaned impostors who have been cut off from the covenant. This supersessionist theology has come under sustained attack by Christian theologians since the Holocaust,¹⁴ but some Christians protested the theology even before the horrors of Nazi antisemitism.¹⁵

Christian theologian Michael Vlach explains how this turn toward replacement theology developed:

Three factors contributed to the acceptance of supersessionism in the early church: (1) the increasing Gentile composition of the early church, (2) the church's perception of the destructions of Jerusalem in AD 70 and 135, and (3) a hermeneutical approach that allowed the church to appropriate Israel's promises to itself. Together these factors contributed to the belief that the church had permanently replaced Israel as God's people.¹⁶

With replacement theology on the rise within churches in these early centuries, the animosity between Gentile Christians and Jews only grew deeper. Commenting on the Jewish perspective of this development, Anglican clergyman and scholar James Parkes wrote, "To find the foundation for survival [after 70 CE], with the loss of any national centre, was not easy. The bitterness of the Jew against the Christian was based on his adoption of the promises of the Scriptures, which are all that the Jew had left for his own comfort."¹⁷

In addition to an adherence to replacement theology, something more is needed for antisemitism to truly accomplish its goal. An internal, theological opposition to Jewish people would be confined to private opinion if the Christian did not also hold to a belief that he or she is required to coerce others toward faith, which is the content of T4 and the prerequisite for T5 and T6. Both a belief in the replacement or rejection or devaluation of Jews and a belief in the morality of coercion is required in the thought-life of any Christian before antisemitism can go anywhere.¹⁸ The Christian belief in coercion did not come about until Christians gained political power in the Constantinian era (fourth century CE), so we will discuss the rise of coercion in the section on political factors below.

We believe that factors T1–T6 are key theological motivators for Christian antisemitism. However, in the same way, the denial of these factors provides a powerful antidote for antisemitic tendencies. For example,

If T1 is denied: If a Christian believes that the Jews are God's chosen people, then would persecuting Jews not be the same as opposing God himself? Why would a God-fearing Christian persecute a people that God has pledged to protect? Would that not invite God's judgment? As the famous American evangelist Billy Graham once said, "The Jews are

¹⁴ See the recommended works at the end of this article. Especially recommended are Brown, Vlach, and Horner.

¹⁵ See the recommended works at the end of this article. Pre-Holocaust authors include Parkes, Bonar, Spurgeon, and Blackstone.

¹⁶ Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, 28–29.

¹⁷ James William Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 156–57.

¹⁸ With that said, we believe that a Christian who holds to T1–T3, yet refrains from acting on his beliefs, may be innocent of wrongdoing in a human court but will be found morally deficient before the God who reads hearts and intentions before actions are ever committed.

God's chosen people. We cannot place ourselves in opposition to Israel without detriment to ourselves.”¹⁹ Billy Graham recognized the error of T1.

If T2 is denied: If a Christian believes that a Jewish person's Jewishness has inherent God-given value and dignity, both before and after believing in Yeshua, what motivation would that Christian have in de-Judaizing that person, since it would strip away that God-given value and dignity?

If T3 is denied: If a Christian denies that God permanently cut off Israel in 70 CE, then how can that Christian justify permanently cutting off Jews in his own mind? Does he know better than God?

If T4–T6 are denied: If a Christian denies the morality of coercion in religious matters, then that Christian would have to consciously sin in order to forcibly coerce Jewish people. One could choose to sin and persecute Jews, but why would he or she think that God would look kindly on that sinful decision?

None of these key ingredients make sense. If a Christian denies T1–T6, then it is hard to see how he or she could support the antisemitic coercion of Jewish people. Antisemitism would be completely out of line with the person's beliefs. However, if a Christian embraces these poorly derived theological and ethical doctrines without question, he or she may not identify antisemitism as sinful, but rather may feel that it is encouraged by his or her theology.

Once a Christian's theology has been corrupted to allow for antisemitic thoughts and the possibility of antisemitic coercion, the stage is set for the next step: determining whether the coercion should come from the church, state, or popular action. In the next section, we will investigate how the church can be turned into an institution set against the Jewish people.

Ecclesiastical Ingredients for Christian Antisemitism

Those who followed Jesus in the earliest years expressed their faith as a Jewish sect with Jewish leaders, Jewish writers, and a Jewish Messiah. Only later did Gentile Christians seek to distance themselves from Christianity's inherent Jewishness. The earliest churches looked to Jerusalem as their mother congregation, which was led by Jewish-Christian bishops until 135 CE.²⁰ They celebrated the resurrection of Jesus on the fourteenth of Nisan (Passover), calculating the date according to the Hebrew calendar, not the Roman calendar.²¹ Jewish followers of Jesus

¹⁹ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Billy Graham Voices Staunch Support for Israel, Concern for State's Security,” *Daily News Bulletin*, December 26, 1967, http://pdfs.jta.org/1967/1967-12-26_248.pdf.

²⁰ Eusebius of Caesarea (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4.5.3) lists the names of the Jerusalem bishops, most having particularly Jewish names: “Since the bishops of the circumcision ceased at this time [135 CE], it might be necessary now to list these from the first. The first, then, was James who was called the brother of the Lord; and after him was the second, Symeon; the third, Justus, the fourth, Zacchaeus; the fifth, Tobias; the sixth, Benjamin; the seventh, John; the eighth, Matthias; the ninth, Philip; the tenth, Seneca; the eleventh, Justus; the twelfth, Leir; the thirteenth, Ephres; the fourteenth, Joseph; and last of all, the fifteenth, Judas. This many were the bishops in the city of Jerusalem from the Apostles to the time indicated, all of them belonging to the circumcision.” *Ecclesiastical History, Books 1–5*, trans. Roy Joseph Deferrari, vol. 19 of *Fathers of the Church* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 211–12.

²¹ Supporters of this position were known as “Quartodecimans”: literally, “The Fourteeners” (of Nisan). When Gentile Christians became increasingly alienated from Jews and from the Hebrew calendar (in the second and third centuries), church leaders pushed to change the date to the Roman solar calendar, severing any link to Judaism. As is

interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures in ways that endorsed and supported their views of the Messiah, often using methods in line with their fellow Jewish brothers and sisters. They preserved and adapted Jewish works and promoted a Jewish flavor of following Jesus.²² They continued to have a distinctly Jewish way of interpreting biblical prophecy and the coming of the Messianic kingdom.²³

As the first century ended, these Jewish influences and Jewish communal spaces where Gentiles came to learn started to dry up. Gentile Christians, and not Jewish believers, came into places of church leadership due to sheer numbers. Jerusalem was lost as a mother church in 135 CE due to the Roman destruction of the city and the emperor's decree that no Jew be allowed to live there again.²⁴ During this period, Gentile Christians started arrogantly asserting their dominance over Jews in violation of the New Testament's teaching in Romans 11:19–25. In the second century, the rift was growing by the day, but it widened at different speeds in different places. While Western Christians were deepening their negative rhetoric against Jews, Eastern Christians were fasting and praying for Jews,²⁵ calling Jews brothers,²⁶ producing literature with pro-Jewish themes,²⁷ and enjoying the presence of Jewish-Christians in their midst.²⁸ As mentioned above, early Eastern Christians were exemplary in their handling of the Jewishness of their faith in Jesus.

Thus, there was a historical process by which the church became more and more dissociated with its Jewish background over time. Outside of theological factors, the leadership of the churches accelerated this dissociation. As with theological positions, several preconditions

common in this discussion, the churches of the East (Asia Minor and Syria) were the last to succumb to this pressure, due to the Jewish believers in their ranks and their ancient connection with the Jewish apostles' practice of celebrating Passover on the fourteenth. See Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "Quartodecimans," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino and James Hoover, trans. Joseph T. Papa, Erik A. Koenke, and Eric E. Hewett (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014); John Behr, ed., *On Pascha: With the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans Melito of Sardis* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

²² See Torleif Elgvin, "Jewish Christian Editing of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 278–304.

²³ The earliest Christians were literalists who used the *p'shat* to interpret biblical prophecy, often reaching the same conclusions as their Jewish counterparts both before and after them. This is most evident in the premillennialism that was dominant in both Western and Eastern churches until the third century, when it began a period of decline. One of the quickest ways opponents of premillennialism could embarrass adherents was by tarnishing premillennialism as too "Jewish." Adherents of this Jewish approach to Scripture included Clement of Rome (*1 Clement*, 23:4–5), *Epistle of Barnabas*, 15:3–5, Papias (in Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.33.3–4; in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39; and in Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men*, 18), Justin Martyr (*Dialogue*, 14:80–81), Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5.30.4, 5.32.1, 5.35), Tertullian (*Against Marcion*, 3.24), Hippolytus of Rome (*Antichrist*, 6), Lactantius (*Epitome*, 72; *Institutes*, 7.22, 7.24), and others.

²⁴ See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.5.

²⁵ *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 21.

²⁶ *Apostolic Constitutions*, 5.17; Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 137.

²⁷ See the Pseudo-Clementine literature, especially *Recognitions* 1:27–71 and the interpolations within the Pseudepigrapha. When considering the evidence that early Jewish Christians edited the Pseudepigrapha (originating from Jewish communities from the second century CE and before), Professor of Jewish and Biblical Studies Torleif Elgvin highlights how Jewish Christian editors may be identified: "(a) a positive view of the people of Israel, (b) an ecclesiology in which Jews are an integral and necessary part of the church (i.e., no ultimate division between the church and Israel is envisioned), (c) an eschatology with a significant role for Israel, and (d) a positive view of the Torah, which portrays Jesus as obedient to the Torah and sees Jewish Torah observance as positive both in the present and the eschaton [World to Come]." Elgvin, "Jewish Christian Editing of Pseudepigrapha," 280.

²⁸ See Skarsaune and Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers in Jesus* and Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Brill Academic, 1988).

for antisemitism must exist in church leadership before Christians can implement their antisemitic policies on an official ecclesiastical level:

#	Ecclesiastical Ingredient	Result	Periods Where Ingredient Was Absent
E1	Jesus-following congregations cease to be led by Jewish clergy.	Christian affinity for, familiarity with, and submission to Jewish authorities wanes.	The leadership of Jesus' followers was exclusively Jewish in the first century CE. The Jewish-led Jerusalem congregation was the mother congregation until 135 CE. Then power shifted to Rome and Gentiles in general.
E2	Church leadership ceases to view Jews as brothers.	An us-versus-them mentality.	Less prevalent before 135 CE.
E3	Church leadership defines the church as essentially Gentile (non-Jewish).	No home for Jews as Jews in the church.	Less prevalent before 135 CE.
E4	Church leadership agrees with and promotes replacement theology and coercion (T1–T6).	The church can coerce non-believers.	The seeds of replacement theology developed in the second century. Christian coercion was not present before the fourth century, but it was definitively promoted by Augustine in the early fifth century.
E5	Church leadership attains power and influence over non-Christians.	The church can enforce theology upon non-Christians.	Partial power was gained under Constantine (312–337 CE) and definitively established by the Edict of Thessalonica (380 CE).

Individual Christians can be antisemites with simply the theological ingredients, but Christian institutions have only become antisemitic once these ecclesiastical features are in place. All the ecclesiastical factors listed above were historical developments that can be located on a timeline. In other words, churches did not initially begin with antisemitic beliefs, attitudes, and policies; these beliefs developed over time due to a complex interplay between historical events and theological ideas.

The closer one gets to the first century CE, the more evidence may be found for Jewish voices within the congregations of Jesus' followers. When we focus on Eastern churches, the evidence is even easier to find. However, after about the sixth century, we hear very little from Jewish voices within the churches in the East or the West. Parkes commented on how much these Jewish Christians became ostracized:

There is no more tragic group in Christian history than these unhappy people [Jewish Christians]. They, who might have been the bridge between the Jewish and the Gentile world, must have suffered intensely at the developments on both sides which they were powerless to arrest. Rejected, first by the Church, in spite of their genuine belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and then by the Jews in spite of their loyalty to the Law, they ceased to be a factor of any importance in the development of either Christianity or Judaism.²⁹

Tragic indeed: the bridge-builders were cast out. In the wake of losing Jewish believers within the churches, both Eastern and Western churches eventually lost their positive attitude toward Jews in general.

The parting of ways between the church and the synagogue would have remained merely an academic dispute if one side had not gained the upper hand through political alliance. The animosity was brewing on both sides, but non-Christian Jews initially had the political

²⁹ Parkes, *Conflict of Church and Synagogue*, 92.

advantage. Jews were the first to benefit from political alliance with Rome³⁰ when Judaism was accorded the right of a “legal religion” (*religio licita*) by pagan Rome on the condition that Jews paid an annual tax, the *Fiscus Judaicus*.³¹ Within a century of the fall of Jerusalem, some Jewish leaders established prayers against Jewish Christians, illustrating their willingness to take action within their own ranks.³² However, Jews’ legal status with Rome enabled them to call for and participate in actual persecution of Christians beyond the walls of the synagogues.³³ The New Testament refers to Jewish opponents of Yeshua-belief using political means to persecute Yeshua’s followers (who were Jewish themselves).³⁴ Additionally, there are multiple second-century sources that claim that Jews used their influence to support the execution of Christians by pagan Roman authorities.³⁵ Opportunistic coercion and persecution of rival religious groups is not a Christian phenomenon or a Jewish phenomenon, but rather a fallen human phenomenon.³⁶

However, with the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity in the early fourth century, the tables turned. With the singular exception of the reign of Julian the Apostate (360–363 CE), Jewish people would never again have political advantage in the Western or Eastern Roman Empires. By declaring Christianity as a *religio licita* in the Edict of Milan (313 CE), Constantine initiated a courtship between church and state that culminated in a full marriage in the Edict of Thessalonica (380 CE), which established Nicene Christianity as the only legal religion. This firmly solidified the church leaders’ power and influence over non-Christians (E5).

³⁰ In saying this, we do not discount the many persecutions that Jews experienced at the hands of the Romans, including the attacks of 70 and 135 CE and the torture and death of Rabbi Akiva. Despite these persecutions, Judaism was a legal religion in the empire.

³¹ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 7.18. Theodore Reinach writes, “Judaism, during the entire duration of the Roman empire, remained a recognized religion (‘religio licita’).” “Diaspora,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1906), 4:564. On the *Fiscus Judaicus*, see *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael*, Tractate Bahodesh 1 and Paul Foster, “Vespasian, Nerva, Jesus, and the Fiscus Judaicus,” in *Israel’s God and Rebecca’s Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. David B. Capes et al. (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 316.

³² There is considerable debate about when the *Birkat Haminim* (the Cursing of the Heretics) prayer became a part of synagogue liturgy. It is not our intention to weigh in on that debate. However, there is evidence that some form of prayer was said against believers in Jesus from within synagogues as early as the second century CE. See Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 95–96 and Philip L Mayo, “The Role of the Birkath Haminim in Early Jewish-Christian Relations: A Reexamination of the Evidence,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16, no. 2 (2006): 325–31.

³³ “It will be thus seen that at the beginning Judaism had the whip hand of Christianity, in that it was the Jews who decided what a Jew was, and who had the right to be admitted to the privileges they enjoyed. By the simple act of excommunication, they could expel a Christian from these privileges and report against him as an atheist. Moreover, so long as the Christians chose to remain—officially, at least—a Jewish sect, they were subject to the discipline of the synagogue.” Parkes, *Conflict of Church and Synagogue*, 64.

³⁴ Some examples include John 16:2 (Jews could not legally execute people, so they worked through Rome) and Acts 13:50, 18:13–17, and 21–22.

³⁵ Justin Martyr stated that Jews of his era sought the death of Christians when it was in their power (*Dialogue*, 95–96, cf. 110, 131, 133). Jews assisted in the burning of Polycarp “as [was] their custom” in *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 13.1 (cf. 17.2–3). Tertullian said that Jews joined with pagans to call for the death of Christians and that synagogues were “fountains of persecution” (*Scorpiace*, 10). Eusebius cited an anonymous second-century writer who claimed that one mark of true Christianity was being persecuted by Jews and slain by lawless men (*Ecclesiastical History*, 5.16.12).

³⁶ As the creator and sustainer of every living thing, God has the right to employ his human servants to accomplish his will, even through violence. Sometimes following God in this sense is a righteous course of action (Deut. 7:2, 20:17; Josh. 6:17), and sometimes it is sinful because it is done without the conscious motive of following God (Isa. 10:5–7). These biblical cases of violence, however, are commanded by explicit divine revelation. The opportunistic coercion and persecutions in post-New Testament history were not commanded or sanctioned by God through divine revelation.

Even so, Jewish people were given an exception to the rule: they were “grandfathered in,” in a way that pagans were never allowed. Saint Augustine was decisive in securing this exception for Jewish people, as we will discuss below.

As one can imagine, this marriage of church and state proved to be a blow to the Jewish people. Although the church’s leadership initially approved only the coercion of schismatic Christians (such as the Donatists and the Arians)³⁷ to change their beliefs, the church became greedy in its power. Soon it began approving the coercion and persecution of Jews, leading to centuries of church leadership agreeing with and promoting replacement theology and coercion (E4) as the dominant ecclesiastical posture toward Jews. Nevertheless, it was not always this way.

Political Ingredients for Christian Antisemitism

Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.
- Lord Acton³⁸

We have already mentioned some of the political currents that enabled Christians to persecute Jews beginning in the fourth century. Now, we will break down some of the preconditions that must take place within a political ideology before Christian antisemitism can become a legal policy of the state and society.

#	Political Ingredient	Result	Periods Where Ingredient Was Absent
P1	Christians may influence government policy from the outside.	Christians have an audience with the state.	Before 313 CE (the Edict of Milan), Christianity was an illegal religion with no influence for Christian interests. Christian influence was largely absent under Muslim rule (from the seventh century onward).
P2	Christians may influence government from the inside as legislators.	Christians are employees of the state.	Before 313 CE (the Edict of Milan), Christians were barred from legislative service. Christian political leadership was largely absent under Muslim rule.
P3	Government is dominated by a majority of Christian politicians.	Christians are the <i>de facto</i> rulers of the state.	Absent before 313 CE. Absent in Muslim, Asian, and African governments. Increasingly absent in contemporary Europe.
P4	Government only allows Christianity as the legal religion.	Church and state have become Christendom.	Absent everywhere before 302 CE. ³⁹ Absent before 380 CE in the Roman Empire. Absent in Muslim, Asian, and African governments.

³⁷ These are two of the most commonly known heretical groups at that time. The sixth-century Code of Justinian gives a more complete list of the heretical groups that Theodosius legislated against with his Edict of Thessalonica: “Arians, Macedonians, Pneumatomachi, Apollinarians, Novatians, Sabbatians, Eunomians, Tetradites or Tessaescaedecatites, Valentinians, Papianists, Montanists, Priscillianists, Phrygians, Pepuzites, Marcianists, Borborians, Messalians, Eutychites, Enthusiasts, Donatists, Audians, Hydroparastates, Batrachites, Tascodrogites, Hermeieciens, Photinians, Paulians, Marcillians, Ophites, Encratites, Apotactites, Saccophorians, and the perfectly appalling Manichees.” *Codex Justinianus*, 1, 5, 5, as quoted in Parkes, *Conflict of Church and Synagogue*, 194.

³⁸ John Acton, “Acton-Creighton Correspondence, Letter I,” April 5, 1887, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/acton-acton-creighton-correspondence>.

³⁹ Armenian King Tiridates III converted to Christianity, proclaimed it the religion of his kingdom, and baptized more than 4 million of his citizens. Mark Cartwright, “The Early Christianization of Armenia,” *World History Encyclopedia*, March 22, 2018, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/801/the-early-christianization-of-armenia/>.

P5	Government enforces a variant of Christianity that agrees with T1–T6.	Christendom becomes an antisemitic oppressor.	Absent before 380 CE. Absent in some American colonies and the USA (from the seventeenth century to the present). Absent in Muslim, Asian, and African governments.
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As we come to a discussion about political factors, our journey to understanding the recipe of Christian antisemitism draws nearer to completion. The purposes of civil law include restraining society’s baser impulses and protecting its citizens. An indicator of a society’s ethics and values may be found in a society’s laws. What is allowed? What is prohibited? Who is protected? Who is not? These are all questions of ethics, and they are codified into law by those who legislate for the government.

The Roman Empire was a pagan, idolatrous, polytheistic society that demanded absolute devotion to the state, except for the providential exception (*religio licita*) given to the Jewish people by Julius Caesar from 47 BCE onward.⁴⁰ When Jewish followers of Yeshua started preaching about his life and teachings, they looked and sounded just like regular Jews to the pagan Romans. However, non-Messianic Jews soon started to assert their distinction from Yeshua-belief, and the Romans stopped giving Yeshua’s followers the exception granted by Caesar. From the time of Emperor Nero (60s CE) until 313 CE, Christians were enemies of the Roman state. They could not exert influence on governmental policies (P1). As illegal enemies of the state, Christians could not serve as employees of the state (P2). The feeling was mutual: a third-century church manual states that a potential Christian convert “who is a civil magistrate wearing the purple, should desist [from his governmental service], or he should be rejected.”⁴¹ Although it may be hard to imagine today, there was a time when Christians did not allow themselves to enter into politics.

From the first through the third centuries, Christians were an oppressed minority with no legal rights or protection under the law. Many Romans believed appalling hearsay and conspiracy theories about Christians that sound curiously similar to Christian blood libels against Jews a thousand years later.⁴² Christians’ ability to live openly as members of their faith waxed and waned with the shifting attitudes of whichever Roman emperor was in charge. Emperor Nero (60s CE) was brutal to the Christians, setting them ablaze as human torches in his gardens.⁴³

⁴⁰ See the decree of Caesar in Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.199. See also Herman Rosenthal, “Caius Julius Caesar,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 3:483–85.

⁴¹ Hippolytus of Rome, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, ed. John Behr, trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes, Popular Patristics Series 22 (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 100.

⁴² See Eberhard Arnold, *The Early Christians: In Their Own Words*, rev. ed. (Farmington: Plough Publishing House, 1998), 72–73. Arnold quotes from Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 8.4, 9.1–6, and 10.2, in which a pagan opponent of Christianity, Caecilius Natalis, gives the following corrupted description of Christian practices and beliefs, of which he seems to have no real acquaintance: “They form a rabble of profane conspiracy. Their alliance consists in meetings at night with solemn rituals and inhuman revelries. They replace holy rites with inexpiable crimes. . . . Just like a rank growth of weeds, the abominable haunts where this impious confederacy meet are multiplying all over the world, due to the daily increase of immorality. Root and branch, it should at all costs be exterminated and accursed. They recognize each other by secret signs and symbols. They love one another before being acquainted, so to speak. Everywhere they practice a kind of religious cult of lust, calling one another ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ indiscriminately. . . . To venerate an executed criminal and the gallows, the wooden cross on which he was executed, is to erect altars which befit lost and depraved wretches. The blood of the infant—oh, how abominable—they lap up greedily, they distribute its limbs with passionate eagerness. Their feastings are notorious.... Why do they not speak in public? Why do they never meet in the open? Is it not simply because what they worship and conceal is criminal and shameful?”

⁴³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44.

Domitian exiled the apostle John (90s CE), a Jewish follower of Jesus. Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE) was relatively friendly to Christians. Marcus Aurelius cracked down with persecutions (161–180 CE). Philip the Arab was friendly (244–249 CE). Emperor Decius issued an edict in 250 CE that compelled Christians to participate in pagan sacrifices, leading to great persecution and many martyrs. Some of the worst State-sponsored oppression of Christians from this period came during the “Great Persecution” of Diocletian (303–313 CE). Thus, from the 60s until 313 CE, the number of Christians throughout the Roman Empire continued to grow, but they were at the mercy of the state at all times.

Everything changed when Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan (313 CE),⁴⁴ which gave Christianity the *religio licita* status that Judaism had long enjoyed. Soon after the edict, Constantine started associating himself with Christianity in increasing measure. He built church buildings, donated money to churches, exempted Christian clergy from taxes, and returned property that had been confiscated during Diocletian’s persecution of Christians.⁴⁵ Instantaneously, Christians were allowed to practice their faith without persecution. In addition, they celebrated that the highest power in the land, the Roman emperor himself, had begun supporting, rather than opposing, their faith. Eusebius of Caesarea, a contemporary of these events, could hardly contain his overflowing and hyperbolic praise of Constantine, the man he considered to be chosen by God to overturn evil.⁴⁶

The political victories of the Christians in the fourth century ended up being a turning point for all that followed. Jews and Christians were in a battle for hearts and minds before the fourth century, with Jewish people having more ability to apply coercive pressure on Christians than vice versa. But that fact was lost to history after the political ascendancy of Christians after 313 CE.

Religious coercion was a development within Christian thought that was not present in earlier centuries. In order to understand how off-limits the idea of religious coercion should be for believers in Yeshua, let us now turn to the historical progression of Christian positions on coercion.

The Justification for Religious Coercion: A Deadly Innovation

As we have argued above, Christian antisemitism cannot go anywhere without a preconceived belief in the rightness of religious coercion. Antisemitism may make a lot of sense to a crusader with a sword in his hand on a mission to kill the infidels. But what if one is from the Amish community?

The Amish are a group of Protestant Christians who live in closed communities that consist of only pre-modern dress and technology. The Amish do not serve in the military for the

⁴⁴ The following is a representative quote from the edict, as found in Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, 10.5.2): “Authority is to be refused no one at all to follow and to choose the observance or the form of worship of the Christians, and that authority be given to each one to devote his mind to that form of worship which he himself considers to be adapted to himself, in order that the Deity may be able in all things to provide for us His accustomed care and goodness.” *Ecclesiastical History, Books 6–10*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, Fathers of the Church 29 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 269.

⁴⁵ See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 10.5–7.

⁴⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea, “The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine,” in *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Ernest Cushing Richardson, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd ser., vol. 1 (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890), 481.

same reason that they disavow religious coercion: they are doctrinally pacifists in both the religious and political spheres. A Jewish person should have nothing to fear from this kind of Christian.

The belief that religious coercion is virtuous was never a part of the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. Neither was it taught by the earliest Gentile Christian writers. The belief in the virtue of religious coercion only came about in the fourth century when Christians achieved political power and misused it. As Christian author Os Guinness writes, “Christians have at times talked of the Prince of Peace but flagrantly betrayed him with their dark record of state-sponsored coercion and violence from Constantine to the eighteenth century.”⁴⁷ Thankfully, most modern, post-Holocaust Christians reject religious coercion, as noted by Rabbi Dr. David Berger of Yeshiva University:

Christians in the modern world, including those with exclusivist views of salvation, definitively reject coercive methods, whether physical or economic, to enforce conformity to Christian belief and practice, and they do this not only because such methods would be ineffective but because they abhor them in principle.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, this abhorrence of coercion was absent for many centuries in Christendom. In the next section, we explain why.

The New Testament Teaching: Peter, Sheathe Your Sword

A Muslim man once wrote to Philip Yancey, an evangelical Christian author, saying, “I find no guidance in the Qur’an on how Muslims should live as a minority in a society and no guidance in the New Testament on how Christians should live as a majority.”⁴⁹ This is a profound observation. Whereas Islam presumes a situation in which religion and state are united as one (and nonbelievers are coerced, expelled, or killed),⁵⁰ the New Testament was written in a minority context in which Yeshua’s followers were persecuted, spread out, and devoid of political power. There is no guidance in the New Testament on how to use political power against unbelievers because no such power existed for Yeshua’s followers at the time. Neither were they encouraged to seek such power.

⁴⁷ Os Guinness, *The Case for Civility: And Why Our Future Depends on It* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 20.

⁴⁸ David Berger, *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue: Essays in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 376.

⁴⁹ Philip Yancey, “The Lure of Theocracy,” *Christianity Today*, July 1, 2006, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/july/24.64.html>.

⁵⁰ “You who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are close to you, and let them find sternness in you, and know that God is with the ones who guard (themselves).” (Quran 9:123). “You who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are allies of each other. Whoever of you takes them as allies is already one of them.” (Quran 5:51). “Fight those who do not believe in God or the Last Day . . . until they pay tribute out of hand, and they are disgraced.” (Quran 9:29). “Muḥammad is the messenger of God. Those who are with him are harsh against the disbelievers, (but) compassionate among themselves.” (Quran 48:29). “I shall cast dread into the hearts of those who disbelieve. So strike above (their) necks, and strike (off) all their fingers! That was because they broke with God and His messenger, and whoever breaks with God and His messenger—surely God is harsh in retribution. ‘That is for you! So taste it! And (know) that the punishment of the Fire is for the disbelievers.’” (Quran 8:12–14). Translations from Gordon D. Nickel, ed., *The Quran with Christian Commentary: A Guide to Understanding the Scripture of Islam*, trans. A.J. Droge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020).

While the New Testament encourages spreading the good news to the world through proclamation, healings, and miracles, it also contains repeated calls against violence and religious coercion. Here are some examples:

- In Jesus's ethics, as given in the Sermon on the Mount, believers must avoid all hatred, insults, and indulgent anger against others (Matt. 5:21–22).
- Jesus commanded that his followers refrain from defending his honor with force. When the Temple guards arrested Jesus, his disciple Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the guards. Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:52–53). Jesus not only commanded Peter against using force to protect Jesus but indicated that he was choosing to refrain from using force himself. Peter was to follow in the example of his master.
- When a Samaritan village rejected Jesus' message, some of his disciples asked, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Lk. 9:54–55). He turned and rebuked their desire for violent vengeance.
- In the Parable of the Weeds (Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43), Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a field in which Jesus has sown good seeds and the devil has sown weeds. The good seeds represent Jesus' followers, and the weeds represent nonbelievers. In the parable, the workers ask Jesus whether they should pull out the weeds and burn them up, but he commands them to let the weeds remain. Jesus said that only God, through his angels, has authority to separate the weeds from the good seeds; no human being may do so. The point of the parable is this: when believers in Jesus live among nonbelievers, no one has the authority to condemn the nonbelievers but God; they must be left alone.
- In Romans 12, Paul gave numerous exhortations to refrain from retaliation: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them . . . Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all . . . live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord" [Deut. 32:35] . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:14–21).
- In matters of religious opinion, specifically about the practice of eating certain foods and observing certain days, Paul exhorted believers to agree to disagree and to be fully convinced in their own minds (Rom. 14:1–6).
- The book of Revelation is similar to other apocalyptic literature of the time period. It includes many violent scenes, but the restraint which it shows is also striking. The only ones who commit violence in Revelation are (1) nonbelievers persecuting believers or (2) God violently judging nonbelievers in the last days in ways that are reminiscent of the plagues upon Egypt during Passover. Missing from the book is any exhortation or example for Yeshua's followers to commit any violence themselves; they simply do not have the moral authority to do so. Matthew Streett calls this "violent pacifism," where God is authorized to be violent at the end of the age, but believers are not.⁵¹

⁵¹ Matthew J. Streett, *Here Comes the Judge: Violent Pacifism in the Book of Revelation*, Library of New Testament Studies (New York: T&T Clark, 2012).

Nothing in the New Testament advocates violence or coercion against unbelievers in order to force them to believe. There are only a few passages that could be twisted to teach such notions:

- Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34). Luke 12:51 records a similar statement, where the word “division” is used instead of “sword.” In reading the surrounding context of these passages, it becomes clear that Jesus is describing what will happen within Jewish families, rather than prescribing violence within those families. Because Jesus’ message will be accepted by some Jewish people and rejected by others, “a person’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Matt. 10:35). This is merely stating the divisive effect that Jesus’ message will have on the Jewish world, not advocating that Jesus’ followers should attack those who disagree with them. If Christians’ family members become adversarial because of their faith in the Messiah, Jesus taught these Christians how to respond: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).
- A few of Jesus’ parables conclude with the deaths of the enemies mentioned in the parables (Matt. 22:7; Lk. 19:27, 20:16). However, in each case, the violence either refers to the destruction of 70 CE or at the end of the age, and the violence is performed at the direct command of God. It is beyond the bounds of the parables to claim justification for violence against people at any other time. The command to love one’s enemies remains the prevailing ethic.
- Some church fathers appealed to Jesus’ parable in Luke 14:23, where he told his disciples to “Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.” In their minds, this was Jesus advocating coercion and forced conversions in order to increase the kingdom of God. But this is an unnecessary interpretation in the Greek, especially since coercion against the will is not advocated elsewhere in the New Testament. The Greek word for “compel” (ἀνάγκασον, *anagkason*) is also used to mean “strongly urge or invite” in the Gospels (Matt. 14:22; Mk. 6:45).⁵² In this usage, it does not require forcing another, but rather an eager invitation. This is what believers in Jesus are supposed to do while speaking to others about him—to eagerly invite, not coerce.
- Romans 13 gives approval to government leaders to enforce laws, institute judgments, receive taxes, and bear the sword. However, when Paul wrote this, the government he spoke of was led by pagan Romans. There is no direct guidance within the New Testament on how to serve in political roles once Christians control a government. In order to find that guidance, fourth-century Christians came up with an analogy in which a Christian state may be modeled off the theocratic state outlined by Moses in the Torah—with all of its purges, exiles, executions, and coercive judgments against idolaters, which was given by divine revelation for those times and circumstances. This was an inference, rather than the teaching of Jesus and his apostles.
- Nevertheless, Romans 13 does provide ample ethical support for Christians to enforce righteous laws through legitimate political structures and defend against unjust attacks with the power of the sword. The Just War Theory developed by Christian theologians and ethicists throughout the post-Constantinian era is legitimate, but its correct

⁵² Walter Bauer et al., eds., “Ἀναγκάζω,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 60.

application has nothing to do with the act of religious coercion of Jews or anyone else. Romans 13 must not be used to justify religious coercion.

Thus, when one approaches the New Testament on its own terms, one finds consistent exhortations against personal violence and religious coercion. Whenever one of Jesus' disciples attempted to act with violence, he rebuked them. When violence is sanctioned in the New Testament, it is performed by the hand of God himself (Acts 5, Revelation) or by his appointed judicial leaders for good ends (Romans 13).

Pre-Constantinian Christians Who Advocated Religious Liberty and Non-Coercion

The New Testament teaches unanimously that Yeshua's followers should not coerce others, act in personal violence, or even harbor anger against others. In light of this, it would make sense that Jesus' earliest followers would advocate religious liberty and disavow religious coercion. Due to their lack of political power, how could they argue for anything else? The church fathers of the second and third centuries often spoke of the general command to love all people,⁵³ in which Jews would be included, and early Christians explicitly denied religious coercion.

The earliest example of a Christian practicing noncoercive evangelism with a Jewish person (outside the New Testament) is in the famous *Dialogue with Trypho* by Justin Martyr. Dated soon after 135 CE, it consists of Justin attempting to convince a Jewish man, Trypho, that Jesus is the Messiah. Scholars debate whether the conversation ever took place, but many of Trypho's positions sound authentically Jewish. In any case, how does the debate end? With Trypho converting to Christianity? No. With Justin heaping insults upon Trypho for his unbelief? No. With Justin fetching the holy water to baptize Trypho by force? No. Instead, Justin sails off into the sunset, waving at Trypho from the ship, and praying for Trypho's salvation, with Trypho calling Justin his friend in return.⁵⁴ What a friendly and heartfelt ending! If only all future dialogues between Christians and Jews could have been so cordial.

Some second- and third-century Christians rejected coercion in religion on the theological grounds that God, likewise, coerces no one.⁵⁵ If God refuses to coerce people into believing in him against their wills, then it is sinful for human beings to coerce one another. Usually, the Christian call for religious liberty came under the shadow of religious persecutions by pagan Romans. The Roman emperor would command Christians throughout the empire to sacrifice to Caesar as to a god, and Christian communities were forced to decide between self-preservation, resulting in betraying Jesus, or fidelity to Jesus, resulting in martyrdom.

The North African Christian writer Tertullian (155–240 CE) was one of the strongest voices in support of religious liberty in the pre-Constantinian era, but there were many others like him. Around 211 CE, Tertullian pleaded with the proconsul of Africa to cease persecuting Christians. Why? Because, he argued,

⁵³ For example, 2 *Clement*, 13:4; *Epistle to Diognetus*, 6.6; *Polycarp to the Philippians*, 3.3; Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 96; *Apostolic Constitutions*, 1.2.

⁵⁴ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 142.

⁵⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.37.1, 4.37.3, 4.39.3, 5.1.1; Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Dives Salvetur*, 10.2, 21.2. The premise of this argument is debatable, in light of biblical examples like the Damascus Road experience of Paul in Acts 9 and God directing the Assyrians in Isaiah 10:5–7.

It is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions: one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion—to which free-will and not force should lead us. . . . You will render no real service to your gods by compelling us to sacrifice.⁵⁶

This is a remarkable statement in favor of religious liberty—so remarkable, that if one removes the remarks about polytheism and sacrifices, it could be mistaken as a statement from John Locke or Thomas Jefferson. Indeed, from the time of Constantine and onward, such advocacy for religious freedom would be mostly absent in Christian thought until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But in the pre-Constantinian third century, there was strong Christian advocacy for religious liberty. Tertullian also wrote in favor of not coercing pagan persecutors:

Let one man worship God, another Jupiter; let one lift suppliant hands to the heavens, another to the altar of Fides; let one—if you choose to take this view of it—count in prayer the clouds, and another the ceiling panels; let one consecrate his own life to his God, and another that of a goat. For see that you do not give a further ground for the charge of irreligion, by taking away religious liberty, and forbidding free choice of deity, so that I may no longer worship according to my inclination, but am compelled to worship against it.⁵⁷

Other variations of the same theme may be found elsewhere in Tertullian's works, including the denial that Christians may "plot the vengeance at our own hands, which we expect to come from God."⁵⁸

Clement of Alexandria (150–215 CE) also preached against the use of violence and coercion, on the grounds that a person's goodness may only come about through his free choice:

Above all, Christians are not allowed to correct with violence the delinquencies of sins. . . . It is impossible for a man to be steadily good except by his own choice. For he that is made good by compulsion of another is not good; for he is not what he is by his own choice. For it is the freedom of each one that makes true goodness and reveals real wickedness.⁵⁹

Moreover, Cyprian (200–258 CE) preached, "The Christian has departed from rage and carnal contention as if from the hurricanes of the sea. He has already begun to be tranquil and meek in the harbor of Christ. Therefore, he should allow neither anger nor discord within his breath. For

⁵⁶ Tertullian, *To Scapula*, 2, in Tertullian, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, The Ante-Nicene Fathers 3 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 105.

⁵⁷ Tertullian, *Apology*, 24, in Tertullian, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 39.

⁵⁸ Tertullian, *To Scapula*, 2, in Tertullian, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 106. See also Tertullian, *Apology*, 28: "But as it was easily seen to be unjust to compel freemen against their will to offer sacrifice (for even in other acts of religious service a willing mind is required), it should be counted quite absurd for one man to compel another to do honor to the gods, when he ought ever voluntarily, and in the sense of his own need, to seek their favor, lest in the liberty which is his right he should be ready to say, 'I want none of Jupiter's favors; pray who art thou? Let Janus meet me with angry looks, with whichever of his faces he likes; what have you to do with me?' You have been led, no doubt, by these same evil spirits to compel us to offer sacrifice for the well-being of the emperor; and you are under a necessity of using force, just as we are under an obligation to face the dangers of it." *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 41.

⁵⁹ Clement of Alexandria, "Fragments of Clemens Alexandrinus," in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria*, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. William Wilson, The Ante-Nicene Fathers 2 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 581.

he must neither return evil for evil, nor bear hatred.”⁶⁰ And in the mid-third century, Commodianus wrote, “Do not willingly use force and do not return force when it is used against you.”⁶¹ Around the same time, Origen (185–253 CE) wrote:

we believe that “revilers will not inherit the kingdom of God.” And we read, “Bless them that curse you; bless, and curse not;” also, “Being reviled, we bless.” And even although the abuse which we pour upon another may seem to have some excuse in the wrong which we have received from him, yet such abuse is not allowed by the word of God. And how much more ought we to abstain from reviling others, when we consider what a great folly it is!⁶²

Finally, Lactantius (260–330 CE) wrote during the overwhelming persecution of the Emperor Diocletian, and his style of approaching his persecutors was nothing short of remarkable. Lactantius gave a stirring argument against religious coercion:

For religion is to be defended, not by putting to death, but by dying; not by cruelty, but by patient endurance; not by guilt, but by good faith: for the former belong to evils, but the latter to goods; and it is necessary for that which is good to have place in religion, and not that which is evil. For if you wish to defend religion by bloodshed, and by tortures, and by guilt, it will no longer be defended, but will be polluted and profaned. For nothing is so much a matter of free-will as religion; in which, if the mind of the worshipper is disinclined to it, religion is at once taken away, and ceases to exist. The right method therefore is, that you defend religion by patient endurance or by death; in which the preservation of the faith is both pleasing to God Himself, and adds authority to religion.

But we, on the contrary, do not require that any one should be compelled, whether he is willing or unwilling, to worship our God, who is the God of all men; nor are we angry if any one does not worship Him. For we trust in the majesty of Him who has power to avenge contempt shown towards Himself, as also He has power to avenge the calamities and injuries inflicted on His servants. And therefore, when we suffer such impious things, we do not resist even in word; but we remit vengeance to God, not as they act who would have it appear that they are defenders of their gods, and rage without restraint against those who do not worship them.⁶³

How different Jewish–Christian relations would have been if Lactantius’ heart had been the heart of all Christians at all times!

In light of all of these early Christian quotations concerning the use of force, it should be no surprise that the earliest Christian communities were pacifist in nature.⁶⁴ This position was an outworking of the teachings of the New Testament, combined with the practical reality that Christians had no political power and their oppressors outnumbered them.⁶⁵ In the face of overwhelming persecution, pre-Constantinian Christians could choose (1) religious surrender (by

⁶⁰ Cyprian, *On the Advantage of Patience*, 16, quoted in David W. Bercot, ed., “Nonresistance,” in *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs: A Reference Guide to More Than 700 Topics Discussed by the Early Church Fathers* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 475.

⁶¹ Commodianus, *Instructions*, 48, quoted in Bercot, “Nonresistance,” 475.

⁶² Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 8.41, in “Origen against Celsus,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Frederick Crombie, The Ante-Nicene Fathers 4 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 654.

⁶³ Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, 5.20–21.

⁶⁴ J. Mitchell Jr., “Pacifism,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 879.

⁶⁵ Once followers of Jesus rise to political power, it is legitimate to wield the force of law and conduct just war for the preservation of good. However, this must be done through official legal and political channels and not for the purpose of religious coercion.

making pagan sacrifices and renouncing Jesus), (2) violent insurrection, or (3) nonviolent resistance. While some chose religious surrender, we have no reports of Christians choosing violent insurrection. Instead, historical records show an overwhelming number of voices saying that Christians chose nonviolent resistance, often becoming martyrs for their faith.

However, the persecutions by the state were lifted at the same time that Christians gained the allegiance of the most powerful man in the world—the Roman emperor. In a matter of years, Christians went from enemies of the state to leaders of it. As an emperor, Constantine only knew how to legislate and conquer his enemies, and he brought that attitude to his Christianity. With the rise of Constantine, Christians tasted political power for the first time. Unfortunately, with the opening of the Constantinian era, the voices of everyone we have considered in this section faded into the background.

Constantine, Augustine, and the Pro-Coercion Consensus

Let the kings of the earth serve Christ by making laws for Him and for His cause.

- Saint Augustine, 408 CE⁶⁶

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

- The United States Bill of Rights, 1789

Few statements of political theory could be as far apart as those of Saint Augustine and the United States Bill of Rights. Both statements were revolutionary in their time, and both statements signaled a change of eras. Augustine represented a shift from non-coercion to coercion, and the Bill of Rights represented a shift back to non-coercion. The time between these declarations—more than 1,300 years—consisted of dark years where Christians used coercive tactics motivated by supersessionism. The Bill of Rights came about through the Protestant recovery of religious liberty, but unfortunately, 1789 did not mark the end of support for religious coercion in the Roman Catholic Church. Augustine's advice concerning coercion continued to influence Catholicism until the Second Vatican Council of 1965.⁶⁷

Augustine of Hippo's (354–430 CE) mastery of theology, philosophy, exegesis, and argument made him the prince of the Western church fathers, the definitive source for answering questions for more than a millennium. Many areas of Christian thought may be segmented into pre-Augustinian and post-Augustinian eras because he was so influential in changing the terms of these debates. Many of his stances continue to be taught by Christians worldwide, yet his influence and outspoken opinions also provide fodder for his many critics.

We may applaud Augustine for many of his positions. The man was an eloquent, prolific genius who loved Jesus and defended the truth of the gospel. His autobiographical work *Confessions* has stood the test of time as a classic of the spiritual genre. But on the issue of religious coercion and the Jewish people, Augustine deserves full repudiation. He has earned his sometimes-mentioned title, “The Father of the Inquisition.”

⁶⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *Letter* 93.5.19, in “Letters of St. Augustine,” in *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*, ed. Philip Schaff, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 1 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 389.

⁶⁷ Thomas Pink, “Conscience and Coercion,” ed. R.R. Reno. Editor, *First Things*, no. 225 (August 2012): 47, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2012/08/conscience-and-coercion>.

Initially, Augustine did not believe in the morality of religious coercion. Augustine shared his reasons for his change of opinion in Letter 93, written to a recipient who opposed religious coercion, as pre-Constantinian Christians did. He wrote,

For originally my opinion was, that no one should be coerced into the unity of Christ, that we must act only by words, fight only by arguments, and prevail by force of reason, lest we should have those whom we knew as avowed heretics feigning themselves to be Catholics. But this opinion of mine was overcome not by the words of those who controverted it, but by the conclusive instances to which they could point.⁶⁸

What changed his mind? In Letter 93, Augustine explained his reasoning: a century prior, Constantine used his political power to quash heretics, and it worked, so Augustine concluded that Christians should encourage more coercion for the unity of the Catholic Church. He pointed to Constantine's battle with a group of Christians called the Donatists. This group refused to readmit Christians to the church if they sacrificed to Caesar during the Diocletianic persecutions at the turn of the fourth century. Constantine and the majority of Christian bishops opposed the ungracious stance of the Donatists, but the Donatists would not back down. In response, Constantine issued imperial edicts to force the Donatists to renounce their position or have their property and possessions confiscated. This was the first-ever use of religious coercion by a Western Christian politician.⁶⁹

Writing nearly a century later, Augustine looked back on the effects of Constantine's edict, remarking on the success of state-sponsored coercion. He wrote with happiness how the Donatists had faded away. His own hometown in North Africa had once been a Donatist stronghold, but due to the emperor outlawing the sect, his hometown became a bastion of Catholicism that rejected Donatism. With this evidence before his eyes, Augustine searched for ways to justify his approval of what Constantine did, thereby becoming a theological pragmatist. He recognized that he was advocating for persecutions and coercions that the pagan Roman state had previously used against Christians. How could he escape the charge of being a hypocrite for advocating the same persecutory actions that Christians previously called sin?

Augustine attempted to justify his hypocrisy by claiming that coercion is not wrong in-and-of-itself—what matters is the intention behind the coercion. In this case, Augustine essentially taught that “the ends justify the means”: the same coercive action taken by pagans and Christians can be sinful for the former, and righteous for the latter. Why? Because the Christian coerces others for the others' benefit, disciplining them like a mother. Since the Catholic Church is the “Mother of all Christians,” whatever she does is good. Augustine wrote,

Whatever therefore the true and rightful Mother does, even when something severe and bitter is felt by her children at her hands, she is not rendering evil for evil, but is applying the benefit of discipline to counteract the evil of sin, not with the hatred which seeks to harm, but with the love which seeks to heal.⁷⁰

The Mother Church punishes heretics so they learn their lesson; she loves them as she persecutes them. Her loving embrace sometimes justifiably suffocates. Thus, Augustine concluded that the Christian emperor should do everything possible, including using severe force, to save people from their own errors. Eventually, the heretics would come around, just like the Donatists, and

⁶⁸ Augustine of Hippo, Letter 93.5.17, in “Letters of St. Augustine,” 388.

⁶⁹ When the kingdom of Armenia adopted Christianity in 302 CE, several million Armenians were baptized, but it is unknown to what extent these baptisms were forced.

⁷⁰ Augustine of Hippo, Letter 93.2.6., in “Letters of St. Augustine,” 384.

everyone would thank the emperor for his coercion, just as a son later comes to appreciate the discipline of his mother.

Besides Augustine's disagreement with everything written above about the New Testament and the church fathers' advocacy of noncoercion, we notice at least two fatal flaws in Augustine's argument for religious coercion:

First, Augustine wrongly assumed at least two things: (1) the Catholic Church will always know what is good, and (2) the Catholic Church will always be benevolent toward heretics and outsiders. This belief in the infallibility of the Catholic Church ignores how any institution made up of sinful human beings will be prone to wrongful decisions and corrupt motives. Did the Donatists not also believe that they were doing good and acting benevolently? Do not most people, even the most evil, think they are doing good when they harm others? What if church leaders decide to define ghettos or concentration camps as good, since isolation and hard work may produce conversions? Augustine's position inevitably leads to a corrupt and power-hungry Catholic Church that accepts no dissent because whatever it says is true and whatever violence it decrees is good. "The ends justify the means" is a recipe for tyranny by the person with the most power to define which ends are good, and Augustine crowned the Catholic Church with this authority.

Second, Augustine's argument is fatally flawed because it only works in retrospect, not in the moment, and Jewish people can provide counterevidence to the whole theory. His argument may be classified as a form of ethical consequentialism, which states that the ethics of an action may only be judged by its consequences.⁷¹ Augustine appealed to Constantine's persecution of heretics ninety years prior and gave it a seal of approval, believing it to have worked for Constantine's "good" ends.

However, while Augustine may have found reason to justify coercion in retrospect when it came to the Donatists, he was forced to modify his ethical theory when it came to Jewish people. Unlike with the Donatists, Augustine could not point to Jews ceasing to exist through the force of an imperial edict! Although anti-Jewish persecution in the fourth century was mostly restrained, there were instances of anti-Jewish violence, such as Saint Ambrose pressuring Emperor Theodosius to allow the burning of synagogues.⁷² So, there were examples of Christians coercing and persecuting Jews at Augustine's fingertips, but the examples did not provide Augustine with any evidence of a positive outcome. Jews were not flocking to churches, despite the pressure applied by the state. This should have given him pause.

Instead, Augustine adopted the pro-coercion policy given above for Gentile heretics only and a completely different pro-coercion policy for Jews. Infamously, on the spurious basis of Psalm 59:11, Augustine taught that the exile of the Jewish people should be seen as a good thing to prove Christianity and preserve an external witness to the Law. He wrote,

Although they were conquered and oppressed by the Romans, God did not 'slay' them, that is, He did not destroy them as Jews. For, in that case, they would have forgotten and would have been useless as witnesses to what I am speaking of. Consequently, the first part of the prophecy, 'Slay them not lest they forget thy law,' is of small import without the rest, 'Scatter them.' For, if the Jews had remained bottled up in their own land with the evidence of their Scriptures and if they were not to be found everywhere, as the

⁷¹ Garrett J. DeWeese and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult: A Beginner's Guide to Life's Big Questions*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021), 92–95.

⁷² See Ambrose, Letter 40.

Church is, the Church would not then have them as ubiquitous witnesses of the ancient prophecies concerning Christ.⁷³

Thus, the Jewish people's subjugation and persecution should be forcibly maintained in all her exiled regions, but they should not be killed or forcibly converted, because otherwise, Christianity would lose Jews as adverse witnesses. With this infamous teaching, Augustine protected Jewish lives and their freedom to practice Judaism on the one hand, but debased them with a utilitarian purpose as permanent, persecuted wanderers on the other. Many Christian kings agreed to enforce the Jewish people's subjugated status, as those who have studied Jewish-Christian relations know too well. Thus, Augustine proved himself to be both subjugator and protector of the Jewish people. Jews were not to be treated like pagans or heretics, but as their own protected class. Parkes commented,

The heretic was forbidden to hold meetings or to possess property. The Jew enjoyed the right to both. The heretic was frequently exiled. He was forbidden to make a will or to receive a legacy. These were penalties which could only affect the apostate to Judaism. The heretic could be put to death for being a heretic. The Jew could only be executed for some crime in relation to the non-Jewish community. The books of the heretics were burnt. The Torah of the Jew was a sacred book to the Church. In a word, the heretic could be forbidden to exist. The Jew could not.⁷⁴

Writing these words in 1934, Parkes could not have possibly realized how ironic his final line would prove within a matter of years.

Contrary to Augustine's "the end justifies the means" approach, the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament promote deontological ethics, meaning that actions are sinful or righteous in and of themselves.⁷⁵ God does not judge the righteousness of one's actions based upon what happens later. Otherwise, one could murder someone today, be thrown into jail, and then a decade later convince a judge that the world is a better place without the victim alive. If the judge agrees, the murder was a righteous execution, or retroactively righteous. Only if the judge disagrees with the killer will the action be considered a crime. This consequentialist ethic is foreign to Scripture. It does not take long to imagine how easily Augustine's consequentialism could be fatally misused. History provides the tragic evidence. Unfortunately, to this day, the Catholic Church supports coercion in religion,⁷⁶ although it has thankfully disavowed the coercion of Jews since Vatican II in 1965.

In sum, Augustine was primarily responsible for quelling the pro-coercion and anti-coercion factions within the Catholic Church through his consequentialist ethics for heretics and

⁷³ Augustine, *City of God*, 18.46, in *The City of God, Books XVII–XXII*, ed. Hermigild Dressler, The Fathers of the Church 24 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 165. See also Augustine, Sermon 201.3 and *Against the Jews*, 9.

⁷⁴ Parkes, *Conflict of Church and Synagogue*, 184.

⁷⁵ DeWeese and Moreland, *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult*, 95–100.

⁷⁶ For example, Catholic philosopher Thomas Pink wrote in *First Things* in 2012: "The Church has jurisdiction over the baptized, who have an obligation of fidelity to the Church, to believe her doctrine and to obey her laws, including a duty to assist her mission when she requests it. And, according to traditional doctrine, the Church has the right and authority to enforce this jurisdiction coercively, with temporal or earthly penalties as well as spiritual ones. The Church has no right to punish unbelief among the unbaptized, who are outside her jurisdiction and have no obligation of fidelity to the Church. But the Church still has the authority to use coercion to defend her jurisdiction against those unbaptized who interfere from without, proselytizing on behalf of false religions. As for the baptized, who do have obligations of fidelity to her, the Church has the authority to punish culpable unbelief through penalties for heresy, apostasy, and schism. The point of such sanctions is punitively to reform heretics, apostates, or schismatics, or at least to discourage others from sharing their errors." Pink, "Conscience and Coercion," 47.

his subjugating, supersessionist-based policies for Jews. The Catholic Church then had power to coerce heretics and to make Jews feel subjugated, which was enforced through the Roman state's unification with the church. The next thousand years would follow this playbook, earning Christianity its reputation as the chief enemy and persecutor of the Jewish people. Yet, as we have argued, this is not how the faith of those who followed Yeshua began.

The Lamentable Poison of Christian Antisemitism

Neither Jesus, nor his disciples, nor Paul, nor the early church fathers advocated for the persecution or religious coercion of the Jewish people or anyone else. It was only after the rise of replacement theology and the ethics of coercion, as well as the rise of Constantine that the Catholic Church set the stage for millennia of Jew-hatred. This poisonous recipe has been disastrous for the Jewish people, and it needs to be removed from the preaching and teaching of the contemporary church. As Messianic Jewish scholar Michael Brown writes,

Christian acts of violence and hate against the Jews were virtually nonexistent for more than three hundred years after Jesus' death and resurrection. After that, they were quite sparse and sporadic for the next eight hundred years until the Crusades at the end of the eleventh century—and *that* murderous, destructive representation of Christianity bore *no* resemblance to the real Christian faith. We also need to remember that even though Christendom ruled in Europe, influential leaders from Augustine to Aquinas did *not* advocate violent persecution of Jews or forcible conversion of the Jews, in spite of the church's political power. In fact, the church at times offered the Jewish people protection. As a result, the story of "Christian" anti-Semitism is not as simple as many assume.⁷⁷

Assuredly, there have been many Christians in history who stood up to the antisemitism of their times and blessed the Jewish people. For example,

- Several bishops sheltered Jews during the Crusades (such as Johann von Kraichgau, Archbishop Ruthard, Bishop Adalbert, Archbishop Hermann III).
- King Casmir III the Great of Poland, a fourteenth-century Roman Catholic, invited Jews to be "people of the king" with privileges and protections, which led to Poland becoming a safe haven for Jews until the pogroms of the seventeenth century.
- Christian Hebraists such as Daniel Bomberg, were responsible for publishing the first printed edition of the Talmud and the first *Mikraot Gedolot* on behalf of their Jewish patrons.
- The seventeenth-century English Puritans campaigned for the dignity and spiritual worth of Jewish people and the future redemption that God would perform for them.
- Oliver Cromwell, an English statesman who shared the philo-Semitic views of the English Puritans, reversed a nearly four-century ban on Jews in England, inviting them to live there once again.
- Horatius Bonar and William Blackstone were passionate nineteenth-century advocates of the Jewish people and promoters of Zionism as a part of God's prophetic plan.
- The Catholics of the Polish Zegota underground movement and many others (now deemed "Righteous Among the Nations") risked their lives to save Jews from the Nazis.

⁷⁷ Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 133.

Although these examples of Christian advocates for the Jewish people do not erase the horrors of historical antisemitism, they do provide a counterpoint to the assumption that the Christian conscience has been uniformly hostile to the Jewish people.

Great strides have been made to recover the early church's repudiation of religious coercion. However, vestiges of antisemitism remain. Wherever the ingredients of antisemitism may be found—whether theological, ethical, ecclesiastical, or political—believers in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile, must stand up to remove them. The church must recover a pro-Jewish attitude of the heart, being able to eagerly say the following with the Apostle Paul: “They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” (Rom. 9:4–5).

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Book Review: *Mysteries of the Messiah*

Richard Harvey

Mysteries of the Messiah: Unveiling Divine Connections from Genesis to Today. Rabbi Jason Sobel. W Publishing Group, an imprint of Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2021.

ISBN: 9780785240051 **ISBN 10:** 0785240055 **Pages:** 224 **List Price:** \$24.99

Rabbi Jason Sobel is the founder of Fusion Global, which aims to equip disciples of Jesus by adding “definition to your faith in Yeshua-Jesus as we restore the lost connection to our ancient Hebrew roots and rediscover our forgotten inheritance in Him.”

He is a Messianic Rabbi, based in New York, ordained by the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) and holding a B.A. in Jewish Studies (Moody) and an M.A. in Intercultural Studies (Southeastern Seminary). His Facebook page describes him as “thought leader, storyteller, spiritual guide” and he is a popular author, speaker and media contributor.

His latest book, *Mysteries of the Messiah*, brings to a contemporary readership what many have attempted over the centuries, to illustrate the Messiahship of Jesus from Jewish sources, particularly using the methods of interpreting the Bible developed by the Jewish mystical tradition (Kabbalah) and Jewish understandings of the Messiah. What results is a popular and stimulating read, which seeks to unpack who Jesus is, and why we should accept him as the Messiah.

The book follows an ordered and well-structured approach, introducing the topic and explaining why numerology, the use of number codes in explaining the meaning of words and phrases in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, is helpful in understanding the nature, person and mission of Jesus. The job description of the Messiah, his origins from before the creation of the world, his fulfilment of God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are all described with feeling, drama and prophetic insight. Sobel continues his reading of the biblical stories in succinct and well-written chapters, showing how Jesus’ Messiahship is relevant to Moses, the Passover and Exodus from Egypt, the wanderings in the desert, the stories of Ruth and Boaz, the line of David and so forth.

All this is familiar material to students of Messianic prophecy and apologetics (giving a reasoned defence and presentation of faith). The book popularises these materials for new readers who may not know of the centuries’ old discussion of such passages, and are willing to investigate if for themselves. To what extent does Sobel succeed in presenting the case for acceptance of Yeshua as the Messiah?

To those already convinced, this book will come as a stimulating and well-illustrated confirmation of their faith, with many useful insights and thoughts to ponder. But for those still looking for answers, they will need to find stronger grounds for accepting Sobel’s position. Much of his presentation is a standard Christian reading of biblical passages that have divided Christian and Jews for some 2,000 years. These continue to do so, as Amy-Jill Levene and Mark Brettler have demonstrated in their recent book *The Bible with and Without Jesus: How Jews and Christians Read the Same Stories Differently* (New York: Harper, 2021) which goes more deeply into the meaning of such passages and the way different interpretations developed in Jewish and Christian tradition.

Sobel’s discussion takes for granted the Christian/Messianic Jewish perspective. His discussion is based not just on the historical-critical methods of Protestant interpretation which the

Reformation popularised, but also on the use of *Midrash* – Jewish methods of interpretation. In particular, he uses *gematria* (from the Greek “geometry”) - the practice of assigning a numerical value to a name, word or phrase according to an alphanumerical cipher. He assumes that these and other traditional Jewish methods of explaining Scripture are not only reliable but also firmly point to the truth that Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel. For those unwilling to suspend their disbelief, or those who would use precisely the same methods to argue for the opposite conclusion - the standard rabbinic response to such arguments - the book will not be persuasive.

Sobel writes well, the book is well-presented, and he clearly expounds his subject with clarity of expression and passion for his faith in Yeshua. Further unpacking and justifying of his own methods and assumptions would have produced a more well-rounded and satisfying presentation for this reviewer. I look forward to Sobel’s development of a more systematic and reflective approach to his subject. For those interested in rabbinic methods of interpreting the Bible that go against the grain of mainstream Jewish teaching, such a book will be of much interest. But further study will show that the question is more complex than Sobel asserts. Whilst his book draws attention to hidden and unknown secrets that Jewish methods of reading the Bible have employed since the time it was written, its attempt to “unveil divine connections” will result in a mixed response.

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Book Review: *Reading the Old Testament through Jewish Eyes*

Rich Robinson

Evan Moffic. *Reading the Old Testament through Jewish Eyes: A Study of the Scriptures Jesus Read*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2021.

It was taught in the School of Rabbi Ishmael: “Behold, My word is like fire—declares the Lord—and like a hammer that shatters rock’ (Jer. 23:29). Just as this hammer produces [literally: divides into] many sparks, so a single verse has several meanings.”⁷⁸

The Jewish way of approaching the biblical text is distinctly different from the Christian approach. Jeremiah’s declaration has become an oft-used image for treating the text as open to a multitude of meanings: no word or letter being superfluous but each one there to convey something; this has been the prevailing rabbinic understanding that has spawned midrashic literature, both ancient and modern. At times this approach ignores authorial intention or historical interest in favor of word plays or teasing out ambiguities in the text to support several possible meanings. What this means is that the Jewish way of deriving ethics from Scripture makes for a rich brew, demands an active engagement with the text, and frequently raises questions and suggests possibilities more than many Christian approaches do.

Reading the Old Testament through Jewish Eyes is the latest contribution to this approach by Rabbi Evan Moffic (Reform) of Makom Solel Lakeside in Highland Park, Illinois. As an exploration of a Jewish way to do biblically rooted ethics, it is an easy read geared toward the curious lay person. After an introductory overview of the Torah, as both text and artifact (its production and its handling in the synagogue service), succeeding chapters select themes in each of the five books of the Torah that lead into discussions of ethical questions and principles. The title’s use of the term “Old Testament” and the subtitle suggest that the intended audience is Christian readers who may find the Torah unfamiliar or difficult to understand. Others, though, are certainly not excluded. The footnotes are few, and there is no index, as befits a lay group who may be getting their feet wet with this kind of study for the first time. Though Moffic does not cite Jeremiah 23:29, his brief book offers glimpses into the Jewish way of exegesis—reading the Hebrew Bible “through Jewish eyes.”

Take Leviticus, for example, which is probably the most opaque book of the Torah to the average person. Moffic finds (and I would agree) ethical principles that underlie the detailed rituals of Leviticus. Regarding the sin offering, he states that “Part of the power of rituals is that they do not simply express ideas. They enact ideas, and actions speak louder than words.” The sin offering thus enables the worshiper to make amends for sin, not to simply apologize with words. A second point: for ancient Israel, sin had a public dimension (as it does today, I would argue), such that “the public had an interest in a person making amends after a sin, and a prescribed ritual helped demonstrate that process within the community.” Third, as we attend to even the smallest of the ritual’s details, we are led to attend to our own lives: “In Leviticus, the care by which we offer a sacrifice is a model for the care by which we should aim to live.” Finally, “It is about achieving rightness in the right things. Rituals shape what we pay attention to.” Much of Moffic’s discussion of Leviticus is given over to these ethical implications of ritual.

⁷⁸ Translation from Azzan Yadin, “The Hammer on the Rock: Polysemy and the School of Rabbi Ishmael,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 9 (2002): 1.

Many Christian readers will be challenged to rethink what they may have been taught about “empty ritual” as a rubric for all Old Testament institutions.

When we get to Nadab and Abihu’s deadly act in Leviticus 10, Moffic offers four possible interpretations of this opaque passage: either they offered an unauthorized sacrifice; or, since the priests are supposed to model following God, when they fail, they hurt others beyond themselves; or, Israel is learning that a “harsh reality” accompanies significant life transitions; or, they were too proud to accept their given role. Moffic doesn’t choose between the interpretations, allowing all four to be possibilities that the reader can learn from.

The chapter on Deuteronomy is more about what most people think of as ethics. Chapter 1:1 introduces a section titled, “The Power of Words,” in which Moses’ initial slowness of speech is contrasted with his later verbal abilities. This segues into a discussion on the idea that the image of God in humanity refers to the ability to create through words. “Love the Lord Your God” concerns Deuteronomy 6:5 and includes a discussion of rabbinic views on “heart,” “soul,” and “might.” These three words do not simply form a generic intensifier but indicate three means by which we love God: “heart” referring to the study of God’s word (drawing additional meaning from the unusual two *vets* in “heart”); “soul” referring to prayer (which leads into a discussion on martyrdom); and “might” referring to one’s financial resources, that is, doing *tzedakah*, donating money. Finally, Deuteronomy 8:14, 17–18 is about “Gratitude,” leading to a conversation about Jewish survival. Surveying traditional Jewish responses to why the Jews have survived, Moffic opts for neither distinctive Jewish practices, nor the catalyst of anti-Semitism, but for God and his faithfulness to his covenant. Moffic navigates the family conflict stories of Genesis as well as the narratives of Exodus and Numbers in the same way.

While the reader, Jewish or not, may not agree with all of Moffic’s observations or his exegetical moves, he has succeeded in looking at the Torah in conversation with rabbinic sages and others. Many will find this to be a fresh look at the text that raises questions well worth pursuing.

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Brief Book Notes

Rich Robinson

Donald M. Lewis. *A Short History of Christian Zionism: From the Reformation to the Twenty-First Century*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2021.

This is the book you have been waiting for. Neither an attempt to advocate for or against the movement, Lewis—from Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia—offers an objective, thorough, and up-to-date history of Christian Zionism. Some key takeaways: Christian Zionism preceded dispensationalism and is not dependent on it, it has been a key factor in identity formation among many evangelicals and churches, and it has become significant in charismatic circles in the Global South. Most anyone that you can think of who has been involved in Christian Zionism and its predecessors, whether for or against it, is discussed, and Lewis includes its most recent developments, such as Gerald McDermott’s non-dispensational advocacy. This is the current go-to treatment of the topic.

Avram Mlotek. *Why Jews Do That: Or 30 Questions Your Rabbi Never Answered*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2020.

Mlotek is a 30-something millennial, progressive Orthodox rabbi who, according to his Wikipedia page, is also a “social activist, cantor, writer, actor and slam poet.” The book—endorsed by the likes of Bari Weiss and Joseph Telushkin, among others—is a bare-bones entree to some aspects of Judaism. Depending on whether you are a glass-half-full or glass-half-empty person, you may find it a refreshing introduction to things that perplex non-Jews and minimally-knowledgeable Jews. Otherwise, you may see it as addressing an audience of idiots, with featured questions such as, “Why do I see candelabras in the windowsills in winter?,” “What’s inside the funky amulet hanging on the door?,” and “WTF is the Talmud?” For better or worse, there you have it.

David J. Zucker and Moshe Reiss. *The Matriarchs of Genesis: Seven Women, Five Views*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015.

A compendium of Jewish thought on Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah. (Yes, the traditional list only includes four matriarchs.) The five views are those of the Bible, intertestamental literature, the rabbis (mostly the Talmud, with excursions into medieval times), contemporary writers, and lastly, feminist writers. Each chapter follows the same format of proceeding through the five views in sequence. There is a great deal of overlap and repetition, though it is actually helpful for fixing the themes and approaches in one’s memory. I would have appreciated more about why various ancient writers took the views that they did (for instance, why is *Jubilees* so intent on painting pictures of family harmony?) The book would have also more useful if its sources had been cited in the text instead of footnotes. Overall, it is a good compendium and sourcebook on the sometimes overlooked matriarchs of Israel.

Eric A. Goldman. *The American Jewish Story through Cinema*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013.

Books like this are a good way to keep up with the pulse of the Jewish community—in this case, through Jewish-themed films from the 1920s until 2005. Because it is well-written, the reader does not need to see the films to benefit from the book, though many will undoubtedly be motivated to do so. Included are *The Jazz Singer*, *Gentleman's Agreement*, two Barbra Streisand films, and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*, among others. Reading this provides a tour through Jewish self-perceptions and interactions with the larger American community (that is, Gentiles) over the decades. Did you know that the Jewish movie moguls of the 1940s were reluctant to make a film about anti-Semitism for fear that it would only stoke more hatred against Jews? It took Darryl Zanuck, a non-Jewish producer, to risk making *Gentleman's Agreement*—and garnering an Academy Award.

Erica T. Lehrer. *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

The title makes the book sound like a travelogue, but it is really a look at identity issues focused on the neighborhood of Kazimierz in Krakow, which was historically the Jewish quarter. We get a look at “heritage” tourism, where the Holocaust becomes the single unifying theme for Polish–Jewish history and relations. This ends up creating distance between modern-day Jews and Poles, as anti-Semitism is virtually anticipated to be encountered on these trips. In contrast are “quest” trips, where Jews come to Poland in hopes of discovering their identity through learning about their ancestors' pasts and engaging more positively with modern Polish people. Of particular interest is that Kazimierz's ongoing Jewishness is curated today largely by non-Jewish Poles—or at least, it was when this book was researched. Lehrer raises all kinds of questions about identity, guilt, and the proper stewardship of Jewishness. Some of these Poles identify as non-Jews, some as almost Jews, and some with just “Jewishness.” A fascinating read that may hold lessons for what the involvement of non-Jews in the messianic Jewish movement could (can? should?) look like.

Peter Schäfer. *Jesus in the Talmud*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Though it is already fifteen years old, I only now had the opportunity to go through Schäfer's surprisingly quick read of a book. It contains an overview of scholarship on the topic, from the well-known *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* by Travers Herford (1903), who found Jesus under every nook and cranny, to Johann Maier's 1978 *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* (*Jesus of Nazareth in Talmudic Tradition*; Schäfer's book originally appeared in German). Maier is at the opposite extreme from Herford, finding Jesus just about nowhere. Rather than mining the Talmud for historical material about Jesus, Schäfer focuses on how the Talmud responds to the gospel story—which Schäfer believes was known to the rabbis—with a counter-narrative. Especially fascinating is the idea that the Gospel of John would have been well-known to the rabbis who compiled the Babylonian Talmud.

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Anti-Semitism Lifts Its Appalling Head as Believers Dive into Conspiracies

Sanna Erelä

A friend of mine asked me to comment on a video running on TokenTube. In the recording, a woman who considers herself a Christian and a speaker of truth shared some health tips and presented her views on many current topics. I froze as she began to pour out her opinions about Israel and the Jews: “Not everyone of Jewish descent is a true Jew,” she said. Quoting from the book of Revelation, she claimed that many of them belong to the synagogue of Satan. According to her, the Israeli political leadership and health authorities are at the forefront of a global conspiracy to machinate the genocide of humanity. They use their own citizens as guinea pigs, injecting them with biological weapons that change their genomes. They also aim to clone humans. The conclusion of this absurd tirade was that both Israel and China are pushing toward the New World Order at full speed.

I have previously heard anti-Semitic voices, mainly among Christians who are so dedicated to the Palestinian case that they have lost their ability to assess the situation in a balanced way. However, Susanna Kokkonen, who received her PhD in Holocaust studies, has noticed that the Covid-19 pandemic has also increased the criticism of Israel among Christians. The critique in its new forms has even sneaked into circles where it previously did not have a foothold.

Anti-Semitism is a very old phenomenon. It existed in ancient times, and with Christianity, it strengthened and spread to new areas. Politicians and other ideologists began to pursue it more determinedly for their own purposes in the late nineteenth century, and this development culminated in the genocide of Jews under Nazi rule.

The classic anti-Semitic writing *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was published in the early twentieth century in Russia. It claimed to reveal the plan of the Jews to take control over the world. The protocols have been proven to be a hoax numerous times, yet, every now and then, these allegations and stereotypes still catch fire. When a nation or the whole world faces a crisis, sooner or later the same pattern recurs: the Jews are blamed for it. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has been no exception, and now, with the Russia–Ukraine war, we are facing another wave of anti-Semitic challenges. According to the Anti-Defamation League, some Christian leaders in the US are already ranting their horrific accusations of Jews orchestrating the war. They have more followers online than I would ever want to see.

In the spring of 2020, someone in Iran launched an idea that Israel was deliberately spreading the virus. Later, Israel’s effective vaccination campaign received a lot of attention and provoked angry comments on social media about how vaccinations and Covid-19 restrictions are a “new Holocaust.” Christians also joined the choir of critics, adding to the song their own verse about the Antichrist and end-time afflictions. Unfortunately, I have heard demonizing tones in the critique here in Israel as well, as believers are pointing to the leaders of their own country. I am sure most believers do not realize that they are actually repeating ancient anti-Semitic stereotypes about the cunningness of Jews. Today’s conspiracy theories do not always speak openly about Jews, but by scratching the surface a little, often the horns of anti-Semitic evil are exposed.

So, what leads believers to get involved in conspiracies? It is probably the same psychological and sociological reasons that lead other groups to conspiracies. The world is

complex, and conspiracy theories provide simple answers to the question, Who is to blame for the misery that we have encountered? In addition to this, Christians find in the plotlines of biblical end times and the book of Revelation an extra reason to dig into conspiracies.

I believe that the anticipation of Jesus' return should be the core attitude of our hearts, but we should not be too eager to see devils and the "mark of the beast" in vaccinations, Covid-19 passports, and other issues that have nothing to do with confessing the name of Jesus. Do you remember the fuss around barcodes in the 1980s? What about the new bank cards with chips at the turn of the millennium? We were standing right on the threshold of the "mark of the beast" and watching the beginning of the end times in Revelation—until everyone gradually got used to the new technology. Believers sometimes seem to have an amazingly short memory.

Believing in conspiracies is a poor choice because it leads a person on shaky ground to doubt everyone and everything. On that terrain, truth and falsehood become almost impossible to distinguish. There is a constant battle between facts and lies on the internet and social media. Do you unintentionally spread something that incites anger and intensifies the anti-Semitic movement? This can happen if one shares images or claims on social media without checking their sources. The stimulating world of alternative media may be appealing, but there is no journalistic reliability in that sphere. There, in complete freedom, one does not observe ethical principles, not even those that the mainstream media aim to follow.

Susanna Kokkonen states in her Finnish-language lecture "The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism in Our Time" that it is wise to study history. The past is our teacher as we head into the future. Anti-Semitism will not disappear from the world. The citizens of Israel and its leaders are ordinary people with both good and erroneous endeavors, but at the same time, they are the chosen people of God. Until the very end, our adversary desperately wants to destroy this nation and prevent her from actualizing her calling. As Christians, we must ensure that we do not accidentally advance the evil plan of the father of lies and, as a result, cause suffering to the Jewish people. Too often, history has repeated itself.

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