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**An examination of the "Jewish Conspiracy Theory" from its inception to the present day.**

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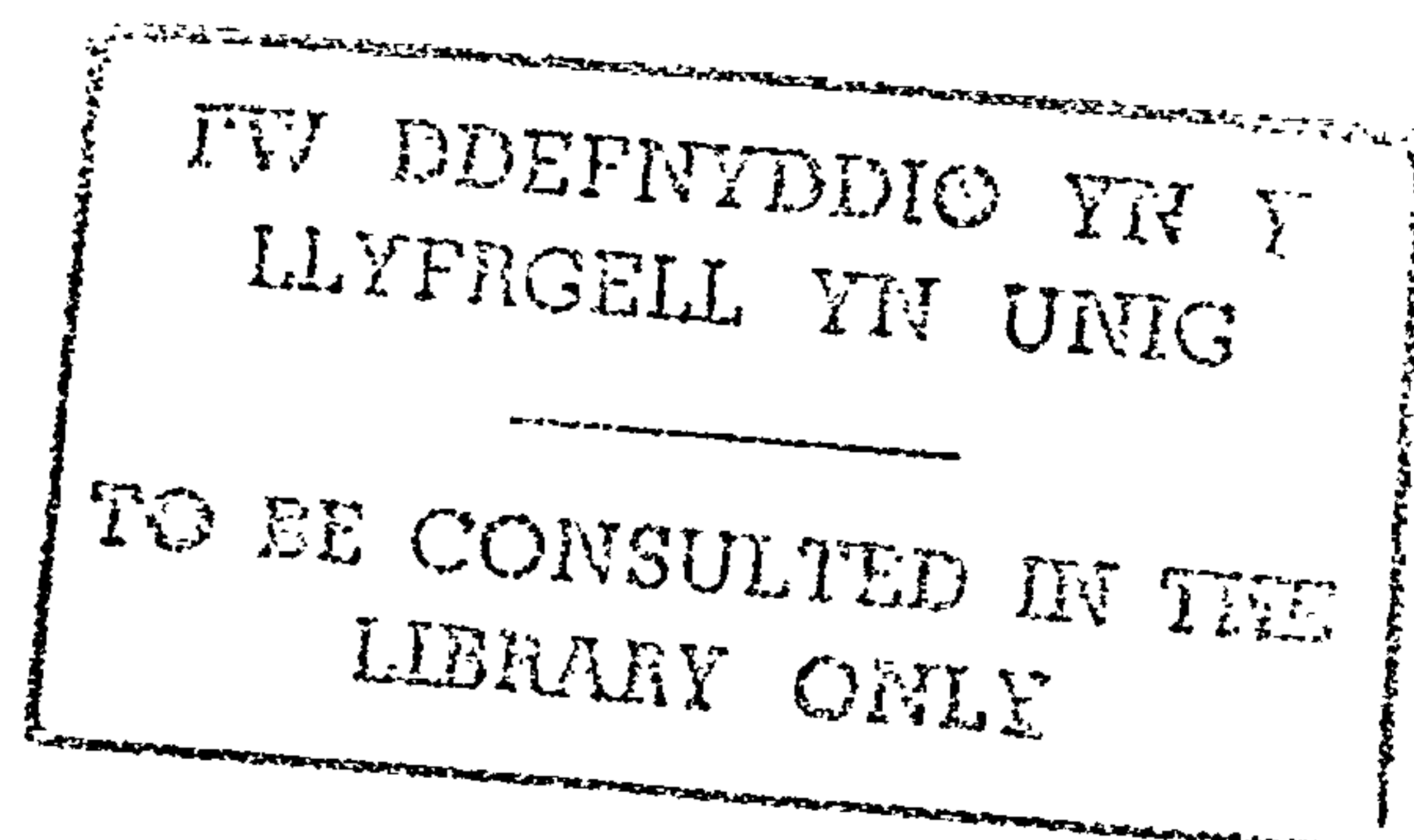
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# **An Examination of the "Jewish Conspiracy Theory" from its Inception to the Present Day.**

**By**

**Barbara Jayne John**



**Supervisor: Dr. Gareth Lloyd Jones.**

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# Summary

The following work is an examination of the allegation that there has existed a world-wide Jewish Conspiracy, by which it is said that Jews have taken various actions aimed at achieving world dominance. I have taken as my starting point the death of William of Norwich in 1144, following which Jews were first accused of having a conspiracy plan and I have ended with the present day Holocaust deniers. The work is divided into two sections. The first concerns the Religious Conspiracy, and deals with the accusations that Jews conspired to kill Christ through means of a substitute child, as in the cases of Ritual Crucifixion and the Blood libel, or by means of host and image desecration; and secondly that Jews conspired to kill all Christians by means of mass poisoning. The second section deals with the Modern Conspiracy Theory and examines the processes that gave rise to the twentieth century forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*; the Conspiracy Theory in Germany, with emphasis on conditions that led to Hitler's attitude towards Jews; and finally examines the state of the Conspiracy Theory in the post-Holocaust world. Overall I attempt to discover just what causes an accusation as outrageous as the Conspiracy Theory to endure throughout history.

*This book is dedicated with love to the memory of my mother,  
Sylvia Gwyther Lloyd.*

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**Section 1**  
**Religious Conspiracy**

# Introduction

Everyone loves a conspiracy story. Most of us know at least one tale that intrigues, entertains or even baffles us. The cult status of the Canadian television series *The X Files*, the tale of two FBI agents who investigate unexplained events in the face of extreme opposition and cover-ups from the government, and from within their own ranks, testifies to the allure that a conspiracy tale can hold for us. In many cases these tales are unimportant - a few minutes entertainment, a puzzle to keep us occupied. We may laugh at the flat-earth society, which firmly believes that we have been duped by higher agencies into believing the world is round, when all along it has been totally flat. We may wonder what possesses people to claim that man never landed on the moon, and that shots we saw of Neil Armstrong taking that "giant leap for mankind" in 1969 were, in reality, filmed in an American desert, as part of an elaborate government cover-up for the failure of the mission. Perhaps at times we even pause over these stories and wonder if they are true. Was Elvis Presley a member of the Mafia or an FBI double agent? Is he really dead or just forced into hiding himself? What about the numerous sightings? Questions like these can build the most outrageous story into something even the sanest person has to think twice about.

Often a conspiracy tale is more than a mere puzzle. In many cases it provides a sort of comfort. For example following the death of Pope John Paul I in September 1978, after just thirty-four days in office, rumour abounded that the immensely popular Pope had been murdered. Claims that he had uncovered a conspiracy involving the Vatican bank and the Mafia, and had died because of his wish to make these findings public, followed in the wake of his demise.<sup>1</sup> A more likely explanation is that Pope John Paul I was a sick man when he took office and died, either through stress, or from neglecting his illness while he came to terms with his new role. Whichever is true, it is more realistic to believe that the Pope died from natural causes than from unnatural ones. So why all the fuss? Even though he had been in office just 34 days, Pope John Paul I, with his friendly and spontaneous manner, won immense affection almost



immediately. His death therefore came as a huge shock. It was difficult to understand why a man who offered so much should die so suddenly. It raised too many questions. Here was God's chosen, a good man, a man of the people, gone all too soon. It brought into sharp reality man's own fallibility, for if this could happen to a man chosen by God, what hope was there for the rest of us? It also called into question the benevolence of God in giving us a Pope such as John Paul I, in making the promise we saw in this man, and then taking it away almost immediately. To believe that the Pope died at the hands of the Mafia, or some equally shady and evil group, is far more comforting for us.

Whatever our reasons for believing conspiracy tales, two things are constant throughout them all. There is always an "Us" and an "Other". The "Us" refers to the victims deceived by the conspiracy, the "Other" are the deceivers. The "Other" can refer to anyone or any organisation, it is essentially an abstract label, definable only in general terms. For example in the above conspiracies the term "Other" covers the government, the Mafia, and so forth, yet there is never a specific member of any of these groups named. The "Other" is essentially an abstract threat, an evil force menacing the existence of the "Us", the good force. Fundamentally a conspiracy tale therefore boils down to the eternal battle between good and evil, albeit an unidentifiable evil.

Conspiracy tales are entertaining, intriguing, comforting and as long as the evil "Other" remains unidentifiable, they are, in essence, harmless enough. Problems arise only when the "Other" is identifiable, that is when he, or they, move out of the realm of the abstract, into reality. Such a problem occurred in the Middle Ages when a conspiracy tale grew up around Europe's Jews. The tale first appears as a harmless conspiracy story revolving around a shadowy Jewish senate, said to meet together to plot terrible deeds. But, although it may have seemed harmless, the Jewish Conspiracy Theory appeared at a time when antisemitism was at its peak, and immediately spread beyond the abstract Jewish body to encompass Jews everywhere.

The following work is an examination of the so-called Jewish Conspiracy Theory. It is intended to demonstrate what happens when the perception of the "Other" leaves the realm of fantasy and enters the real world.

It looks at what happens to those labelled "Other" and the reasons why they are chosen. It examines the individual Conspiracy charges charting their possible origins, their growth, their genuineness and the effects they have on later charges. A further intention is to examine whether there are any genuine factors which led to the inception and growth of the conspiracy theory, such as social, economic or political conditions, religious antagonism and so forth. Finally, an attempt will be made to determine the possible reason why the Jewish Conspiracy Theory, which was originally very much a Medieval phenomenon, continues to exist even in the present day.

For the most part the study of the Jewish Conspiracy Theory, as a phenomenon separate from the history of antisemitism, has been sadly neglected. That is not to say that no mention is ever made of the subject; there is in fact a wealth of material. But, this material tends to be confined to specific topics, or lost in the general study of antisemitism. There are many examples of the study of specific areas of the Conspiracy Theory. In 1891 Hermann Strack published a pioneering study of Jews and the ritual murder accusation, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice*.<sup>2</sup> The work, which reached its final form in 1909, is one of the most concise examinations of the history of ritual murder from its origins to the end of the nineteenth century. The many other studies on the same topic include R. Po-Chia Hsia's study of ritual murder after the Medieval period, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*,<sup>3</sup> Gavin Langmuir's study of the first ritual murder case, that of William of Norwich, in *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*,<sup>4</sup> and Cecil Roth's examination of the possible origins of the blood libel, "The Feast of Purim and the Origins of the Blood Accusation".<sup>5</sup> There is also Joshua Trachtenberg's excellent study of the Medieval period, *The Devil and the Jews*, which considers all aspects of the Medieval Conspiracy Theories,<sup>6</sup> and Malcolm Barber's examination of the first charge of well-poisoning in his essay, "Lepers, Jews, and Moslems: The Plot to Overthrow Christendom in 1321."<sup>7</sup> Foremost among the studies of later aspects of the Conspiracy Theory must be Norman Cohn's, *Warrant for Genocide*, the most definitive study of the *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*<sup>8</sup> and Jacob Katz's ground-breaking

studies of the origins of the link between Jews and Freemasons, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1727-1939*.<sup>9</sup>

Of the studies of the Conspiracy Theory in modern Germany Paul Rose's *German Question/Jewish Question: Revolutionary Antisemitism from Kant to Wagner* contains a wealth of material on the subject of the Young Hegelians<sup>10</sup>; whilst *Little Man What Now?: Der Stürmer in the Weimar Republic*, by Dennis E. Showalter, gives an excellent insight into the type of conspiracy propaganda that dominated public consciousness in the pre-Nazi, and the Nazi eras.<sup>11</sup> With regard to the latter era there is of course a plethora of material which alludes to the Nazi attitude towards Jews and the place of the Conspiracy Theory in that attitude. Of these Eberhard Jäckel's study, *Hitler's Weltanschauung*, gives a concise and thorough insight into the mind of Hitler,<sup>12</sup> as does Robert Wistrich's *Hitler's Apocalypse*.<sup>13</sup> Studies of the contemporary development of the Jewish Conspiracy include Gill Seidel's pioneering thesis, *The Holocaust Denial*,<sup>14</sup> and among more recent works are Deborah Lipstadt's, *Denying the Holocaust*,<sup>15</sup> and *Assassins of Memory*<sup>16</sup> by Pierre Vidal-Naquet.

Amongst more general topics the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*<sup>17</sup> and *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*<sup>18</sup> provide a wealth of detail on the various conspiracy accusations. For an examination of the place of the Conspiracy Theory in the overall history of antisemitism, Leon Poliakov's four volume *The History of Antisemitism* is without equal.<sup>19</sup>

As I have said, however, all these works either allude to part of the Jewish Conspiracy Theory or treat that theory as just another part of the overall history of antisemitism. That is not to say that the history of antisemitism and the Conspiracy Theory are two totally separate entities; often they are intrinsically intertwined, with one contributing to the other. Before we begin a study of the Conspiracy theory it is important that we first understand the status of antisemitism prior to the inception of the Conspiracy Theory in the Middle Ages.

The dawn of the Middle Ages brought with it a sudden shift in fortunes for Jews in Christendom. In the centuries that preceded the Middle Ages Jews had existed in conditions that can be considered reasonably stable.

Anti-Jewish hostility without doubt existed, but such hostility tended to be sporadic in nature and, more often than not, confined to the denunciations of various clergy. On the whole the Christian masses lived side by side and relatively peacefully with their Jewish brothers. This situation ended abruptly at the close of the eleventh-century, as Gavin Langmuir points out:

*The first major massacre of Jews in Europe, in the Rhineland in 1096, demonstrated that Christian anti-Judaism had, for the first time, gained merciless mass support.*<sup>20</sup>

In little more than three centuries antisemitism became widespread in northern Europe. The Jew became a symbol of subhumanity, hated for characteristics that he did not possess, tortured and killed for crimes he did not commit. By 1350, the Jew, once considered nothing less than an errant brother, was perceived as a Satanic being no longer capable of rational thought, who conspired to overthrow Christendom, who committed ritual murder, consumed blood, profaned the host, and who caused the Black Death by poisoning wells. It mattered little that no-one ever observed these crimes, for antisemitism flourishes on irrational beliefs and very rarely on facts.

As has already been mentioned, prior to the eleventh century the lot of Jews was totally different from what they experienced during the following centuries. During the critical period that followed the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire the future of Judaism hung in the balance. Ordinary Christians got on well with Jews and at times were drawn by their religious practices. Because of this the religious authorities felt the need to curb the influence of both Jews and their synagogues. To this end they preached against both Jews and their religion. Some even went as far as to encourage and support the destruction of synagogues. Indeed St. Ambrose of Milan threatened Theodosius I with excommunication if he punished the perpetrators of one such incident.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the denunciations and the incidents of violence, Church policy tended towards the Pauline theology of the providential role of Jews, and the Roman laws of toleration for others religions. Early in the fifth century these ideas were elaborated upon by St. Augustine, one of the most profound and

influential thinkers among the fathers of the Latin Church. He presented a two-sided picture of Jews. On the one hand, he depicted them as carnal, preferring their earthly ways to the spiritual path, which led to salvation and peace of the soul through Jesus. Because of this rejection of the true way, all Jews, he said, were punished by God and considered enemies; a depiction much favoured by bishops and monks who felt the need to curb Jewish influence. But, said Augustine, their punishment was that of Cain: they were to be seen and learned from, but never to be harmed. Jews he claimed should be tolerated as Jews, because through their scriptures, and in their rejected status, they bear witness to the truth of Christianity.

This position was later adopted by the founder of the Medieval papacy, Gregory the Great. He held that non-believers should be led to the faith by the "sweetness of preaching" and not by persecution. Those who used force to bring others to the baptismal font were, he claimed, pursuing their own ends, not those of God. It was Gregory who formulated the statement that appears in the preamble of all the papal bulls of protection of the Jews from 1120 to the end of the Middle Ages:

*Just as licence ought not to be allowed for the Jews to do anything in their synagogues beyond what is permitted by law, so also they ought to suffer no injury in those things that have been granted to them.*<sup>22</sup>

Gregory thus declared that Jews, whilst remaining politically and socially subservient to their Christian neighbours, had the right to live as Jews in Western Society.

For some five centuries after Gregory, Jews settled throughout Europe and were, on the whole, left alone. The only exception was Visigothic Spain during the seventh century where a radically different policy was essayed, including a royal edict mandating compulsory baptism of all Jews in the realm. "This experience," as Saperstein observes "dramatically points to what might have been the fate of all Jews in Europe but was not. For most rulers it was the road not to be taken."<sup>23</sup>

Many of them, recognising the value of Jewish communities, followed a policy that was vigorously and consistently pro-Jewish. In their realms, Jews prospered, enjoying a legal status not materially different from that of their Christian neighbours. They obtained a prominent role in trading, particularly from the eighth century onwards, they owned land, engaged in a wide range of occupations and professions (including agriculture, the military, and public office), and in general lived next to Christians without noticeable popular antipathy. The complaints of various churchmen seem to have had little effect on the secular rulers. For example, in the ninth century, Archbishop Agobard of Lyons was shocked to observe that in the avowedly Christian society of the Carolinian Empire the common people and nobles seemed to favour Jews as much as Christians. He tried to persuade Charlemagne's successor, Louis the Pious, to enforce the anti-Judaic laws of the Church, but without success. Among the rulers and the people there was no significant animus against Jews and no reason to enforce anti-Judaic laws. What little anti-Judaism there was existed amongst a handful of clergy who held on to the fourth century stereotype of the evil, demonic Jew.

This situation, however, came to an end very abruptly with the first Crusade in 1096. In November 1095 Pope Urban II called upon all Christendom to liberate the Holy Land from Moslem domination. He envisioned a carefully prepared fighting force, under the command of one leader, namely the bishop of Le Puy.<sup>24</sup> However, every aspect of this papal plan was nullified. Crusading fervour gripped the people, who were provoked, no doubt, by countless stories of Moslems and their treacherous auxiliaries, Jews, ill-treating Christians in the Holy Land. Furthermore, many believed that the Crusade marked the end of the world and that the Second Coming was imminent, thus it became an urgent necessity to win themselves grace and remission of sin. With this in mind, and "God wills it" on their lips, great ill-organised hordes assembled and set out from northern Europe before the official forces. These mobs consisted primarily of peasants, although among them also were knights, monks, the old and feeble, women and children. These people believed, as Leon Poliakov noted, that they were

*God's avengers, appointed to punish all infidels, whoever they might be. . . . Therefore, what could be more natural than to take revenge, along the way, upon the various infidels living in Christian territories?*<sup>25</sup>

A contemporary chronicler, Guibert de Nogent, quoted the Crusaders of Rouen as saying:

*We desire to combat the enemies of God in the East; but we have under our eyes the Jews, a race more inimical to God than all the others. We are doing this whole thing backwards.*<sup>26</sup>

This logic was turned quickly into action. The massacres began in Rouen in France, and in the spring of 1096 spread to the Rhineland cities. Every Jewish community in the line of march was at risk from the crusading horde. Wherever Crusaders found Jews they offered them the choice of Christianity or death. At Speyer, a crazed band from Count Emicho de Leinigen's force, broke into the locked synagogue and killed a dozen terrified Jews. Further massacre was prevented by the intervention of Bishop John who halted the riots and hanged the ringleaders. Other bishops and archbishops tried to hide Jews within their own palaces; some, such as the Archbishop of Cologne, with a measure of success. Many, however, found that the stronger forces of the Crusaders prevailed and the Jews they tried so hard to protect were more often than not massacred. A few chose baptism over death but many Jews committed suicide in sanctification of their faith (kiddush ha-shem) rather than submit to conversion. Others had little choice, especially in Ratisbon where the Crusaders forced the whole Jewish community into the Danube and baptised them. Massacres occurred at Treves, Neuss, in the cities along the Rhine and the Danube, in Bohemia and finally in Prague, despite the efforts of Bishop Cosmas to shield the local Jews. In 1099, at the journey's end, the soldiers of Godfrey de Bouillon celebrated the conquering of Jerusalem by burning down a synagogue with Jews still inside. By the end of the Crusade between a quarter and a third of the Jewish population in Germany and Northern France had been killed.<sup>27</sup>

The Crusade marked a new turning point in the attitude of Christians to Jews. As Langmuir observes, "The worst hostility was no longer Mediterranean, ecclesiastical and official; it was northern, popular, and defied both ecclesiastical and secular prohibitions."<sup>28</sup> The ordinary Christian who had once lived side by side with his Jewish brother now viewed that brother in a different light. New attitudes prevailed, the Jew became an enemy to be viewed with hostility and suspicion. Thus, as Johnson points out:

*The antisemitic ideology and folklore which helped to detonate the first crusader riots proved to be simply the plinth on which a vast superstructure of hostile myth and rumour was built.*<sup>29</sup>

The First Crusade taught the Christian masses that it was correct in the eyes of God to persecute His enemies. It further taught them that those enemies were Jews. Persecution, as Litvinoff correctly states, "has at least one attribute in common with love: it invests the recipient with whatever characteristics are ascribed to him."<sup>30</sup> This was the situation in 1144 when there occurred in England an incident, which not only gave rise to a charge that would haunt Jews everywhere for centuries, but which also served to invest Jews with the characteristics of an archconspirator, plotting always to dominate, to control and ultimately to destroy Christianity and overthrow mankind. A myth that can bend and change as needs demand, the Conspiracy Charge became the backbone of antisemitism in 1144 and has remained so ever since.

Thus we come once more to the Middle Ages, when Litvinoff's antisemitic plinth erected during the earlier centuries was finally ready to be built upon. The Christian masses had learnt to see themselves as persecuted and they had already marked their persecutors as being Jews. The "Us" was in place, the "Other" identified, all that was now needed was a suitable accusation to create a devastating Conspiracy Theory. What follows is a study of that Conspiracy Theory and the horrors it caused, and continues to cause, the Jewish nation.



# Chapter 1

## Conspiracy Against Christ

### Ritual Murder

#### i. Background

In 1144 the death of a young boy in Norwich gave rise to a charge that for Jews everywhere was to prove devastating. William of Norwich was the first of a number of victims of accidental death, homicide and, in some cases, natural death, around whom the fantasy of ritual murder developed. Once unleashed this fantasy spread quickly throughout England and to the Continent where it lodged firmly in the minds of the Christian masses, and no amount of reason could dislodge it. Between the twelfth and twentieth centuries there were over 150 recorded trials, where Jews, and often entire Jewish communities, were accused of engaging in ritual murder. In almost every instance Jews were tortured into confessing the crime and then put to death.<sup>1</sup>

Before we can begin any study of ritual murder, we must first define and examine what this phenomenon actually is. Langmuir defines it as :

*The killing of a human, not merely from motives of religious hatred but in such a way that the form of the killing is at least partly determined by ideas allegedly or actually important in the religion of the killers or the victims.*<sup>2</sup>

Beyond a definition, however, the study of ritual murder is often difficult, due to a lack of understanding and often ignorance of the fact that there was more than one form of ritual murder. From 1144 to 1235, the ritual murder accusation against Jews was that annually, at Eastertide, they crucified a Christian boy as an insult to Christ. This act I will define as "ritual crucifixion." However, in 1235, a second type of ritual murder appeared, whereby Jews were accused of killing a Christian child to acquire blood which they needed for rituals, medicinal purposes or for practising magic. Unlike ritual crucifixion this

second type of murder, which I will define as the "blood accusation", was not connected with Easter. Indeed, the very first blood accusation was made on Christmas Day.<sup>3</sup> However, this accusation did eventually become connected with Passover and the idea that the blood was used in the making of Passover bread. Unlike ritual crucifixion the blood accusation could also have more than one victim, as in the first case at Fulda (1235) where it was claimed that five children were murdered. The blood accusation also both stood on its own, or could be combined with ritual crucifixion, as in the case of Simon of Trent (1475).<sup>4</sup>

Confusion starts when we attempt to study the two accusations separately. Indeed Langmuir is perhaps one of the few modern scholars who is clear on the point and who distinguishes between what he terms "ritual murder" and "ritual cannibalism".<sup>5</sup> On the whole scholars tend towards defining the two crimes either under the heading of "ritual murder" or, more confusingly, as "blood libel" without distinguishing between the two.

On consulting *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, one finds under the heading "Blood Accusation" that "in the twelfth cent. the blood accusation flared up in England, and spread from there all over Europe. The earliest case was that of William of Norwich." This is stated despite the fact that there is no hint that William of Norwich was anything other than a case of ritual crucifixion. Indeed, the explanation continues, "the fiction of the blood murder now appeared on the continent, with accusations in Blois, France, in 1171, and in Erfurt, Saxony, in 1199." Again both these murders were ritual crucifixions without mention of blood. The first blood accusation, which took place in Fulda in 1235, is mentioned only in passing; "the notion of the healing or curing properties of blood, a basis of some of the medieval blood murder accusations (e.g. Fulda 1235) is an old one."<sup>6</sup> Again no mention is made of the departure from the pattern of ritual crucifixion, or of the unique nature of the accusation made at Fulda. The historian Paul Johnson makes much the same mistake. Recounting the murder of William of Norwich, he correctly states that this was a "ritual murder of a Christ-substitute." (i.e. a ritual crucifixion), but then goes on to claim that Jews murdered a Christ substitute every year "to get the

necessary blood, with which to make their curative Passover bread." This latter claim dates from the fourteenth century. During the century after the events at Fulda it was believed that the Jews bled their victims in order to obtain blood to use for medicinal purposes. This, however, does not deter Johnson who goes on to say, "One Theobald of Cambridge . . . married this tale to the murder of William. . . Thus from this one crime flowed two distinct, but intermingled accusations against the Jews - the ritual murder charge and the blood libel."<sup>7</sup> Johnson is right in saying that from the death of William two distinct accusations flowed, but these were the charges of ritual crucifixion and Jewish conspiracy; the blood accusation played no part. Even Solomon Grayzel, incorrectly asserts that the charge that Jews used Christian blood for ritual purposes "made its first appearance in 1144 in Norwich" and "caused the destruction of the Jewish community in Blois, France, in 1171."<sup>8</sup>

In the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* all ritual murders are discussed in the entry for "Blood Libel". There Hiam Ben-Sasson informs us that "the first distinct case of blood libel against the Jews in the Middle Ages [was] that of Norwich in 1144." Ben-Sasson however, recognises that the crucifixion libel had played a central role in the accusations before Fulda in 1235. But, nonetheless, he considers those accusations to be best labelled "blood libels" and confuses the issue further by stating that "the crucifixion motif explains why the blood libels occurred at the time of Passover."<sup>9</sup> Ben-Sasson does emphasise that Fulda was an important case, but only because that there for the first time Jews were accused of taking blood for medicinal purposes. He does not recognise it as the first blood libel.

There is little excuse for these mistakes. Both *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, and the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* list in their bibliographies on ritual murder, a book which first appeared in 1891, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice*. In this book, Strack, emphasised with italics that "it should be carefully noted, that even in the case of the twelfth century, the utilisation of Christian blood by the Jews is not mentioned by any ancient writers." A hundred pages later he repeats the point: "We read nothing about a Jewish blood ritual for much longer than a thousand years, till right into the thirteenth

century. It is mentioned for the first time in 1236 on the occasion of the Fulda case."<sup>10</sup> The same point was made in 1943 by Trachtenberg. Again his book *The Devil and the Jews*, is in the bibliography of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Trachtenberg discusses at some length the twelfth century cases in England and France and demonstrates beyond all doubt that they did not involve blood. Indeed, he emphasises that, "the collecting of blood was first mentioned in a case at Fulda, in 1235."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in 1954, Cecil Roth noted in his more general Jewish history that the blood accusation had appeared some time after the earlier crucifixion accusation.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, in a number of recent articles and later in his book *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, Gavin Langmuir added his voice to those who defined the different types of ritual murder.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst the names of Strack, Trachtenberg and Roth appear in a number of bibliographies they seem on the whole to have been ignored by later historians. As a result, the Jewish encyclopaedias and general histories have totally ignored the fact that for the century between 1144 and 1235, Jews in England and France were accused of the crime of ritual crucifixion, but not of any crime involving blood.

## ii. Ritual Crucifixion

During the twelfth century there arose a strange fantasy, whereby it was claimed that Jews crucified Christian children during Passion week in order to re-enact the crucifixion of Jesus and to mock and insult the Christian faith. Every one of the twelfth century charges were based upon this motif and likewise a number of thirteenth century accusations took the same form. The only exception is perhaps the case of Robert of Bury St. Edmunds, concerning which we know little more than the simple statement that "the boy Robert at St. Edmund is martyred by the Jews on June 10."<sup>14</sup>

This crucifixion fantasy first developed after the discovery, on Easter Saturday 1144, of the body of 12 year old William, an apprentice skinner, in Thorpe Wood, Norwich. The body was discovered by a nun and a peasant, the latter of whom informed a forester, Henry of Sprowston. Henry viewed the body but decided to leave it in the open until after the weekend. Over the next

two days others came to look but likewise left the body in the open. On Easter Monday, Henry returned and buried William where he had been found. The following day, William's relatives, having heard that a body had been buried in the wood, came and dug it up and identified it as William. But, instead of removing the body to consecrated ground and seeking immediate justice, they reburied it on the spot and left.

It was some three weeks before the family sought any justice and it was from them that the first hint of "martyrdom" comes, although they mention neither crucifixion nor a Jewish conspiracy. At an open synod of the diocese, Godwin Sturt, the boy's uncle, claimed that Jews had murdered William. He recounted a curious tale, alleging that on the Monday before William was found a mysterious emissary, claiming to be the archdeacon's cook, had induced the boy's mother to let him take William to work in the kitchen. She consented and was given some money. Godwin's wife then claimed that the man and William visited her briefly the next day, after which the child was never seen again. Godwin made vague references to wounds and punishments before asserting that the so-called "cook" was "a very cunning messenger of the Jews."<sup>15</sup> He then told of a remarkable vision that his wife had had, which he claimed proved that Jews had killed William.<sup>16</sup> The bishop presiding at the synod however, concluded that the matter was unclear and neither he, nor the secular authorities, whom he asked to look into the case took any action.<sup>17</sup>

The family's claims, however, stirred up a certain amount of interest. Indeed, the visiting Prior Aimar, of the abbey of St. Pancras at Lewes begged to be allowed to take William's body to the abbey where he would make it a famous treasure. His request served to draw the attention of the authorities to the potential value of William's remains, and they refused Aimar's request and buried the body in the monks' cemetery, an act, which Langmuir presumes, marked the remains as a potential relic, for, as he points out, if it was seen as the relic of an indubitable martyr, the body would have been buried in the cathedral.<sup>18</sup>

The tale of William might well have ended there. It had not been proved that there was any Jewish involvement in the boy's death, the family profited a

little from their connection with the "martyr",<sup>19</sup> and the church gained by having the relics and a few associated miracles. However, some five years after William's death, Thomas of Monmouth was transferred to the priory at Norwich. The alleged martyrdom had drawn very little attention but Thomas, for some reason was attracted to the story and became almost obsessed with proving William's sanctity. He collected all the information he could about William, and was highly influential in the development of his cult, eventually becoming sacristan of his shrine. From the information he had gathered, Thomas wrote a record of events surrounding William, entitled *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich*.<sup>20</sup> Central to Thomas' account is a belief that Jews were not only guilty of murdering William, but that they actually crucified him. Thomas' record is somewhat dubious, for it is based entirely on hearsay evidence and as Langmuir states:-

*He had no disposition to be sceptical of his story, and he accepted anything he heard that could be used to support his conviction that William was a saint. He was sure - and badly wanted to be sure - that he had discovered what had happened to little William. **The Life** tells us what he wanted to believe happened, but not necessarily what really did happen.<sup>21</sup>*

In Thomas' reconstruction we are given an entirely different version of events from all earlier accounts. The glaring problem in Godwin's case was that there was nothing to link any Jew with William's disappearance, only his wife's bizarre dream. However, by 1149, Godwin's wife had more to offer. She told Thomas that when William and the "cook" had visited her she had been suspicious and had told her little daughter to follow them. The child, she claims, saw them enter a Jew's house. Such a testimony would have greatly enhanced the case put forward in 1144 but, as it was not used in testimony we can be sure that the tale surfaced at a much later date.<sup>22</sup> Likewise Thomas produced another dubious witnesses who could link Jews with William. Aelward Ded, claimed that he had seen the Jew, Eleazer (who had been killed by a debtor in 1146), and another Jew, with the body of William in Thorpe Wood. This statement was said to be Ded's deathbed confession, made some five years after the event.

He had, it was claimed, been forced to keep silent by the sheriff, who had been bribed into supporting the Jews. It is, however, strange that the aforementioned sheriff had managed to force Ded's silence for three years after his own death.<sup>23</sup>

There is still a gap in Thomas' story, however, for having made the connection between Jews and William, he still had to prove that the boy was crucified. Thomas himself claimed that when the body of little William was finally removed from its grave in Thorpe Wood and brought to the monks' cemetery, it was discovered to have all the marks of crucifixion. He stated that there were thorn wounds on the head and "even pieces of actual thorns," and evident signs of martyrdom in the hands, feet and side. He also claimed that there were indications that the body "had been plunged into boiling water."<sup>24</sup> How had William got these marks and where had he been between his disappearance and the disposal of his body? Thomas found an unnamed Christian woman who could supply the answer. She said that she had been a servant in the house of the Jew, Eleazer (mentioned by Ded) and, had witnessed events during the week before Easter. She claimed she had been ordered to bring boiling water from the kitchen and having done so had curiously spied upon the room where, to her horror, she saw a young boy attached to a post. Again her story is somewhat unbelievable, for she had never come forward at any of the inquiries, and had only told her tale some time later after apparently being questioned by Thomas. Her statement may not be totally reliable because, as Jacobs reminds us, "readers of *Silas Marner* will remember how rustic witnesses get to believe they have seen whatever they have been asked if they have seen."<sup>25</sup>

Thomas, however, believed the story, for he needed to prove his crucifixion theory. Godwin's references to wounds and punishments were too vague to be used as evidence, and likewise the condition of the body, despite Thomas' assertion that it showed the marks of crucifixion, was not clear evidence. No doubt there were wounds, but they were on a body that for three days had lain in the open exposed to the elements and all manner of wild creatures; had been buried, dug up and reburied in the space of two days; had lain in the ground for a month and had been dug up again before being

examined. Thomas was forced to rely on witness evidence. But, even that was never conclusive. In the case of the Christian woman, Thomas visited the house of Eleazer with her, and there found marks on a post. From Thomas' account it seems that the marks did not fit exactly with the concept of crucifixion, for in his narrative he states that Jews had nailed William's left hand and foot, but had tied his right hand and foot, so that if the body was discovered its condition would not be recognised as evidence of a Jewish crime.<sup>26</sup> Thomas' explanation stretches his theory to the limits, for, as Langmuir points out:

*Since no one in 1144 thought that Jews crucified children, the motive alleged is ridiculous, but what Thomas unintentionally reveals is that no one could have known from the wounds that William had been crucified.<sup>27</sup>*

Despite the flimsy evidence, and the fact that the monk's tale did not at first meet with the approval of his superiors, the theory of ritual crucifixion was quickly accepted as fact. So much so that five years after Thomas first told his tale, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, written at Peterborough, not far from Norwich, contained this brief report:

*In his [King Stephen's] time, the Jews of Norwich bought a Christian child before Easter and tortured him with all the torture that our Lord was tortured with; and on Good Friday hanged him on a cross on account of our Lord and then buried him. They expected it to be concealed, but our Lord made it plain that he was a holy martyr, and the monks took him and buried him with ceremony in the monastery, and through our Lord he works wonderful and varied miracles, and he is called St. William.<sup>28</sup>*

As well as introducing the notion of ritual crucifixion into Medieval society, Thomas of Monmouth was also responsible for introducing the idea of a Jewish Conspiracy. Thomas had stated that William was crucified at the hands of Jews. However, if his theory had ended there, then the boy would be seen simply as the victim of a cruel murder brought about by some form of religious animus - an unfortunate victim, but hardly a saint. The tale needed a small modification which could alter it dramatically. If it could be proved that an



innocent boy of twelve had died at the hands of Jews during Easter, or Passover week, not simply because he was a Christian but as a recognised Christ substitute, then he would truly be the saint that Thomas longed for.

Thomas' search for this final proof brought him to Theobald, and "from the lips" of this monk came the most infamous and damaging testimony of all. Theobald, who had lived in Cambridge at the time of William's death, was a newly baptised monk. More importantly, he was a converted Jew. His evidence was valuable because it was "uttered by one who was a converted enemy, and had also been privy to the secrets of our enemies."<sup>29</sup> Theobald told Thomas that every year the Jews of Spain assembled at Narbonne in order to arrange the annual sacrifice prescribed in the ancient writings of their fathers. For it had been written that Jews "must sacrifice a Christian in some part of the world to the Most High God in scorn and contempt of Christ, so that they might avenge their sufferings on him."<sup>30</sup> Thus through the sacrificial blood of a Christ figure, Jews who had been made slaves in exile by Christ's death obtained their revenge, their hope of freedom and of a return to their own land. Theobald told how at Narbonne Jewish leaders and Rabbis from all over Spain cast lots to decide in which country the sacrifice must take place that year. Then, when a country was chosen, the Jews of that place in turn cast lots to decide the town where their sacrifice was to be performed. In 1144 the choice had been Norwich, and all the synagogues of England had known about and consented to the act. This was how Theobald of Cambridge claimed he had learned of it.

Theobald's tale was the final piece of evidence that Thomas needed to prove his case. Yet it is so false that it contradicts everything we know about both ancient and modern Judaism. Moreover, if such a deed was performed annually, and was known to every Jew in Europe, then there would have been far more evidence of it than this one murder and the word of a renegade Jew. Such is the dubious nature of the evidence that some scholars have suggested that Theobald did not even exist, and that his tale was the product of the imaginative Thomas. However, as Jacobs pointed out in 1897, the tale is given authenticity by the fact that it was unlikely that Thomas, a simple monk, would have known that Narbonne was the chief seat of Jewish learning at the time.<sup>31</sup>

We can only speculate as to why Theobald told such a fantastic tale. Possibly he was expressing contempt for his former religion, or maybe he wanted to prove the sincerity of his conversion. Whatever his reason, he took a Jewish idea, namely Old Testament sacrifice, mixed in the Christian notion of sacrificial blood, and gave to Thomas, and ultimately to Christians everywhere, a reason to see the unfortunate death of a child during Easter Week, as a ritual crucifixion, performed as part of an international Jewish conspiracy. Out of one man's blind desire to prove, or even to create, a saint, two distinct, yet intrinsically linked, charges - that of ritual crucifixion and of Jewish Conspiracy - flowed. Where there was a ritual crucifixion charge, and thereafter any accusation of ritual murder, there was in the background the reminder of Jewish Conspiracy.

The charge of ritual crucifixion, once launched in Norwich, spread throughout England and to the continent. Ritual crucifixion brought with it many advantages. For the church such a charge meant a moment of sanctity and fame, and occasionally, where shrines were erected there was the glory of having a saint and martyr. In the churches where shrines were formed there were tales of miracles, which drew pilgrims, who also brought money. Thus a ritual crucifixion could provide both fame and a temporary prosperity to the church in question.

For the Christian populace the charge of ritual crucifixion also brought a number of advantages. On the surface it provided a seemingly legitimate means of attacking, torturing and putting to death individual Jews, and sometimes entire Jewish communities. On a much deeper level the act provided a measure of reassurance. It demonstrated that the crucifixion was not only a historical, unrepeatable event, but a recurring tragedy or "crime" perpetrated by Jews, both ancient and contemporary. Thus it brought the salvific nature of the crucifixion out of history and into the immediate world of the Christian, making it all the more real, more so than the Mass ever could. Furthermore, as Hsia points out, "by exposing the 'crimes' of the Jews and avenging the 'murders', sacrificing the evildoers to the offended deity," the Christian masses "celebrated

the triumph of Christianity and avenged and vindicated the historical crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>32</sup>

The appeal of this conspiracy libel was almost immediate, as was the effort to establish shrines. In 1168 a case almost identical in form to that of Norwich led to a cathedral shrine for Harold of Gloucester.<sup>33</sup> Around 1171, a similar accusation led to the establishment of the shrine of Richard of Pontoise at Paris<sup>34</sup> whilst in 1181 a shrine was established at Bury St. Edmunds to Robert, who was supposedly killed secretly by a Jew. Some sixty years later a shrine was established in London after the body of a baby boy was discovered in the cemetery of St. Benet's, in 1244. The corpse bore none of the signs of crucifixion but there were a number of marks on his arms, legs and chest which were thought to be Hebrew letters. A number of Jewish converts were charged with deciphering the letters, but unlike their predecessor Theobald, they evidently were unable to furnish a suitable fantasy, for although all the Jews of England were ordered to pay a large fine, no one was executed for the crime.<sup>35</sup>

Of course not every attempt at accusing Jews of ritual crucifixion led to a shrine. But this did not act as a deterrent; indeed, rumours seem to have increased, one suspects simply because of continual attempts to establish shrines. For example, in Winchester in 1192 a rumour circulated that the Jews there had murdered a Christian child. No shrine was established, neither was one created in 1225 when a Winchester Jew was accused of killing a girl later found to be still alive. But, one's suspicion that Winchester wanted a ritual murder shrine is strengthened by the imprisonment of Jews there in 1232 on suspicion that they were responsible for the death of a boy whose broken body had been discovered. They were freed, however, before their trial, whereas the mother who had also been arrested was kept in prison.<sup>36</sup> The frequent attempts to establish shrines and the increase in rumoured killings meant that whenever the body of a child was discovered, Jews were naturally suspected of having committed the murder.

As the rumours increased, so too did the theme of a Jewish conspiracy aimed at mocking Christ and Christianity. Echoes of Theobald's fantasy can be clearly seen in the tale told to Philip Augustus, the future Philip II of France, by

playmates, sometime around 1179. They related that Jews annually cut the throat of a Christian boy in the catacombs under Paris to insult Christ and as a quasi-sacrifice. In 1205, Innocent III reported in all seriousness that Jews in France, because of their evil nature, seized the opportunity of living among Christians to kill their hosts secretly, "as recently said to have happened to a poor scholar found dead in their latrines."<sup>37</sup>

By the middle of the thirteenth century, five shrines to alleged victims of ritual murder had been established, of which four were in England, the land where the fantasy had originated. They there were constant reminders of the belief that Jews, as part of some ancient conspiracy, did commit murders in order to mock Christ. The tales and rumours were fully supported by local ecclesiastical authorities who used the stories to stir up a "mighty wave of superstitious credulity, unreasoning hate, and insatiable ferocity,"<sup>38</sup> Yet, no responsible secular authority had acted on the charge. Louis VII had not believed the charge made at Blois in 1171, and no English king had condemned Jews for ritual murder, despite many opportunities. Furthermore, even the Medieval popes condemned the tales as baseless and inconsistent with Jewish teaching. Indeed in 1247 Innocent IV issued a bull, which while it did not pass a final judgement on the question of ritual crucifixion, was intended to remind the faithful of the commandment "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." He himself obviously did not believe that there was any truth in these stories, which were rapidly becoming connected with the horrible traffic in dead bodies. Yet, his protest against these abominations had little effect on the passions and prejudices of the time.

In 1255, eight years after the publication of the papal bull, there arose in Lincoln a charge of ritual crucifixion which had a profound impact on the Jews of England. In 1255 a large number of Jews were in Lincoln to attend the wedding of Belaset, daughter of Magister Benedict fil'Moses, an eminent Jew. The day after the wedding the body of Hugh, a Christian boy who had been missing for three weeks, was discovered in a cesspool into which he had fallen, most probably by accident. But, a more dramatic explanation immediately suggested itself. There were a large number of Jews, a dead Christian boy, and

had not Theobald referred only a century previously to Jews meeting, plotting, casting lots, conspiring to crucify? Tales of Ritual Murders, no doubt, immediately sprang to mind. Indeed, the contemporary chronicler Matthew Paris wrote what he and other Christians believed had happened. The Jews of Lincoln, he said, stole an eight year old boy, and

*Having shut him up in a room quite out of the way, where they fed him on milk and other childish nourishments, they sent to almost all the cities of England where the Jews lived, and summoned some of their sect from each city to be present at a sacrifice to take place at Lincoln, for they had, as they stated, a boy hidden for the purpose of being crucified.*

Having gathered under the pretext of a wedding, the Jews set about re-enacting a mock crucifixion with the child playing the part of Christ and a specially chosen Jew as Pilate. So, said Matthew, having tortured the boy

*They beat him until the blood flowed and he was quite livid, they crowned him with thorns, derided him, and spat upon him. They crucified him and pierced his heart with a lance. After the boy expired, they took his body down from the cross and disembowelled it.<sup>39</sup>*

Subsequently, a Jew named Chopin was arrested, and under torture confessed that "the Jews had crucified the boy in the manner that the Jews had once crucified Jesus."<sup>40</sup> Chopin, despite the promise that his life would be spared, was "tied to a horse's tail and dragged to the gallows." Ninety-six other Jews were arrested and taken to London, where eighteen of them, "the richer and higher order of the Jews of the city of Lincoln . . . were hung up, an offering to the winds."<sup>41</sup>

Matthew Paris hints that the whole story of Hugh of Lincoln was concocted by Christian moneylenders intent on ridding the city of rival Jewish lenders. Whatever the reason, it had the greatest impact of all the ritual crucifixion accusations. The boy became known as Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln; a church was dedicated to him and pilgrims came from all over Christendom to marvel at the miracles wrought there, to pray, and no doubt to

refresh their hatred of the Jews, who had conspired to crucify the child. A century later, Chaucer provided more permanent publicity for the gruesome tale in "The Prioress's Tale" in his classic Canterbury Tales. In the nineteenth century, one of the leading essayists in England, Charles Lamb, wrote: "I confess that I have not the nerve to enter their synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln." <sup>42</sup>

### iii. The Origin of the Accusation

In little over a century it became natural to believe that Jews were conspiring to mock Christ and Christianity through annual sacrifices of Christian children. We have seen how the myth of ritual crucifixion and Jewish Conspiracy, originated in Medieval England; likewise we have seen how the spread of the ritual crucifixion charge helped spread the conspiracy idea. But, we must consider how these charges originated. Were they conceived in an earlier age, or were they nothing more than a couple of imaginative stories concocted by a medieval cleric playing at being a detective and a renegade Jew, who, in attempting to prove himself a good Christian, was led into making false accusations against his former people?

The earliest recorded accusation of ritual murder made against Jews came from Apion of Alexandria in the first century C.E. The text itself is now lost, but we know of part of it through the refutation which the historian Flavius Josephus felt it necessary to write. In his book, *Against Apion*, Josephus recounts a tale in which Apion claimed that when Antiochus Epiphanes entered the temple in Jerusalem, he found there a certain Greek lying on a bed beside a table of dainties. The Greek told the king a horrible tale in which he claimed that while he was travelling in the province, he was kidnapped by foreigners, and conveyed to the temple and "fattened by the curious provisions set before him."<sup>43</sup> At first he had enjoyed them immensely, but after a while he had become suspicious and enquired of a servant the reason for this treatment. He was told that in order to fulfil one of their laws, Jews

*Catch a Greek foreigner, and fatten him thus up  
every year, and then lead him to a certain wood, and*

*kill him, and sacrifice with their accustomed solemnities, and taste of his entrails, and take an oath upon thus sacrificing a Greek, that they would ever be at enmity with the Greeks.*<sup>44</sup>

Josephus pointed out to his readers that this was an absurd tale, and concluded that, "it was a great shame for a grammarian not to be able to write true history. . . unspeakable mischiefs have been occasioned by such calumnies that are raised upon us."<sup>45</sup>

This story cannot be said to have been widespread in the ancient world; indeed, it is not repeated by other antisemitic writers, such as Juvenal and Tacitus, both of whom are assumed to have been familiar with Apion's writings. The only other source where it is mentioned is the work of another writer, Damocritus, possibly of the first century C.E..<sup>46</sup> He wrote a book about Jews in which, he related the rumour that every seven years Jews capture a foreigner, take him to the temple and sacrifice him, cutting his flesh into bits. In a few words it is the same tale told by Apion, the only difference being, that the murder occurred annually in Apion and once every seven years in Damocritus. Opinions vary as to the originator of this tale. Trachtenberg, believes that it is based on a pamphlet circulated in Alexandria during the first century B.C.E. by the rhetorician, Apollonius Molon.<sup>47</sup> Langmuir on the other hand, claims that the tale can be attributed to the historian Posidonius who wrote in the second century B.C.E. and from him it circulated in literary circles for some centuries afterwards, where it came to the attention of Molon, Damocritus and Apion.<sup>48</sup> This idea seems to be backed up by Josephus, who says that the story goes back to Greek writers who were more concerned with upholding the reputation of the half demented king, Antiochus Epiphanes, than with giving fair description of the temple and its rites.<sup>49</sup>

This early ritual murder accusation constituted an expression of hostility toward an enemy people, with the purely ritual element of secondary importance. Such accusations were far from uncommon in the ancient world, and many others besides Jews were also their victims. During the first few centuries of the Christian era, Christians themselves were often accused by pagans, and perhaps even by Jews, of killing and sacrificing infants.<sup>50</sup> In the

second century C.E. the Church Father Tertullian complained: "We are said to be the most criminal of men, on the score of our sacramental baby-killing, and the baby eating that goes with it." He further complained that judicial torture was applied to Christians because of this accusation:

*It ought . . . to be wrung out of us [whenever that false charge is made] how many murdered babies each of us has tasted . . . Oh! the glory of that magistrate who had brought to light some Christian who had eaten up to date a hundred babies.<sup>51</sup>*

Similar accusations were made by Christians against the gnostics. It should be noted, however, that despite the fact that Christian writers were familiar with Josephus's works, they never referred to the charge made by Apion. Indeed, there seems to have been no other accusation of ritual murder made against Jews before the twelfth century.

Apion's fable bears very little resemblance to the charge of ritual crucifixion made by Thomas. Indeed, the only point of similarity is the fact that both killings were said to be an expression of hostility against an enemy people. Apion's tale is of an adult male, who was fattened for a year, sacrificed in a Jewish ritual manner and partly eaten as a sign of hostility toward Greeks. Thomas's tale is of a male child who was sacrificed by crucifixion (a wholly Christian symbol) as a sign of hostility to Christ and Christians. This suggests that the later accusation was not based on the ancient charge, or possibly that the earlier myth was not even known. Evidence collected by Langmuir tends to support this theory. Langmuir believes that despite the fact that Josephus was well known in the Middle Ages, all the attention was focused on his *Antiquities* and *Jewish Wars*, whereas *Against Apion* was all but unknown, especially those sections of book 2, which contain the discussion of Apion's charge. Langmuir observes that all extant Greek manuscripts of *Against Apion* derive from a single manuscript of the eleventh century which lacks the sections containing the accusation of ritual murder. Furthermore, a major channel of transmission for Josephus's work are the numerous references and quotations in the writings of Eusebius. But, Eusebius never refers to those sections of *Against Apion* where



the ritual murder is recorded. Indeed, no one seems to have referred to them at all.

Latin versions of *Against Apion* reveal a similar story. There were Latin texts of the work available to Medieval scholars but mostly these were coupled with the *Antiquities* and *Wars*, both of which proved to be of far greater interest. Franz Blatt lists 171 Latin manuscripts containing the *Antiquities*, but only seventeen of these contained *Against Apion*, and one of these contained only the first book. Furthermore, of those seventeen manuscripts containing *Against Apion*, only seven are dated before the fourteenth century.<sup>52</sup> Carolus Boysen, in a similar study of the Latin manuscripts of Josephus, discovered that of the twenty-six manuscripts containing the Latin *Against Apion*, only five contain the book without any other work by Josephus. But, these five manuscripts all date from the fifteenth or sixteenth century, well after the accusation of ritual murder resurfaced.<sup>53</sup> It seems therefore that complete versions of *Against Apion* were very rare in the middle of the twelfth century when the Medieval accusation of ritual murder first appeared. This fact is further supported by the absence of references to the work by Medieval authors. For example Peter Comestor (died c. 1179), used Josephus more often and more explicitly than any other Church writer, yet he never refers to *Against Apion*.<sup>54</sup> Thus it seems that there was a complete discontinuity between the first accusation made in antiquity and the first medieval charge.

Having said this, however, there appears to be a number of parallels between the ancient ritual murder charge and the claims made by Theobald of a Jewish conspiracy. The ancient charge relates that in accordance with "the unutterable law of the Jews," a Greek stranger was kidnapped and fattened for a year, then taken to a wood and sacrificed. Whilst the sacrifice took place an oath of hostility was sworn against the Greeks, and "the practice was repeated annually at a fixed season."<sup>55</sup> Theobald's tale is almost identical except for the people to whom the hostility is directed, and the tale of the Jewish assembly at Narbonne. In Theobald's version the Jews meet to arrange an annual sacrifice, at a fixed time (namely Easter) as prescribed in the ancient writings of their fathers. A place is chosen by lot, and the Jews of that place informed. They

then kidnap and sacrifice a Christian child "in scorn and contempt of Christ". Unlike the case of ritual murder, there is a certain amount of continuity in the thinking of Apion and in that of Theobald.

Whether Theobald knew of Apion's tale is almost impossible to say. Texts of the tale were all but non-existent in the twelfth century, making it almost certain that in Christian circles the charge was unknown. Yet, Theobald had not originally been a Christian, but had been born and raised a Jew. Like all Jews he would have known the tales and history of the Jerusalem Temple, whether through written evidence or oral tradition, and no doubt, would have known about Antiochus Epiphanes' desecration of the Temple. It is possible that through this tradition he learnt of the original ritual murder accusation, and when approached by Thomas of Monmouth he repeated this tale with slight adaptations, such as the mention of contemporary Narbonne, and the Biblical idea of casting lots. Such a theory is, however, pure conjecture. Yet, Theobald's tale and Apion's fable are, in my opinion, too much alike to be dismissed as separate myths. Furthermore, if Theobald had been doing nothing more than attempting to prove the ritual crucifixion theory of Thomas of Monmouth, he would have told a tale in which the Jews plotted to crucify a Christian child; instead he told of an annual Jewish sacrifice, a term which did not fully prove Thomas's theory. If the tale had been suggested to him, even unconsciously, by Thomas's questioning he would have said exactly what Thomas wanted, i.e. that Jews plot an annual crucifixion. If, however, he had adapted an earlier tale to prove Thomas's theory, then it is possible that he repeated it as it was known to him, without the crucifixion motif, but with the idea of a sacrifice, as understood by both Jews and ancient Greeks. Thus it seems probable that while the myth of ritual crucifixion was conceived of in the twelfth century, the myth of a Jewish conspiracy was most likely rooted in antiquity.

Aside from Apion, there are certain other incidents which possibly helped to form the ritual crucifixion myth. In 415, a charge was brought against the Jews of Inmestar in Syria in connection with the celebration of Purim. Purim had long been the source of contention between Christians and Jews. The carnival atmosphere of Purim and the jestful heaping of abuses upon the

head of Haman, could easily lead to offensive actions on the part of Jews, and could all too easily be misinterpreted by Christians. Jews were often accused of burning an effigy of Haman made to look like Christ. Indeed, in 408 Theodosius II prohibited Jews from burning such an image or mocking the cross during Purim. In 415, a number of drunken Jews, carried away by the revelry, were alleged to have hung a Christian boy from a cross in place of Haman's effigy, and ill-treated him so much that he died. The only evidence we have for this episode comes from the fifth century Church historian, Socrates, and modern scholars are divided as to the truth of this report. Parkes and Simon accept that the Jews were drunk and did kill the child as Socrates recorded.<sup>56</sup> Juster on the other hand expressed suspicion, whilst Roth is hesitant to pronounce judgement,<sup>57</sup> and even Langmuir gives no definite judgement in his statement: "given the bitterness of relations then, the incident might have happened, but it could equally have been imagined by Socrates or others."<sup>58</sup>

An incident similar to that of Inmestar was reported to have occurred during the Purim celebrations at Bray in Northern France, in 1191. Jews there were alleged to have made a Christian act the role of Haman and executed him. Roth suggests that the ritual murder accusations originated with such acts as this occurring at Purim, which was sometimes known to have coincided with Easter.<sup>59</sup> Few scholars, however, hold with this theory. Trachtenberg believes that Roth has made too much of what amounts to "rare and purely coincidental occurrences," and further points out that ritual murder accusations had occurred prior to the Bray event.<sup>60</sup> Langmuir likewise believes that the Inmestar incident could not have influenced the first Medieval ritual murder charge, on the grounds that there is evidence that manuscripts of Socrates' tale were not available in England until the end of the twelfth century.<sup>61</sup>

At best we can say that the ritual murder accusation, as made by Thomas of Monmouth in 1150, was an independent creation, and did not rely on either of the two charges made in antiquity. However, reports of incidents such as those of antiquity, and other accusations, (such as the claims of Agobard in the ninth century that Jewish slave traders stole French children to sell to the Moors of Spain) whilst not directly influencing the ritual murder

charge, could only have served to substantiate it in the minds of the Medieval masses.

#### iv. The Blood Accusation

It took less than a century for the tale of ritual crucifixion to spread throughout Christendom and be accepted as fact. From pulpits everywhere it was told how Jews celebrated their hatred of Christ by annually crucifying a Christian child, at Easter or thereabouts. To the Medieval mind this seemed quite a logical thing for a Jew to do. As Hay points out:

*The commemoration of the passion and death of Christ is the central feature of Christian ritual, and it did not seem strange to some Christians that a hostile ceremony, with inverted rites, might be the central feature of Jewish ritual.<sup>62</sup>*

After 1235 the concept of ritual murder began to undergo certain changes. In Germany the blood accusation, a new charge totally separate from ritual crucifixion, arose. The new accusation eventually became mixed with the crucifixion motif, initially as part of the peculiar conception of how Jews celebrated Easter. But, the belief that Jews celebrated Easter, even in such a perverse fashion, eventually began to strain even the most active of imaginations, and the association gradually gave way to the idea that Jews annually sacrificed a Christian, not at Easter but at Passover, in order to collect his blood for medicinal or magical purposes.

The first case of ritual murder, in which blood was involved occurred in of Fulda, Germany in 1235. Fulda was renowned as the site of the famous German monastery where the body of the martyred St. Boniface was buried. It had also once been one of Germany's two great centres of learning, boasting vast collections of Biblical and patristic manuscripts, and many works by Classical and post classical Latin authors. However, by the thirteenth century, much of Fulda's scholarly fame had declined, although it still retained its riches, and continued to increase in secular importance.

On Christmas Day 1235, whilst a local miller and his wife were at church their mill burnt down and the bodies of their five sons were found

amongst the ruins. If this was a sad day for the miller and his wife, for the thirty-four Jews of Fulda it proved fatal, and for millions of Jews in the centuries that followed it was the start of unimagined horror. From the Dominican annalist at Erfurt, some 60 miles to the northeast of Fulda, we learn that the Jews of Fulda were accused of murdering the boys, a crime to which they confessed, claiming that two of them had killed the victims and drawn off their blood into waxed bags. Following this revelation, the Erfurt annalist tells us, on December 28th thirty-four Jews were put to death by Crusaders. He gives no reason as to why they committed this crime; however, the annalist at Marbach, some 120 miles south of Fulda, reported that the Jews had drawn the blood *ad suum remedium*, a term which Langmuir points out, "could have been used with either religious or medicinal purposes."<sup>63</sup> The annalist at Marbach also claims that it was the people of Fulda who killed the thirty-four Jews, not Crusaders.

The events that followed the deaths of the children at Fulda are not very clear. The Marbach annalist tells us that in order to get the Emperor Frederick to take action on account of the crime, the citizens of Fulda brought the bodies 150 miles to the imperial castle at Hagenau. A similar account is given by Richter Sens, which Langmuir claims is "a highly garbled account" of the Fulda case, and which Langmuir believes supports the truth of the Marbach annalist's record.<sup>64</sup> However, the account by Richter mentions neither blood nor Fulda, and is accepted by some scholars as a totally different case. For example, Dean Milman and Malcolm Hay both quote the story as an illustration of Frederick II's attitude to the blood accusation. Likewise Poliakov quotes the case as one in a list that prompted the Emperor to action.<sup>65</sup> According to Richter the bodies of three seven-year-old Christian boys were discovered in the house of a Jew at Hagenau, and it was alleged that local Jews had killed them at Passover during a mock ritual. As the emperor was not at Hagenau at the time, the Christians who discovered the bodies waited for his return and brought the bodies before him. However, Frederick II it seems did not believe their tale, and on seeing the bodies coolly replied to their accusations: "If they are dead, go bury them, for they aren't good for anything else."<sup>66</sup>

Whether the Hagenau case is genuine, and whether it came to the attention of the emperor is difficult to say. However, we know that the Fulda case did come to Frederick's attention, no doubt along with other strange tales and rumours about ritual killings, and goaded him into action. Almost immediately after the Fulda case he declared his intention to clear up the matter of the blood accusation once and for all, stating that if the stories were true he would have all Jews in the empire killed, but if they were false all Jews would be publicly exonerated. Recognising that this was a problem affecting all Christendom, Frederick first consulted the recognised Church authorities and magnates of the empire to establish whether the blood accusations were true. However, as Frederick himself summed up, the Church authorities "expressed various opinions about the case" and were "proved incapable of coming to a conclusive decision."<sup>67</sup> Frederick, therefore sent letters throughout the empire and to all the kings of Europe asking them to send him converts from Judaism to Christianity for they, as he stated, "having been Jews and having been baptised into the Christian faith, could conceal nothing, as enemies of the other Jews, of what they might have learned against them in the Mosaic books."<sup>68</sup> The speed at which he did this is evidenced by a letter he received from Henry III of England, dated February 24, 1236, in which the king remarked that he had never heard of such a crime before.<sup>69</sup>

Having gathered the converts together Frederick ordered that they "seek out the truth most diligently."<sup>70</sup> In the spring of 1236 the converts gathered and presented their conclusions to the emperor, which he in turn published in an imperial bull in July 1236. He declared that "it was not indicated in the Old Testament or in the New that Jews lust for the drinking of human blood. Rather precisely the opposite, they guard against the intake of all blood."<sup>71</sup> The document quotes from various Jewish texts in support, adding:

*We can surely assume that for those to whom even the blood of permitted animals is forbidden, the desire for human blood cannot exist, as a result of the horror of the matter, the prohibition of nature, and the common bond of the human species in which they also join Christians. Moreover, they would not expose to danger their substance and*

*persons for that which they might have freely when taken from animals.*<sup>72</sup>

The bull further extended to all Jews in Germany the privileges granted by Frederick I to the Jews of Worms, and which categorised German Jews as serfs of the imperial chamber. More importantly, Frederick absolved all Jews in Fulda and Germany of the blood accusation, and forbade anyone to make any such allegations in future. The words of this enlightened emperor, however, went unheeded and the next decade saw an upsurge in blood accusations.

In May 1247 Pope Innocent IV was forced to send two indignant protests to the Archbishop of Vienne, condemning "the cruelty of Christians who, covetous of their possessions, thirsting for their blood, despoil, torture and kill all Jews without legal judgement."<sup>73</sup> This followed the deaths of a number of Jews in the town of Valreas, in Dauphine, on the accusation that they had kidnapped and crucified a two year old girl and used her blood for their religious ceremonies. Like Frederick II, the Pope's attempt at ending the persecution came to nothing. Indeed, less than two months later, Jews in various localities in Germany found themselves the victims of attacks after it was alleged that they partook of the heart of a murdered child while solemnising Passover. Again the Pope protested strongly, and on July 5, 1247 he sent out the encyclical *Lachrymabilem Judaeorum Alemannie* to the archbishops and bishops of France and Germany. In it he defended Jews and declared that

*They are falsely accused, that in that solemnity [Passover] they make communion with the heart of a slain child. That it is believed their Law enjoins, although it is clearly contrary to the Law. No matter where a dead body is found, their persecutors wickedly throw it up to them.*<sup>74</sup>

Four days later on July 9th, Innocent IV, promulgated a bull in which he expressed disbelief about the various accusations, and strictly forbade anyone to accuse Jews of using human blood in their religious rites.<sup>75</sup>

Innocent went as far as to threaten with excommunication those who ignored his decrees. However, no one was excommunicated for it was said that the Pope had been bribed by Jews. His threats were ignored to the extent that

about twenty years later, (1272) Pope Gregory X was faced with the same situation. Jews were still being tortured and murdered for allegedly killing children to obtain their blood. Indeed, the situation had become far worse as the Pope observed on October 7, 1272:

*It happens that the fathers of certain dead children, or other Christians who are enemies of Jews, hide in secret these dead children and attempt to extort money from the Jews.*

*They affirm most falsely that the Jews themselves have stolen these children, and immolate their hearts and blood.<sup>76</sup>*

Gregory X issued an order that, in all cases where an accusation of ritual murder was brought against Jews, the testimony of Christians was not to be accepted unless an equal number of Jewish witnesses against the accused could be produced. But, like those who had gone before him, Gregory tried but inevitably failed, and the blood legend went on circulating for centuries spreading fear, suspicion, prejudice and hatred throughout Christendom.

By the end of the thirteenth century the blood accusation was firmly established. The connection of these early cases with Passover, however, was rather more vague and uncertain, as is evident from the papal allusions cited above. If we examine but a few of these cases it immediately becomes obvious that the sole accusation in the thirteenth century did not involve Passover or religious rites, but as Trachtenberg points out, the alleged "abstraction of blood, or of some other part of the body."<sup>77</sup> As we have seen the very first case in Fulda, occurred on Christmas Day, and the stated purpose was to collect the blood of the five victims. On July 1, 1267, at Pforzheim, a child was killed, and its blood supposedly collected on folded pieces of linen. Three years later on June 29, at Weissenburg, Jews were accused of suspending a child by the feet and opening every artery in its body in order to obtain all its blood. In 1287, the boy Rudolf was said to have been tortured and decapitated by Jews, whilst in 1293, it was alleged that Jews murdered a boy at Krems "in order to get his blood."<sup>78</sup>



A lack of ritual motivation pervades these cases, as does the notion of a Passover sacrifice. However, the Passover connection is not entirely absent in the thirteenth century. Richter Sens, in his account of the blood accusation at Hagenau, which some scholars believe refers to the Fulda case, set the date of the murders as March 22, 1236, the day before Passover. Likewise Pope Innocent IV in his encyclical *Lachrymabilem Judaeorum Alemannie*, refers to the supposed Jewish need for a child's heart at Passover. It appears then that during the thirteenth century the connection of the blood accusation and Passover remained little more than a rumour, which offered a plausible motive for a new form of ritual murder.

The notion that Jews needed blood to mix with the unleavened bread of Passover, or to mix with the Passover wine, seems, according to Trachtenberg, to be no earlier than the fourteenth century, and became a fixed element of the charge only in the fifteenth century.<sup>79</sup> In Savoy in 1329 a Jew confessed under torture that Jews:

*Compound out of the heads and entrails of murdered Christian children a salve or food called 'aharace' (Haroseth), which they eat every Passover in place of a sacrifice; they prepare this food at least every sixth year because they believe they are saved thereby.<sup>80</sup>*

When Martin V reiterated the traditional papal attitude towards Jews in 1422, he felt constrained to protest against the rumour that Jews "mix human blood in their unleavened bread, which the preachers of various orders spread among the people."<sup>81</sup> Likewise, one of the more important reasons given for the expulsion of Jews from Spain was that they drank Christian blood. Indeed it was claimed in Genoa in 1452, that Jews there, having murdered a child, dipped various fruits into the blood and ate them.<sup>82</sup>

Efforts to stop the spread of the blood accusation proved fruitless and charges of ritual murder gradually replaced the Crusades as a pretext for slaughtering Jews. Such accusations became fixed in the popular imagination, giving rise to cults that served to carry the bloody theme down through the ages. In many of the places where these crimes were said to have taken place,

miracles were said to happen, canonisations took place and pilgrimages continued for centuries. It mattered little whether Jews were guilty or not of ritual murder for "a little saint" to be created; it was enough that they were the ones accused. A well known example of this occurred in 1475 at Trent in the Tyrol. Following the discovery of the body of a two and a half year old Christian child called Simon in the Adige river, nine Jews were arrested and accused of ritual murder. For several days, Samuel, the most prominent among those arrested, suffered prolonged and horrific tortures, until finally he confessed that the Jewish community at Trent had murdered the child.

His "confession" was unacceptable in a number of ways. Samuel confessed that Simon was kidnapped by a Jewish physician, and "to the accompaniment of curses and spells" was crucified and drained of blood. The body was then hidden by the officers of the synagogue until it could be disposed of in the river. As the crime took place two days after Passover, and therefore had no connection with the Passover ceremony, it was alleged that Samuel admitted that "fresh Christian blood" had been required because it was a jubilee year. However, the jubilee year was part of the Catholic calendar, and Jews had not celebrated the jubilee year since biblical times, if at all. It seems probable that Samuel withdrew this initial confession, for two months after he was first tortured, he was tortured again, and agreed "to tell the truth, provided they would promise to have him burned and not put him to any other death." Despite attempts by the Pope to exonerate the nine Jews, on June 23, Samuel and the eight arrested with him were burned at the stake, as was the entire Jewish community of Trent, even those who had chosen to be baptised.<sup>83</sup>

The Trent episode gave a renewed impetus to ritual murder charges in Europe. A commemorative chapel was erected in Trent, and the tomb of Simon became a centre of pilgrimage. However, Pope Sixtus IV, during whose pontificate the boy was "martyred," refused to allow the child to be honoured as a saint, and subsequent Popes repeated the prohibition. In 1588, over a century later, Pope Sixtus V gave way to popular opinion and the name of Simon of

Trent was added to the Roman Martyrology, although the Holy See still did not consent to attribute his murder to Jews.

To those intent on creating "little saints" and their associated shrines, it mattered not whether Jews were guilty of the crime, for popular opinion was such that Jews could be blamed for anything. In fact it often did not matter that no crime whatsoever had been committed, or whether the "little saint" existed. Indeed the absence of a "victim" was no hindrance to the legend. A chapel in the cathedral of Saragossa honours the patron saint of choirboys, Domingo del Val, who was supposedly crucified by Jews in the thirteenth century. There is no evidence that he existed.<sup>84</sup> Some twenty miles from Toledo a village still celebrates the festival of the Holy *Niño* of La Guardia. Again there is no evidence to suggest that the *Niño* ever existed.<sup>85</sup>

The blood accusation itself served to keep alive the ritual murder charge, long after the original ritual crucifixion accusation had died out. The new charge was more adaptable and far more acceptable than the tales of Easter sacrifices. But, if Thomas of Monmouth's tale of the Easter sacrifice did not survive for long, Theobald's story of the annual rabbinical conference was far from over, for it had struck a responsive chord in the public fancy. The idea of a Jewish conspiracy spread rapidly along with the blood accusation. The shady rabbinic body no longer cast lots to carry out crucifixions, but instead organised the kidnap and murder of Christian children, and oversaw the distribution of blood and organs taken from the victims of this new form of ritual murder. The blood accusation kept the myth of ritual murder alive, and in turn ritual murder kept the Jewish Conspiracy fantasy alive for centuries.

#### v. Origins and Reasons for the Blood Accusation

As we have seen the events at Fulda had a wide impact. They engaged the attention of the highest authorities in thirteenth century Europe, and the blood accusation they initiated would pursue Jews down to the twentieth century. It is important to note that the accusation made at Fulda was unique in a number of respects. From 1150 to 1235, for almost a century, the Jews of England and France were accused of crucifying Christian children, but never

of a crime involving blood. More interesting is the fact that prior to 1235 no accusation of ritual murder, of any type, had been made in Germany. It is true that between 1146 and 1235 Jews in Germany were on several occasions accused of killing Christians, but in none of these cases were they accused of ritual murder.<sup>86</sup> When the ritual murder accusation was finally made in Germany, in 1235, it was not the familiar Easter ritual crucifixion, but a crime committed at no specific time and which involved the obtaining of blood.<sup>87</sup> Having recognised the unique nature of the thirteenth century blood accusation, an obvious question arises. Where did the new accusation come from and why did it arise in thirteenth century Germany?

There is no single certain reason why the blood accusation entered Germany at this time. Unlike the ritual crucifixion accusations, there was no Thomas of Monmouth equivalent, or no Jewish apostate trying to prove his new found faith. Instead we have a mixture of ideas and situations which together could have created the new accusation, although even of this we cannot be fully certain. We can almost certainly dismiss the notion that the new accusation resulted from the introduction of the ritual crucifixion libel into Germany. If the earlier libel had been the source of the blood accusation then we can be certain that a number of elements, such as crucifixion and the Easter association from the older accusation would have found their way into the new myth. Instead we have a complete departure from the earlier pattern and this, along with the fact that the blood accusation was later incorporated into the ritual crucifixion myth, suggests that the two were initially separate entities.

It is, however, possible that one of the sources frequently referred to by scholars when searching for the origins of the ritual murder libel, namely *Against Apion*, was the source of the blood accusation. *Against Apion*, as we have seen is the earliest known record of an accusation of ritual murder, but manuscripts of it seem to have been unavailable in England and France at the time of the ritual crucifixion libel. Furthermore, the tale recounted by Apion seems to have no connection with ritual crucifixion. However, in the case of the blood accusation it is possible that there was some connection with Apion's tale. As we have seen already, there were few manuscripts of Josephus's *Against*

*Apion* available in northern Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth century. There were, however, some manuscripts known at the time in Italy,<sup>88</sup> and it is not impossible that some were available at Fulda, which had once been a great centre of learning which had boasted a vast collection of early manuscripts. Furthermore, *Apion's* tale involved allegations that Jews partook of the entrails of the sacrificed Greek, an action which is alluded to in some early cases of the blood accusation. It is therefore not impossible that someone who had read *Against Apion* at Fulda projected the idea of a ritual involving blood onto contemporary Jews, following the unfortunate death of some children in a fire.

Of course it is not enough to suppose that a mere document could have influenced the people of Fulda enough to create the new myth of ritual murder. Indeed a lot of other factors would have had to be involved in creating an atmosphere whereby an accusation such as the blood libel could and would be accepted. In Germany such an atmosphere existed. In September 1234 Pope Gregory IX, proclaimed a Crusade to the Holy Land. Ever since 1096, calls to crusade had brought massacres of Jews in Germany.<sup>89</sup> Initially they had been attacked because of the view that they were Christ killers, but since the middle of the twelfth century, there had also been added to that attitude a certain amount of hostility against them as moneylenders. The papacy and secular authorities had recognised this problem and taken steps to prevent attacks occurring, especially during Crusades, and had, to some extent, managed to reduce the number of deaths. Nonetheless, when a Crusade was called attention was suddenly turned upon Jews. For those reasons Gregory IX reissued the famous papal bull of protection for Jews, *Sicut Judeis*, on May 3, 1235. However, proclaiming protection was one thing, forcing the Crusaders, who swarmed throughout the land, to leave Jews alone, was another. Indeed, as the Erfurt annalist recorded, there is a possibility that the Crusaders were responsible for killing the thirty-four accused Jews at Fulda. In this light it is possible that the Fulda blood libel was invented to justify Crusader murders.

The year 1235 also saw a different form of unrest directed towards Jews in Germany. Between January 1 and 3 of that year, eight Jews were killed and burned at Lauda on the Tauber, after the murder of a Christian. Ten months

later, on November 12, Jews at Wolfshagen were also accused of killing a Christian, and eighteen were put to death. As the annalist at Erfurt commented, "it was seen proper that those who thirsted for blood should shed their own blood in accordance with the prophecy that 'since you hate blood, blood will follow you'."<sup>90</sup> Despite the fact that the Dominican annalist was thinking of Christ's blood and did not mention ritual murder, his words can easily be viewed as indicative of a process of thinking that led to the Fulda charge. For, as Jews had murdered Christ and spilled the blood of an innocent, so now too at Fulda they were murdering innocent Christian children and once more spilling innocent blood. Indeed the accusation which spread after Fulda, as reported by Frederick II in 1236, was that Jews "thirsted for blood," the very same phrase used by the annalist.

Whilst these demonstrate how the ritual murder charge could have arisen in Germany, they do not adequately explain how the idea that Jews stole blood and bodily parts and partook of them in strange ceremonies occurred. However, there was a climate of thought that could have prompted such accusations in Germany. During the 1230s Germany was subject to a large number of fantasies connected with the growing search for heretics. In 1231 Gregory IX wrote a number of letters commanding various church leaders to engage in a campaign against heretics. Foremost in this campaign was one Conrad of Marburg, who, along with a number of bishops and archbishops, and with a great deal of secular support, saw to it that between 1231 and 1234 an extremely large number of supposed heretics were executed. Tales of horrific heretical deeds abounded; indeed Gregory IX issued the famous bull *Vox in Rama* upon the subject, helping to transmit the tales to a wider audience. Fantasies about nocturnal rituals involving toads, cats, and the Devil abounded, along with stories of secret rituals involving bleeding hosts. There was also talk of women bearing children fathered by the Devil, and of the resulting babies being thrown into fires and their ashes consumed by the heretics.<sup>91</sup>

We cannot directly attribute the blood accusation to those such as Conrad and his search for heretics. Indeed our most direct evidence of the fantasies involving heresies, *Vox in Rama*, says nothing of Jews or stealing

blood. What is important, however, is that little over a year before the crime at Fulda, thoughts about blood, the consuming of burnt babies and secret rituals had abounded throughout Germany, and especially in Conrad's home town of Marburg, less than fifty miles from Fulda. Such ideas were no doubt still in the minds of the citizens at Fulda in 1235, and in the minds of those who had been called to Crusade in September 1234, and it took little imagination to project similar horrific tales upon the worst of all heretics, the enemies of Christ, the Jews.<sup>92</sup>

The most we can say about the fantasy created at Fulda, is that it was the product of many minds. Blame cannot be attributed to one person, but only to a number of different thoughts and ideas. The views of the Crusaders who saw Jews as the enemies of Christ; those who suggested, and those who believed, the fantastic tales of heresies; those who believed quite literally that Jews "thirsted for blood"; the murders of Christians in 1135; and perhaps even a tale which had survived from antiquity about the ritual murder of Greeks, all culminated in the fantasy created at Fulda.

The attractiveness of this new fantasy about Jews is obvious from its rapid spread, to which Frederick II's bull of 1236 and Gregory IX's bull of 1247 attest. This rapidity was, no doubt, assisted by the citizens of Fulda, who took the bodies of the miller's sons some 150 miles to Hagenau, spreading the new libel in the towns and villages along the way. The tale was accepted quickly and remained long after the idea of an Easter sacrifice had died out, because of the number of beliefs prevalent in Medieval society about the value of blood in medicine, sorcery and magic.

The statement that the Jews needed the blood of a murdered Christian child for medicinal purposes occurred early in the thirteenth century, with the very first case of the blood accusation. What the "medicinal purpose" was is not made clear, but a fable that gained rapid popularity in that century points to Jews taking blood for the purpose of self healing. In his account of the Pforzheim incident in 1267, Thomas of Cantimpre explained that since the Jews had called out to Pilate, "His blood be upon us and on our children," (Matt. 27.25) they had been afflicted with haemorrhoids. A sage had told them that

they could only be cured by Christian blood, and taking the advice literally had adopted the custom of annually shedding Christian blood which they smeared upon their bodies "in order that they might recover from their malady."<sup>93</sup> Through the following centuries the Jewish maladies varied considerably, but the treatment never changed. Jews needed blood to cure themselves, and a suitable "confession" as to the illness they needed to cure, could always be produced under torture.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, some of these strange ideas were summed up in 1494, by the citizens of Tyrau:

*Firstly, they are convinced by the judgement of their ancestors, that the blood of a Christian was a good remedy for the alleviation of the wound of circumcision. Secondly, they were of the opinion that this blood put into food, is very efficacious for the awakening of mutual love. Thirdly, they had discovered, as men and women among them suffered equally from menstruation, that the blood of a Christian is a specific medicine for it, when drunk. Fourthly, they had an ancient but secret ordinance by which they are under obligation to shed Christian blood in honour of God in daily sacrifices in some spot or other . . . the lot for the present year had fallen on the Tyranau Jews.<sup>95</sup>*

It is ironic to note that the ritual murder charge was directed against the first nation in history to outlaw human sacrifice (Genesis 22, Deuteronomy 18:10). It is an even greater irony that the charge survives to the present day in the form of the blood accusation, made against the only nation in the Near East to prohibit the consumption of blood, (Leviticus 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14; Deuteronomy 12:15-16; 12:23-25). The unsavoury catalogue of so called crimes and "confessions" are, as Trachtenberg points out:

*Tragic testimony to the plight of Jews forced to admit not what was true but what their persecutors believed and insisted upon hearing; testimony, too, to the effectiveness of a propaganda against which the fervid disclaimers of Jews and the protestations of leading Christians were of no avail.<sup>96</sup>*



## Host and Image Desecration

By the end of the thirteenth century, when the myth of ritual murder had become firmly rooted in northern Europe, a new and most unreasonable fantasy appeared, which not only served to support the theory of a Jewish Conspiracy against Christ, but also altered the original Conspiracy idea by adding an element of blasphemy to it.

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council accepted the doctrine of transubstantiation as official Church dogma. Christians had long debated whether Christ's body and blood were present in the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist, and the new dogma asserted that the wafer used at mass was miraculously transformed into the body of Jesus. The wafer was to be regarded not as a symbolic representation, but as Christ's actual body. Though doubts continued, the cult of the consecrated host was keenly developed. The masses believed as directed, to the extent that some, in order to witness Christ's presence in the wafer, rushed from church to church just to see the priest elevate the host.

Hidden doubts, however, still continued to plague many. Berthold of Regensburg, a popular preacher of the thirteenth century, found it necessary, for instance, to explain why Christ, though present in the wafer, could not be seen in it. He asked, "who would like to bite off the little head, or the little hands, or the little feet of a little child?"<sup>97</sup> The best indication that these doubts still continued was the way Jews, who, by no stretch of the imagination would believe this dogma, were exploited to prove its truth. Tales linking Jews with the host were current before the thirteenth century. A tenth century story told of a Jew who, wishing to insult Christ, went to mass and received the wafer on his tongue. But, as he was about to transfer the wafer to his pocket was seized with unbearable pains and was unable to shut his mouth. The tale concludes with the conversion of the Jew.<sup>98</sup> The purpose of these early tales was simply to illustrate the power of the host in miraculously affecting the conversion of Jews. During the thirteenth century, however, when so much had been staked on the reality of Christ's physical presence in the Mass, Jews were suddenly accused of torturing Christ by assaulting the host. Unlike the few conversion stories, the

new fable proved to be immensely persuasive and resulted in the slaughter of thousands of Jews, and the erection of shrines to the profaned hosts.

In the typical thirteenth century tale a wise, and often prominent, Jew bribes a Christian to secure a host. The Jew then mutilates it by piercing, beating, cutting, grinding in a mortar, burning, or whatever manner takes the fancy of the narrator. After such treatment the host pours with blood and some miraculous event occurs. Again the miracle is down to the imagination of the narrator, so the Jew may be paralysed, struck dumb, seized by pains, or the wafer may fly out of his grasp, cry out, or be transformed into a child. Here the fable ends and horrible reality begins. The Jew is apprehended and, along with all the other Jews that can be found, is executed. The tale served the two-fold purpose of presenting to the doubtful a real miracle, which proved that the host was indeed the body of Christ. For it could be argued that even the unbelieving Jew recognised His presence. Furthermore, by having Jews torture the host the reality of the crucifixion, and the role of Jews as deicides, was brought firmly into the present. Thus, not only did Jews desire to ritually murder a Christ substitute, but were also driven to attempt to destroy Him through the host. It should be noted that host desecration was easier by far to "prove" than a ritual murder, for it did not involve problem of having to provide corpses.

A number of reasons made the tale of host desecration seem plausible. It found fertile soil, for example, in the fact that Jewish pawnbrokers and moneylenders would often take church vessels made from precious metals as pledges. This practice ended sometime after the Second Crusade when a rabbinic conference decided that no Jew was to buy crucifixes or church vessels, because such an act might endanger the entire Jewish community.<sup>99</sup> Physical evidence that made the accusation seem plausible was furnished by the red spots that often appeared on the wafers after they had been stored for a long time. To many tales of host desecration there was often added the statement that the pierced host bled. This apparent "miracle" is caused by a red fungoid organism called *Micrococcus prodigiosus*, known to form on stale food especially bread;<sup>100</sup> indeed, such formations of bacteria gave rise to *Corpus Christi Day*.<sup>101</sup> The idea of blood also gave the tales greater credibility, for as

with the blood accusation, it was believed that Jews utilised the blood that came from the wafer to cure their secret ailments. The primary purpose of this alleged campaign of host mutilation, as the Christian masses saw it, was to re-enact the crucifixion, evident from the frequent accusations that the host had been pierced with knives and nails. It could be possible that host mutilation for the purpose of crucifying Christ, helped the demise, and possibly replaced the charge of ritual crucifixion, which began to lose its credibility during this century.

The charge of host desecration led to the death of thousands of Jews, and the rumour persisted until the Reformation broke the hold of Catholic doctrine upon the masses. The first recorded case of host desecration occurred at Belitz near Berlin in 1243. The city's entire Jewish population was burned alive for allegedly torturing a wafer. The spot where they died was subsequently called the *Judenberg*. The charge, however, did not become popular, until the end of the century when a case in Paris, in 1290, brought it once again to public attention. The case was clearly designed to illustrate the devil-inspired blindness of Jews, for it was alleged that a Jew of Paris misused a host in order to show his coreligionists "how silly the Christians are, who believe in such things."<sup>102</sup> The incident was commemorated in the Church of the Rue des Billettes and in a local confraternity. From the continent the rumours of host desecration spread unchecked although it is significant to note that almost no cases are recorded in Italy, partly owing to the protective policies of the popes and partly owing to the more sceptical nature of the Italian people. Indeed, the most famous Italian case of host desecration, "the miracle of Bolsena" (1264), involved a doubting priest, not a Jew.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, the most remarkable artistic representation of the desecration of a host can be found on the famous altar predella, painted by Paolo Uccello (1397-1475) for the Confraternity of the Sacred Sacrament at Urbino.<sup>104</sup> In England, whence Jews had been expelled in 1290, before the libel became widely known and accepted, it received its reflection in the Croxton Sacrament Play, written in 1461, long after the expulsion.<sup>105</sup>

In the spring of 1298 particularly violent persecutions of Jews broke out in Franconia and Bavaria, after the Jews of Rottingen, Franconia, were accused

of stealing a host and pounding it to pieces in a mortar until blood flowed from it. An inhabitant of the town, named Rindfleisch, a nobleman according to some, though others called him a butcher, (*Rindfleisch* means "beef flesh"), aroused the populace, calling for vengeance upon Jews. Under his leadership, an armed band fell upon the Rottingen Jews and burned every last one of them. Such an action was of course nothing new, the very first host desecration accusation had resulted in the destruction of the whole Jewish community at Belitz, and frequent accusations of ritual murder brought similar results. But what followed the massacre at Rottingen was far more unusual. Instead of dispersing, the *Rindfleisch* band, or *Judenschlächter* (Jew killers), wandered from city to city, looting and burning Jewish neighbourhoods and slaughtering all the inhabitants, except for the few who accepted baptism. The campaign lasted several months (April-September 1298) and every Jewish community in Bavaria, with the exception of those in Regensburg and Augsburg, fell victim to the slaughter, which extended as far as Austria. One contemporary chronicler, Gottfried von Ensmingen, claimed that one hundred thousand Jews were massacred in these raids, a figure which Poliakov states cannot be too greatly exaggerated, for a contemporary list from a Jewish source gives a figure of five thousand deaths in the area at that time.<sup>106</sup>

The *Rindfleisch* incident was unique in that it was a departure from the normal turn of events that followed any accusation against the Jewish community. Prior to this episode such attacks on Jews had remained in a sense localised. If a Jew, or Jewish group had committed a crime, then it was usual for that Jew, or group, to be massacred along with the Jewish community of his particular town or city. But, the *Rindfleisch* band saw to it that all the Jews of the country were held responsible for a crime said to have been committed by one, or at most, several, Jews. It is difficult to say why the *Rindfleisch* band departed from the normal procedure of localising such events. It is possible, as Poliakov suggests, that the accusation was a pretext for widespread pillaging,<sup>107</sup> but this does not satisfactorily explain why the band murdered Jews during the pillaging, unless we accept that the pillaging somehow got out of hand. It is more likely that the group, inspired by the recent focus on ritual murder saw the

act of host desecration as the Church intended them to see it, that is, as another part of the Jewish Conspiracy against Christ. As Jews murdered Christian children to mock Christ, so now they were turning their attention to the body of Christ, in the form of the host, and venting their hatred upon that. Just as the Conspiracy Theory had implicated all Jewry in the murder of innocent Christian children, so now it showed how all Jews plotted against Christ and were together in the conspiracy to desecrate the host. A similar theme is expressed in a German broadsheet, dated c.1480, showing an alleged desecration of a host in Passau, Bavaria.<sup>108</sup> The broadsheet tells how the stolen wafers were distributed from the synagogue in Passau to Jews in Prague and Salzburg. The theme of the Jewish community spreading ill-gotten gains between themselves had already become prevalent with the blood accusation. It was believed that the central Jewish council in Spain organised the distribution of blood between the communities after a ritual murder, and the Passau broadsheet likewise suggests a similar attitude, the only difference being, the items distributed are sacred wafers and not blood although, like the stolen blood, the host wafer was supposedly destined for medicinal or magical purposes.

The theme of group desecration of the host, soon became more popular than the idea of an individual acting in such a manner. Indeed, as with the Passau broadsheet it quickly became the belief that an individual Jew secured the host wafer to distribute to the Jewish community. Sometimes instead of distributing the wafers the individual was said to invite the leading Jews of the country to gather together and participate in the act of desecration. In a good many instances the proceedings were said to have taken place in a synagogue as if the act of desecration were part of a ritual, (a further suggestion that host profanation was seen as a form of ritual crucifixion). In at least two instances the host desecration was alleged to have occurred at wedding feasts, supposedly as the culminating ceremony of the festivities.

The idea that the group rather than the individual Jew was guilty of torturing the host meant that massacres on a large scale were far more justifiable. After all, to the Medieval masses, did not every single Jew desire the death of Christ? So it was that large scale massacres followed throughout the

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. An accusation in 1337 in Deggendorf, Bavaria, brought about the massacre of the entire Jewish community, and sparked off a series of killings in Bavaria, Bohemia, Moravia, and Austria. The events are still celebrated locally as the Deggendorf Gnad. In 1408 an act of host desecration was said to have caused an earthquake in Segovia, Spain, which resulted in the destruction of the synagogue. Large numbers of leading Jews were tortured and murdered.<sup>109</sup> The incident remains the occasion of the great local feast of *Corpus Christi*.

Most of these accusations, as Trachtenberg points out, "had no material basis and were pure inventions, as the fixed pattern and the miracles indicate."<sup>110</sup> It was known at the time too that in a great number of cases the wafers were actually "planted" on or near Jewish premises in order to incite the people into taking action against Jews. A notorious case of this sort occurred in 1338, when following a report that a bleeding host had been found at the home of a Jew in Pulkau, the members of the Jewish communities in Lower Austria, Moravia and Steiermark were exterminated. Pope Benedict XII, ordered Duke Albert of Austria to investigate the incident. Albert's report disclosed that the Jew was innocent of the charge, for the blood covered wafer had been placed in some straw outside his house by a Christian. The report was too late to save the lives of those Jews exterminated because of the malice of one Christian.<sup>111</sup> Having said this, there are documented cases in which it is likely that certain Jews were indeed guilty of host desecration, although not in the sense that the Medieval masses were led to believe. Zefira Entin Rokeah, in a study of the court records of Norwich, found a case dated from 1285 which suggests that during a church robbery carried out by both Jews and Christians a host was indeed desecrated.<sup>112</sup> However, evidence suggests that the desecration was not a deliberate act but happened accidentally during the search for valuables. Rokeah states quite clearly that "there was no religious motive involved" for it was highly unlikely that Jews would undertake such an act in front of their fellow-Christian robbers.<sup>113</sup>

A similar charge to which Jews were also subject was that of image desecration. Most scholars emphasise host desecration charges but few ever

mention the charge that Jews defiled religious paintings, images and crucifixes in the hope of hurting Christ and His followers. To the Medieval mind it was natural to believe that just as Christ was present physically in the host, so likewise He was present in the crucifixes and other representations of Him that adorned Churches and Christian homes. Not only Christ but other holy people, such as the Virgin Mary and the Saints, were also considered to be physically present in their images and representations. Such ideas were not of course official doctrine but, as Trachtenberg points out, were "nonetheless part and parcel of the average Christian's belief."<sup>114</sup>

Charges of image mutilation followed the pattern of host desecration closely. Again it was claimed that a Jew having stolen, or bought, an image set about insulting it by hurling abuse, spitting at it, throwing stones, etc. Having done this the Jew then attempts to injure the image, piercing it, cutting and slashing it, or shattering it. The image then bleeds and retaliates miraculously against its persecutor. The Jew was said to have carried out such a crime because of his hatred of Christ and because of the Jewish plot to crucify Him. Indeed one of the early legends concerning the rites of conversion to Judaism was said to involve the act of stabbing a crucifix, no doubt as a symbol of contempt for Christ.<sup>115</sup> In the miracle plays, Jews were sometimes represented as re-crucifying the figure of Jesus torn from a crucifix.<sup>116</sup> There is also some suggestion that Jews mutilated images in order to injure the Christian masses, as well as its foremost figures. One tale relates that in 1020 a whirlwind and an earthquake almost destroyed Rome as the result of a Jew mocking a crucifix.<sup>117</sup> As the images were said to bleed, it is natural to assume that, as with host desecration and ritual murder, the blood was supposed to have been utilised by Jews. However, the stories are strangely silent on this point, but the frequency with which the blood motif appears, and the fact that the stories are almost the same as those of host desecration suggests that the blood motif is not without significance.

Crucifixes, were alleged to be the favourite object for desecration. Indeed the myth of image mutilation is replete with tales of Jews displaying almost foolhardy daring in order to obtain a crucifix. One story dating from

1268 tells how during a University procession in Oxford on Ascension Day, a Jew "of the most consummate impudence" snatched the cross from the bearer and "trode it under his feet as a token of his contempt of Christ."<sup>118</sup> A similar tale was reported in 1577 by a Czech writer, who claimed that a Jew entered a church, tore down the crucifix and, in full view of the assembled congregation, allowed his horse to trample upon it.<sup>119</sup>

In more than one instance Jews were actually accused of making their own images upon which to vent their hatred. A poem by Gonzalo de Berceo of Spain, dated around 1250, relates that whilst the Archbishop of Toledo was celebrating mass a miraculous apparition of the Virgin appeared to him, and cried out that Jews were again crucifying "my son." The people and all the clergy rushed out and were guided by the apparition to the place. "They found in a house of the Chief Rabbi a great figure of wax fashioned like a man - like the Lord Christ was it - set there crucified, fastened with great nails, with a great wound in its side."<sup>120</sup> A number of Spanish poems were also devoted to a similar theme, which in turn led to a decree in 1263, banning Jews in Spain from making waxen images of the crucifixion.<sup>121</sup>

The Medieval chronicles were sprinkled liberally with such tales. The legends of image mutilation by Jews, and their subsequent miraculous conversions to Christianity were all material for the chronicler to embroider and embellish. From the chronicles they entered folklore, literature and drama, so that none could be ignorant of the myth, or fail to be suspicious of Jews and to hate them to the end. Ironically this hate propaganda, written by Churchmen, was intended, as Gregory of Tours expressly admitted, as propaganda for the Christian faith, that is why the miracles are always prominent in them. Along with the fantasies of host desecration and ritual murder, they are

*Narratives in which legend is rationalised and passes for authentic history, in which history is made the pendant of legend, or vice versa. One never knows where the one ends and the other begins.*<sup>122</sup>

For Jews beginnings and endings were more clearly defined. If it began as a fable, then it invariably ended in death.



## The Jewish Devil

Ritual murder and charges of host and image desecration were the first accusations of conspiracy levelled at Jews. As we have seen, whilst the charge of host desecration was altogether new, that of ritual murder seems to have existed as early as the first century C.E.. The pagan nations often accused Jews of kidnapping strangers in order to sacrifice them, and equally Jews had often accused early Christians of similar deeds. From the twelfth-century onwards, however, the ritual murder charge was aimed exclusively at Jews. Furthermore, the idea that Jews murdered mainly adult strangers because of xenophobia, was replaced by the claim that they murdered Christian children principally because they were innocent, and therefore could be viewed as a Christ substitute. Thus the crime changed from one which could be committed against anyone, to one committed exclusively against Christianity.

The charge of ritual murder, and in some cases host desecration, was highly profitable for the Medieval clergy in terms of shrines, which brought pilgrims who in turn brought money. But, as well as being profitable, the charges also stirred up Christians, and provided seemingly legitimate excuse to attack and put to death large numbers of Jews. The fact that ritual murder was profitable and a good reason for killing Jews, goes a long way towards answering the question of why it quickly gained immense popularity and remained prominent for several centuries afterwards. However, whilst both these reasons explain the appeal of ritual murder neither adequately answers all questions that its reappearance in the twelfth century and its subsequent unquestioned acceptance raises. For example, why was ritual murder so readily accepted in the twelfth century when it had been all but dismissed as a credible act in earlier centuries? Why was it aimed exclusively at Jews when once it had been used of both Jew and Christian alike? Why had the charge changed in character to the extent that it could be viewed as a crime aimed solely at Christianity? To believe that avarice and violence alone can answer all these questions, we must first accept the impossible notion that neither of these conditions of human nature had existed before the twelfth century, for if they had, the revival of the ritual murder charge would have happened much earlier.

As both greed and murderous intent were always present, and as ritual murder did not gain immense popularity before the Middle Ages, then we must conclude that by the twelfth century something in the Christian view of Jews had changed enough to accommodate and accept such a horrific tale.

For centuries the Christian view of Jews had been a progressively hostile one, and it was during the Middle Ages that this hostility reached its peak. Widespread social unrest, combined with the rising menace of Islam and the spread of heresies served to make this a period of extreme social and religious tension. Religious tension found its outlet in an intensification of Christian fanaticism, and this fanaticism was directed mainly toward Jews - seen as the most heretical and anti-Christian force in Europe. Not only that, but a force that existed in the very midst of those whose security it threatened. Furthermore, growing nationalism, and a certain amount of jealousy, caused by the often superior economic position of Jews, also served to complicate the already strained Christian-Jewish relationship. But, nothing served to do as much damage as the image of the Jew created by the Church.

To the Church the Jew was the fount of all evil and the eternal enemy of mankind. Not only was he guilty of unspeakable crimes against the founder of the Christian faith, but also against those who shared that faith, and in her view he would not rest until he had destroyed Christianity and Christendom. The Church devoted her time to presenting this view to the masses, to the extent that mystery, miracle and morality plays, legends, poems, folk tales, and songs, produced during the Middle Ages, nearly always portray Jews according to this single point of view. If we look for example at the Passion Play, popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, we find that the villains of these plays were always Jews. The Passion Play in effect was little more than an instrument of antisemitic indoctrination. Towns and villages came to a standstill so that the masses could watch the violent, ribald and often obscene performances. The tortures of Christ were enacted with extreme realism and an abundance of artificial blood, and Jews were always depicted as relishing the agonies of Christ. In the play attributed to Jehan Michel, for example, Jews compete to

pull out handfuls from Jesus' beard, pulling away flesh at the same time.<sup>123</sup> The following extract shows a typical scene:

*1st Jew: See the blood streaming, and how his whole face is covered with it!*

*2nd Jew: Here, you false, blood stained man! I don't pity your pain. You are only a vile trifler, the lowest of the low.*

*3rd Jew: Let us play at pulling out his beard. It's too long anyway.*

*4th Jew: I've torn him so hard that the flesh has come away too.*

*5th Jew: I'd like to have my turn at tearing at him.*

*6th Jew: Look at this clump I'm pulling away like lard!<sup>124</sup>*

It is hardly surprising that after what Maccoby terms "an orgy of dramatic sadism," the Christian populace, seized by a somewhat misguided religious fervour, often vented their anger upon local Jews.<sup>125</sup> This is even less surprising when we realise that Jews in these dramas were not depicted as historical figures but as contemporary Jews. For example in the Frankfort Passion Play the Jews who mock and strike Jesus bear names current in that vicinity until today.<sup>126</sup> In some German and French mystery plays the stage directions call for Jews to be dressed in contemporary Jewish garb.<sup>127</sup> Thus as Trachtenberg states, "The sins of Jesus' contemporaries were deliberately piled upon the collective head of medieval Jewry."<sup>128</sup> Not only were the ancient sins of Jews used to illustrate their supposed evil nature but, more often than not, the manifold crimes attributed to Jews of the time also found a prominent place in them, serving to further blur the distinction between the evil Jew of ancient times and the evil Jew of the present.

In times of uncertainty the nature of mankind is such that he always searches for someone to blame for the happenings around him. The Church in the Middle Ages was no different. Her fight for a place in an uncertain world, where she felt surrounded by evil and enemies, led her in turn to search for a scapegoat. The struggle with evil became a prominent theme in her perception of things, and that evil became personified in the shape of Satan. To the

Medieval Christian Satan was a very real person. As real, at one end of the moral scale and the world scheme, as Jesus was at the other. In the Medieval mind Satan was the Devil, a figure of unimaginable evil. No more the beautiful Lucifer, the fallen angel of light, who had dominated earlier art and literature, Satan appears in the Middle Ages as a horned being, with a tail and often with cloven hooves. He was identified with a sulphury smell and often depicted riding a goat, or even as a goat-like figure. He was also identified with all that the Church considered immoral, especially with licentiousness and was thus sometimes depicted with grossly enlarged sexual organs. The Christian was oppressed by his omnipresence, and subjected to his evil plots, flattery and temptations. Every day, every hour Christians were bombarded by Satanic torments and those of his agents, the demons. So it was that "Christian laymen and clerics, learned or unlettered, paid him the homage of belief and reverence, in the fear and trembling with which they regarded his nefarious activities."<sup>129</sup> Satan was the archenemy of mankind, seeking to destroy it, as Jesus had come to save it. This became increasingly emphasised by describing Jesus' ministry in terms of a struggle between Him and the Devil for control of the world, an idea which also became the basic theme of many mystery plays.<sup>130</sup>

To Medieval Christians the Jew was evil and if the source of all evil was Satan, then it was inevitable that the two should be connected. Satan needed demonic forces on earth to spread his evil and the Church depicted those demonic forces as consisting entirely of Jews. Thus millions of Christians came to believe that Jews were not actually human, but creatures of Satan. Images of the demonic Jew dominated the consciousness of Christians. One of the earliest dated sketches of a Medieval Jew, from the Forest Roll of Essex (1277) bears the superscription, "Aaron fil(ius) diaboli" (Aaron son of the Devil).<sup>131</sup> One of the most common caricatures of the Jew in the Middle Ages, the "Judensau", which depicts a sow as a mother feeding her Jewish offspring, often shows the Devil supervising the operation.<sup>132</sup> Likewise the Devil was often depicted wearing the characteristic round Jewish badge, and often had exaggerated Semitic features.

In the Christian art and folklore of the Middle Ages, a considerable number of Devil motifs also appeared as symbols of Jews and Judaism. These included dark bulging eyes, oversized head and horns. The matter of horns went considerably further than mere pictorial representation, for in 1267 the Vienna Council decreed that Jews were to wear a "pileum cornutum" or "horned hat," and Philip II of France required Jews to attach a horn shaped figure to the customary Jew-badge. If the Jew had horns it took little imagination to perceive that he also had a tail which, of course, he managed quite cunningly to hide. Likewise, the characteristic smell of Satan was transferred to the Jew, as the thirteenth--century Austrian poet Seifried Helbling pointed out, "There was never a state so large that a mere thirty Jews would not saturate it with stench and unbelief."<sup>133</sup> Another characteristic feature of the Jew in the Middle Ages is the so called "Ziegenbart" (goat's beard or goatee). This, coupled with the constant associations of the Jew with the he-goat, either as his favourite domestic animal or favourite mount, has led Trachtenberg to suggest that "perhaps the Ziegenbart emphasis is intended to identify the Jew as the human goat."<sup>134</sup> The goat, according to popular legend, was created by the Devil and was his favourite animal. It was also symbolic of Satanic lechery, an accusation often levelled at Jews.

In the mystery plays the Devil and the Jew were also inexorably linked. A number of plays present the Devil, and his legions, inciting Jews against Jesus, and plotting His destruction with them. One famous French drama<sup>135</sup> depicts the Devil and Jews working hand in hand instigating Judas to betray his master. In this and many other plays Jews dance with joyous abandon around the cross of Jesus, mocking their victim and exulting in their achievement. In a similar vein this theme is pursued in the miracle plays which portray the lives of the saints. Also, in plays depicting host desecrations when a Jew is apprehended and condemned, it is to the Devil that he cries for help, and often while he expires in agony at the stake, devils rush upon the stage to carry off his soul. Time and time again Jews are described in these plays as "devils from Hell, enemies of the human race."<sup>136</sup>

This then became one of the basic convictions of the Middle Ages. Millions of Christians came to believe that Jews were not actually human beings, but demons, creatures of the Devil and allies of Satan. As Satan's only intention was to destroy Christians and Christianity, then it was certain that Jews required the same thing. This view of rendered plausible every accusation made against Jews. Thus it was that they became ritual murderers, host desecraters and archconspirators, and it mattered not that there was an absence of evidence to support these charges. As Prager and Telushkin point out, "the absence of any evidence fooled few Christians - agents of the Devil are notoriously tricky."<sup>137</sup>

The diabolisation of the Jew thus was the reason why the earliest conspiracy charges became popular in the Middle Ages. The linking of the Devil and the Jew, coupled with the growing perception of the Devil as the arch-opponent of Christ and all that He stood for, seeped deeply into the Christian consciousness and clouded his judgement greatly. To Christians of the Middle Ages the evil of the universe existed on two planes. In the spiritual realm all that was evil was embodied in the person of Satan. To Medieval Christian thinkers Satan was the force behind all their troubles. It was he who raised their enemies against them and it was his temptations that led Christians to follow heretical movements. To counteract these temptations Satan was depicted as a monstrous figure, he lost all his angelic features and instead was endowed with a countenance which was calculated to inspire fear and loathing among the Christian populace.

On the temporal plane the evil of the universe became embodied in the person of the Jew. There can be little doubt that the Jew, as perceived by the masses in the Middle Ages, was a figure of utter evil. He was a monster, a demon and the Devil incarnate. However, unlike Satan, who was very much a product of the Medieval mind, it should be noted that the Jew, as depicted in the Middle Ages, was the product of centuries of negative characterisation stretching back to the early-church and indeed, to the New Testament. There is little doubt that the development of the Devil/Jewish relationship began within the sacred pages of Scripture, where the Jew was depicted as a child of the

Devil, an agent of evil who rejected good and was ultimately responsible for killing Christ.<sup>138</sup> In the centuries that followed the Jew, as depicted in church literature, became a superhuman figure, demon possessed and preyed on by Satan. As Satan's agent, he was said to destroy Christianity by enticing unwary Christians into worshipping the Devil.<sup>139</sup> As the centuries passed the Jew was given certain characteristics which not only diminished his humanity, but which suggested that he could not be distinguished from his master. Thus it was that during the Middle Ages the character of the Jew, which had long moved away from the demonic and the superhuman, became entangled with the developing character of Satan, to the extent that the two became one being. Whether intentional or not, the Jew that emerged from these centuries was a mythical figure, a Devil-Jew. All that distinguished the Devil-Jew from the figure of Satan was the fact that Satan was an invisible spiritual being, the Devil-Jew was all too visible and very corporeal.

This image of Jews invoked in the masses a deep-seated and unreasoning hatred. It was an image that would haunt Jews through the centuries and which would continue to do so long after the fearful image of Satan had lost its power to frighten. More importantly the Devil-Jew image made it possible for even the most unlikely and unreasonable charges to be made against Jews. It made the outrageous and monstrous believable, and had the capacity to invoke the venom of the masses. Thus it was that the charge of ritual murder, dismissed so long before, became credible once more. As Satan conspired against Christ on the spiritual realm, so in the material world the Devil-Jew was conspiring, and would long continue to conspire, against Christendom.

# Chapter 2

## Conspiracy Against Christians

### An Introduction to the Fourteenth Century

The status of Jews in Europe on the eve of the fourteenth century was a somewhat precarious one. The thirteenth century had been one of almost steady decline, attitudes towards Jews on every level had changed, as tales of ritual murder and host desecration spread. The Jewish image became increasingly negative, with Jews being viewed as satanic beings capable of unspeakable crimes. No enormity was too great to lay at their feet and, as the *Rindfleisch* massacres proved, no crime was too small for whole communities, whether involved or not, to be punished for it. Indeed, by the close of the century charges of ritual murder and host desecration had replaced the Crusades as an excuse for the mass murder of Jews. By the late thirteenth century Judaism was called the "religion of Satan"<sup>1</sup> and its adherents were openly mocked and despised. The Jew was in effect friendless and his existence precarious. He was surrounded by enemies on all sides.

The close of the thirteenth century saw Jews in a very sorry state. Hated on the popular level and liable to attack at any moment, subject to various persecutions by the Church, which included the introduction of the "badge of shame"<sup>2</sup>, they even found that their position as "royal usurers" guaranteed them no safety.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, what semblance of protection the Kings and nobles offered to Jews began to crumble away at the end of the thirteenth century in a tide of greed. In 1290, the entire Jewish community of England, numbering around fifteen thousand, was ordered to leave the country. They were allowed to take with them as much personal property as they could carry; the remainder, including the debts owed to Jewish moneylenders, passed to the king. In 1306, France followed England's example. On the orders of Philip IV, all Jews were quietly arrested on a single day and ordered out of the country within a month. One hundred thousand people were compelled to cross the frontier with nothing more than the clothes they wore. Many settled in



nearby lands to await their recall, well aware that Philip had no special grudge against them: he merely wanted their money. But it was left to his successor, Louis X (1289-1316), to effect the recall nine years later, when the royal coffers were once again empty.

For those Jews returning to France in 1315, the joyous return they had waited patiently for, was all too soon to turn to horror. Europe had been swept by almost continual rain since the summer of 1314. In 1315 northern France was flooded in a deluge. The harvest was a catastrophe and in some areas was totally non-existent. Starvation was rife as bad harvests and epidemics followed year after year. In 1320, amidst a rising tide of social upheaval, an army of shepherds (the *Pastoureaux*) headed south searching for better things. Their numbers swelled to some 40,000<sup>13</sup> as friars and peasants, as starved as the shepherds, joined the march. At their head was a young unfrocked Benedictine monk, who had visions during which a miraculous bird perched on his shoulder and exhorted him to fight the infidels. It was to be a Crusade, the "Shepherds' Crusade", and like all Crusades its victims, "the infidels", were Jews.

The way south was marked in Jewish blood. At Auch, Gimont, Castelsarrasin, Rabastens, Albi, Toulouse, and numerous other places, Jewish blood flowed, "unopposed by royal officials and apparently with the silent approval of the people."<sup>4</sup> Over 120 Jewish communities were wiped out, and many Jews, confronted with baptism, killed themselves and their children.<sup>5</sup> The "crusade" ended at the close of 1320, after Pope John XXII passed a sentence of excommunication on those who participated in or assisted the "crusade". King Philip V sent his troops against the horde and easily dispersed their unorganised ranks. Such action was prompted, not by the deaths of Jewish people - the lives of five hundred Jews who died in the siege at Verdun-sur-Garonne counted as nothing - but simply because the horde had also begun to attack clerics. By the end of 1320 no more was heard of the shepherds in France, but several groups crossed the Pyrenees and entered Spain, where they indulged in further orgies of massacre.

Fifteen years later, this unhappy sequence of events was repeated in Germany. In a country torn by almost permanent anarchy there arose a mob

called the *Armleder*, followers of two noblemen called "Leatherarms", because of their custom of wearing leather bands on their arms. One of the two was a visionary who believed he had received a call to avenge the death of Christ by murdering Jews. For two years, 1336 to 1338, armed with crude weapons, some 5,000 people followed the *Armleder* and slaughtered Jews from Alsace through the Rhineland into Swabia. Their excuse for the murders was usually a charge of host profanation, an accusation which was generally made after the slaughter, and rarely before. No-one intervened to protect the Jewish communities, again suggesting that there was a silent approval for such massacres.

By the early fourteenth century then, the Jew was a friendless being. What little protection the Church and State had once offered Jews no longer existed. Indeed, it seemed that the Church and State stood back in silent approval when attacks and slaughter occurred. Those attacks and slaughters came with alarming regularity as the Christian masses, confronted with the Jewish badge which told them that Jews were different; with passion plays and so forth, which depicted Jews as Christ killers and demonic beings; with tales of ritual killings host defilement, secret blasphemies and conspiracies learnt to hate and fear Jews. Thus by the early fourteenth century Jews were no longer slaughtered as a side effect of crusades but by mobs organised to slaughter on the least pretext.

### **The Jewish Mass Poisoner**

It was during the early fourteenth century that the Jewish mass poisoner entered the realms of the Conspiracy Theory. The crimes of the Jewish mass poisoner were as mythical as those of ritual murderer and host desecrator, yet the tales of his evil deeds won immediate acceptance amongst the Christian populace. Unlike his partners in conspiracy, however, the Jewish mass poisoner was a new and deadly foe. Before his appearance the Conspiracy Theory had been merely concerned with that alleged trait of Jewish nature, the desire to kill Christ. But, the Jewish mass poisoner had a new mission - to kill Christians, and not just one or two Christ substitutes, but all Christians, everywhere.

The Jewish mass poisoner brought a new and hitherto unknown twist to the Conspiracy Theory. For almost two hundred years Christians believed that Jews, had plotted to destroy Christianity at its source - Christ. At the dawn of the fourteenth century, however, they looked at those Jews among them and saw not Christ killers, but Devil inspired monsters, whose quest to destroy Christianity was now focused upon them.

The first accusations of a plot to destroy Christianity by means of poison was made in the summer of 1321, just months after the *Pastoureaux* crusade ended. Reports appeared almost simultaneously in Spain and France. In Teruel, Spain, a Christian, Diego Perez, was accused of administering poison to local wells. Under torture, he confessed that he had committed the crime, but placed the blame for the plot on an unknown Breton. After further torture, however, he claimed that he had poisoned the wells at the instigation of two Jews, one of whom he named as Simuel Famos. Simuel was promptly arrested but despite the severest of tortures he refused to admit to the crime. Diego then declared that he had lied about Simuel to satisfy his torturers and end his own suffering. Diego was found guilty and executed, and Simuel, despite Diego's testimony to his innocence, was murdered also, without trial or any sentence being passed. According to the bailiff of Teruel the public were willing to believe that the innocent Simuel was part of a plot to poison them, to the extent that the entire Jewish community was now at risk from reprisal actions.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time a similar drama was being played out north of the Pyrenees. As with the accusation made in Spain, the chief protagonists in the original tale were not Jews, but in this case lepers. Like Jews, lepers were social outcasts, but, unlike Jews were kept strictly segregated from the rest of the populace. In revenge for this treatment it was alleged that the lepers had conspired together to poison the wells of Europe in order to eliminate those who treated them as pariahs. However, it was not long before the Jewish nation was also involved in the plot, indeed, they were soon rumoured to be the instigators of the scheme, while the lepers were relegated to little more than agents.

How the supposed Jewish involvement in the plot to poison Christendom came to light is difficult to ascertain. A number of different tales circulated at the time, involving letters, tortured lepers, and all kinds of poison. The chronicler of St. Denis recounts the tale told by a huge leper, captured on the lands of the Lord of Parthenay. The leper claimed that he had been hired by "a great and rich Jew" who had given him ten livres to poison the wells of the region. The poison, he stated, was made up of "men's blood and urine and of three manners of herbs, of which he could not or would not name" and also there was added the magical ingredient, "the body of Jesus Christ." This mixture was dried to a powder which was tied in small bags, and thrown into the region's wells. He further added that a much larger sum was promised him if he could recruit other lepers to aid this sinister task.<sup>7</sup> According to another account, the powder consisted of a mixture of toad's legs, adder's heads and women's hair, to which was added a "very black and stinking" liquid, horrible not only to smell but also to look upon. This mixture, which seems not to have contained the host as a magical ingredient, nevertheless displayed undoubted magical virtues, since it did not burn when put into a roaring fire.<sup>8</sup>

By far the most popular story of the source of the well poisoning, however, involved a conspiracy on a much larger scale than earlier reports. In 1321 claims were made that a letter, written in Hebrew, had been intercepted in Parthenay. The letter, duly translated by a Jewish convert, revealed a plot to poison the whole of Christendom, involving not only lepers and Jews, but the Muslim kings of Granada and of Tunis. Torture of lepers brought forth more and more abundant evidence to support this tale. According to their testimony the plot had originated with the king of Granada, who sought the aid of Jews in his evil plan. The Jews, however, although willing to make the poison, were unwilling to carry out the actual poisoning themselves, and instead induced the lepers to do so in their stead. Some lepers went as far as to confess that with the help of the Devil, Jews had induced them to betray their Christian faith and to procure the sacred hosts needed for the manufacture of the poison. Some lepers went even further with this tale, and told of four meetings attended by leading members of various leper colonies, at which the Devil and Jews had promised

to apportion the land among the lepers after they had destroyed the Christians and taken it over.

The legend of the Jewish mass poisoner took a heavy toll. Public fear and anger were expressed in several lynchings, as one chronicler recorded, "The common people wrought this justice without calling upon either bailiff or provost."<sup>9</sup> Upon the orders of King Philip V, official enquiries took place in every province, for as the king stated, the criminal enterprises of the Jews and lepers were "so notorious that in no manner can they be hidden."<sup>10</sup> Many arrests took place, and throughout France hundreds of Jews and lepers were brought to trial. In Champagne, forty Jews committed suicide in prison, whilst in Chinon 160 Jews were cast into a pit and burned.<sup>11</sup> Five thousand in all were reported killed.<sup>12</sup> Confiscations - which enriched the royal treasury - followed most deaths. Indeed, swelling the royal coffers seems to have been the main purpose of the investigations, with even those communities acknowledged as innocent being made to pay heavy fines. In 1322 Charles IV used the well-poisoning libel as an opportunity to reverse the royal pledge of toleration and expelled Jews from his land for their alleged complicity in the plot.

Thus, it was for the first time Jews were charged with plotting the destruction of all Christendom, using a very learned and precise method. Of course poisoning was nothing new; Renaissance Italy was infamous for having some of Europe's most efficacious poisoners. Having said this, however, there is, as Baron points out, no evidence of the frequent use of poisons by Jews.<sup>13</sup> This is not to say that there was no such thing as a Jewish poisoner, for there were occasional incidents, like that of an Aragonese Jewish woman accused of poisoning her husband, where it was likely that poisons were used.<sup>14</sup> Incidents such as these tended to increase suspicions and inflame the popular imagination, to the extent that the notion of the Jewish poisoner, like that of the wholly imagined ritual murderer, became real. Whether there was a poisoning or not, it was enough that a Jew was suspected to prove his guilt.

The notion that Jews were somehow involved in poisonings was not unique to the fourteenth century. Indeed, there are recorded cases of Jews being accused of poisonings stretching back to the sixth century. Having said this,

however, it must be noted that prior to the poisoned-wells accusation the recorded cases of poisoning did not involve the notion of a conspiracy to destroy all Christians, nor did it involve the Jewish community as a whole. Accusations of poisoning, when they were made, were usually directed at an individual, such as a doctor or an apothecary, or anyone whose job involved the prescribing or sale of drugs and poisons.

Poisons were used widely during the Middle Ages by both physicians and apothecaries of all denominations in the treatment of various ailments. Hence one could readily suspect any doctor or druggist of making use of his knowledge of poisons and his supplies to destroy his foes. The low esteem in which drug salesmen were held in twelfth century England is illustrated by their inclusion in Richard of Devizes' list of low-caste characters reputedly living in London in 1192:

*Actores, buffons, eumuchs, garamanters, flaterers, pages, cowards, effeminate, dancing-girls, apothecaries, favourites, witches, vultures, owls, magicians, mimes, mendicants, dancers, people of this kind fill every house.*<sup>15</sup>

Evidence suggests that Jews were well represented in the drug trade as in most other mercantile occupations. For example, records show that there were a number of Jews dealing in salves and drugs in the Rhineland in 1090.<sup>16</sup> We may also surmise that since most of the rare medicinal herbs and other exotic pharmaceutical ingredients were imported from the Orient, that such items were part of the regular stock-in trade of Jewish merchants. Indeed, from the eleventh to the thirteenth century several rulers granted Jewish traders the privilege of selling drugs and medicines, although in the succeeding centuries this policy was reversed and both religious and secular authorities made repeated attempts to halt the trade.

To the medieval mind, as Trachtenberg points out, "drugs and poisons were practically synonymous,"<sup>17</sup> and precisely because they were invested with a mysterious aura of healing, these drugs with their strange herbal ingredients readily conjured up in superstitious minds mental associations with sorcery and Devil inspired evil. In 1550 the Polish king, Sigismund Augustus, demanded

that the Russian ruler, Ivan the Terrible, honour a commercial treaty between the two countries, and admit Lithuanian Jews into his kingdom. In reply to the demand Ivan curtly declared:

*It is not convenient to allow Jews to come with their goods to Russia, since many evils result from them. For they import poisonous herbs into our realms, and lead astray the Russians from Christianity.<sup>18</sup>*

The coupling of poisoning with sorcery and magic was almost inevitable. The mysterious element of death by poisoning suggested to the superstitious mind that magic and the occult was involved. Very many prominent Christians, were brought to trial during the Middle Ages as poisoners and sorcerers, a fact which served to inspire an almost excessive credulity in the powers of poisons.<sup>19</sup> This credulity was such that it was firmly believed that poisons could be efficacious at a great distance, or after a long lapse of time after administration. This latter idea is illustrated by a sixth century accusation made against Arabian Jews, who it was alleged, murdered the first caliph Abu Bakr by serving him poisonous food which affected him a year later.<sup>20</sup>

Jews naturally suffered from the coupling of the concepts of poisoning and sorcery. After all they existed in a society which already viewed them as demonic beings, devil worshippers and masters of the occult and magic. Jewish doctors were particularly suspect, especially as to the Medieval mind there was little difference between a magic potion, a drug and a poison.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in the late Middle Ages the increase in general Jew-hatred, as well as the rise of an influential class of Jewish physicians, strengthened these suspicions, which were no doubt further intensified by Christian doctors, jealous of the often far superior reputation of the Jewish doctors.

Poisoning speedily became a trite charge against Jewish physicians, who were of course powerless to refute it. As James Parkes notes, "If a king had a Jewish physician and did not actually perish on the battlefield, cloven in two by the battle-axe of the enemy, there is nothing surprising in his unfortunate doctor being accused of poisoning him."<sup>22</sup> In 1161, a mass execution took place in Bohemia, with eighty-six Jews burned for their part in an alleged plot of Jewish physicians to poison the populace. A Franciscan monk, Bernadin of

Siena, incited the Sienese population against a local Jewish doctor in 1489, by reporting that " a Jewish physician of Avignon had boasted on his death-bed of having during his lifetime killed many thousands of Christian patients by prescribing them fraudulent drugs."<sup>23</sup> The records are full of similar accusations, and the frequent prohibitions against the use of Jewish doctors have their basis as much in the suspicion that they were poisoners, as they have in Christian rivalry.

The role of poisoner was not restricted to Jewish physicians alone. Jews in general were also considered especially adept in the art. One of the greatest fears in Medieval society was that Jews could contaminate the foodstuffs sold to Christians. Such was this fear that the Breslau Councils of 1267 produced legislations forbidding Christians to buy meat or any other food from Jews. One popular superstition held that even if Jews did not poison the meat they sold, they still rendered it unfit for human consumption or loaded it down with curses which would bring sickness and death to any Christian who ate it. Similar beliefs were also held concerning Jewish wine. In the fifteenth century a Sicilian ordinance forbade the sale of Jewish produced wine:

*Because it is not fitting that the Christian should drink the grapes trodden out by the feet of Jews, and also because of other deceptions which might be practised by the admixture of filthy things.<sup>24</sup>*

A similar accusation had already been made as far back as the ninth-century. Strange ordinances, like that from the fourteenth century statutes of the city of Bozen (Tyrol), attest to how deep-seated and irrational the fear of Jewish contamination of food was. The Bozen statutes read:

*When the Jews wish to purchase anything in the market place they must point it out; what they touch they must buy at the seller's price.<sup>25</sup>*

Another ordinance required that a Christian must be warned prior to buying meat, if that meat had been touched in any way by a Jew. During the fourteenth century a number of similar ordinances were also in force in many European cities.



So strong and widespread was the belief that Jews possessed amazing abilities with poisons, that it took little stretch of the Christian collective imagination to picture them as capable of the wholesale poison of Christendom. When the rumours began to circulate in the fourteenth century that Jews were involved in a plot to poison wells and streams in order to bring about the total destruction of Christendom, they won immediate acceptance primarily because the ground had already been prepared. Prior to the alleged plot of 1321 a number of accusations of well poisoning had already been made. The earliest recorded charge of well poisoning by Jews came from Troppau (Opava), in Silesia, in 1163, followed by similar accusations in Breslau in 1226 and Vienna in 1267.<sup>26</sup> The early fourteenth century also saw a number of similar rumours. In 1308 in the Vaud, Jews were accused of poisoning wells, and again in 1316 in the Eulenberg region and in Franconia in 1319.<sup>27</sup>

These libels had little impact at the time they were made and seem only to have become part of the legend of the Jewish poisoner. However, such legends have a way of piling up until they finally assume catastrophic dimensions. The events of 1321 were the culmination of centuries of the poisoner legend. They brought together all the elements of the various myths into an outrageous, but believable tale. The Medieval masses believed that the Jew was an adept poisoner, they believed he hated Christianity, and was part of a huge conspiracy to end not only the religion, but given the chance would use his skills to kill them all. It mattered little whether any of this was true or not, only that the masses believed it was.

### **The Black Death and the Jews**

In 1347 an epidemic of contagious diseases, which later became known as the "Black Death", seized Europe in a pitiless and unrelenting embrace. At its source was an especially virulent bacillus which in the three years between 1347 and 1350 brought the populace of Europe to the very edge of existence. The epidemic swept from town to country, through the greatest of cities and the humblest of villages, bringing death to some twenty-five million people and depleting Europe's population by over a third.<sup>28</sup> The origin of the plague lay in

the East<sup>29</sup> most probably in China, from there it passed to the three main centres of commerce, India, Persia and Russia, before being carried westwards into Europe along the main trade routes. Ships carried the plague from port to port rendering nowhere in Europe safe, for it was only a matter of time before the disease moved inland, spreading as rapidly as the transport of the day would allow.

By January 1348 the plague-ridden ships had carried the infection into Genoa and Venice, from where it spread throughout the Italian peninsula and into France, where the first outbreak occurred in Marseilles rendering the city almost uninhabited by the time the disease abated.<sup>30</sup> The wave of pestilence soon engulfed the whole of France killing an estimated four to seven million people between 1348 and 1350.<sup>31</sup> From Flanders the disease spread into Holland and Belgium. One chronicler in Holland reported that the plague was so virulent that people expired while walking in the street.<sup>32</sup> Further south, it appeared in Spain, and from Italy and France it spread into central Europe. By June, 1348, it was already at work in Bavaria. By the end of the same year it had crept up the Moselle valley and was eating into North Germany. The devastation in Germany was particularly bad. In Frankfurt-am-Main two thousand perished in just seventy-two days, six thousand died in Mainz, eleven thousand in Munster, twelve thousand in Erfurt and in just four parishes in Bremen seven thousand died.<sup>33</sup>

The effects of the disease were the same everywhere. Few were safe from its deadly grip. Being peasant or king, clergy or layman made very little difference - the plague attacked everyone. Some sections of the community did, however, suffer more than others. Research has shown that the transmission of the disease from person to person, due to the density of housing or because people were together for most of the day, increased the mortality rate significantly. Thus, university towns suffered because of the increased population, and students, who gathered together frequently, died in greater numbers.<sup>34</sup> For the same reasons the mortality rate in religious communities was amongst the highest.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the death toll of members of religious houses was incredible. It seems that when the disease entered it carried off everyone.<sup>36</sup>

The clergy also suffered badly during this period, especially in Germany, where the plague seems to have struck with exceptional violence amongst them. Priests died in their thousands, their devotion to the sick and dying making them more vulnerable. One estimate puts the total number of priests who succumbed to the Black Death in England alone at 25,000.<sup>37</sup> Unlike his superiors, the priest could not hire a substitute or retreat to a more healthy place to live. He was required to sing mass, to visit the sick and dying and to conduct burials. If he chose to protect himself then he could only do so by turning his back on his sacred responsibilities.<sup>38</sup> In England, France, and more particularly in Germany, the clergy remained devoted despite the risk. Indeed, in Germany it has been demonstrated that some thirty-five per cent of the higher clergy died during the reign of the plague.<sup>39</sup> Such a figure would be unremarkable if it related to the parish priest, but the fact that it relates to their normally cautious and well protected superiors makes it all the more astonishing.

The Black Death of course held no respect for class. It killed amongst the nobility as surely as it did amongst the lower classes. For example, Hungary lost a vast majority of its nobility during the plague. It was, however, the peasants, who really suffered. Because of their restricted diet and poor lifestyle they succumbed more easily to the ravages of death. When the plague struck a village it usually carried off all the inhabitants, often including the family pets. Villages in which everyone had died crumbled into ruin, while confused cattle and sheep wandered aimlessly through the grain fields. Likewise, the normally bustling cities were left devoid of inhabitants, their streets silent and empty, except for the bodies of the dead. Often when it became apparent that the disease was approaching their city, the people rushed from their homes in panic, fleeing into the countryside in an attempt to escape death. Most fell by the wayside, dying there, huddled in hedges and ditches. So great was the plague-induced fear, that at the first signs of sickness parents deserted their children, and children their parents. Infection was everywhere and the world was filled with terror.

Of course not everyone abandoned hope. Many believed that there was a cause, and a cure, for the disease. Some of these opinions were scholarly in

origin, others were based wholly on superstition and fear. One favourite theory among scholars and doctors was that the plague was caused by the movement of the planets, or the effects of earthquakes which had poisoned the air. The Church on the other hand pronounced against this opinion, no doubt because in astrology she perceived the remnants of pagan religious ideas. The Church taught that the plague was sent by God.<sup>40</sup> But, since it was unthinkable that God would permit such evil without good purpose, it was believed that God had inflicted the plague upon mankind as a punishment for his sins, or as a test of his devotion. Prayers were organised and vast processions and pilgrimages took place as a sign of the people's devotion and to beg God to forgive mankind and eradicate the Black Death from among them.<sup>41</sup>

The theme that God was punishing the sins of the people or testing their faith was far from reassuring. If God was testing the faith of His people by means of the plague then it called into question the very goodness of God, for if He was the forgiving and kind God that Jesus had spoken of, then it was against his very nature to inflict such evil upon His people. If He was punishing the sins of the people then the matter of personal salvation was brought into disturbing focus, for thousands of Christians were dying, including the most devoted priests, monks and innocent little children, people who could not have sinned grievously enough to merit death.<sup>42</sup> The explanations served to disillusion the masses even more, and when they discovered that prayers had little effect on the plague, and the processions and pilgrimages often served to spread the plague further, rather than bring about its end, they were filled with a deep despair. With the Church showing little success and the doctors doing little better, the masses soon felt the need for a better explanation of events. Disillusioned and frightened, the masses began to search for an explanation for the plague's onslaught, one which they could easily understand. Few doubted that the disease was God's will but, by some peculiar quirk of reasoning, they also believed that the disease had an earthly, man-made cause.<sup>43</sup> They reasoned that God had used human agents to carry out His will, and that if they could identify those agents, it would be legitimate to destroy them. Such reasoning meant that they could dismiss the question of God's goodness and their own

doubts about salvation, whilst also giving themselves something or someone to vent their frustrations and anger upon. What they needed therefore was a scapegoat, preferably in the form of a minority group, who would be easily identifiable, already unpopular and without any powerful protection.

The suspicion that the hand of a human was behind the Black Death was widely accepted amongst the populace, and the idea that it was brought about by poison fell onto the even more fertile ground of ignorance and terror. The people couldn't understand that they were victims of chance; they needed something tangible, something they could grasp, and as Deaux points out, they required

*A human scapegoat into which they could project all the anger and fear the disaster inspired: someone to receive blows and bleed real blood to make up for all the days of resignation, despair, and the shaking of fists at the sun. In the midst of death men sought a cure for death in killing.<sup>44</sup>*

There were of course a number of candidates for the role of scapegoat, especially as the people suspected the motives of every minority group they hated or feared. The poor suspected the nobles, the nobles suspected the poor, whilst the natives of each country suspected the motives of any stranger among them. Physicians, gravediggers, witches, sorcerers, lepers and even pilgrims were suspected of poisoning the world, and some suffered torture and death.<sup>45</sup> But, none suffered to the extent that Jews did. They fitted the scapegoat criterion perfectly, thanks primarily to the image ascribed to them during the thirteenth century. The badge of shame meant that Jews were an easily identified minority group. Their trade in usury meant that they were hated the world over, and destroying the Jewish nation was, in the eyes of the ordinary people, a good economic move. After all a dead Jew could not collect his debts. Thus when 2,000 Jews of Strasbourg were burnt in February 1349, all records of their debts were thrown into the fire with them.<sup>46</sup> Confiscation of Jewish goods and property often followed a massacre of the Jewish community, and these goods were often distributed amongst the common people, providing they had not already been looted. Either way the death of Jews often proved to be

profitable, and as the Alsatian chronicler concluded during the plague, "The ready cash in the hands of the Jews was also the poison which killed them. Had the Jews been very poor, they would not have been burned."<sup>47</sup> Moreover, when it came to violence, no-one protected Jews. There might be some protests and condemnation, but past events had already shown that few would risk standing up for Jews, for if they did, they would be powerless to stop the violence. Furthermore, the belief that Jews were well acquainted with methods of mass poisoning, and were intent on the destruction of Christendom, was already deep-rooted. The poisoned wells incident in France, in 1321, had already revealed a similar plot, and now those events were being repeated. The Black Death, the people declared, could be nothing less than part of the Jewish Conspiracy to rid the world of Christians.

Rumours of Jewish well-poisoning began to circulate in Southern France, in the spring of 1348, and in May there was a massacre of Jews in one town of Provence. Upon the same pretext both Narbonne and Carcassone exterminated their Jews.<sup>48</sup> From there the rumours spread south to Spain, where Barcelona was the scene of some serious anti-Jewish disturbances. These early rumours tended to be isolated and localised and of no serious consequences for the Jewish community. It is possible that the madness might well have stopped at that point or at least continued to flare up in isolated incidents, had it not been for the events in Savoy.

When the pestilence reached Savoy, things changed dramatically. In the little communities of Chillon and Chambery, on the shores of Lake Geneva, the populace immediately pointed an accusing finger at the Jews claiming that they had poisoned a number of wells at Neustadt. A number of Jews were seized and imprisoned at the castle of Chillon, where they were "questioned" upon the rack, by their prosecutors. The "questioning" lasted from September 15 to October 11, 1348, and the authorities managed to tear from several prisoners "confessions" regarding the Jewish Conspiracy "to kill and destroy the entire Christian faith."<sup>49</sup>

The first to be racked and to "confess" to a world conspiracy to destroy Christianity was a Jewish surgeon by the name of Balavignus. "After much

hesitation"<sup>50</sup> he confessed that several Jews in southern France had compounded a poison out of Christians' hearts, spiders, frogs, lizards, human flesh and a sacred host, with which to poison the wells of Europe. The plot, he claimed, was organised by the Rabbi Jacob a Pascate (Jacob Pascal) of Toledo,<sup>51</sup> who had distributed the powdered poison to various Jewish communities. Balavignus stated that Jacob sent to him a leather pouch full of red and black powder, which he was ordered on the pain of excommunication, to throw into the larger wells of Thonon. Another Jew, Aquet of Ville-Neuve, acknowledged that he had operated all over Europe, in such places as Venice, Calabria, Apulia and Toulouse.<sup>52</sup> Others "confessed" that the leaders had ordered them to provide Christian families with poisoned butter, wine, and other foodstuffs, whilst Balavignus, added that Jews had also injected poisons into the air, fully realising that human bodies, once infected, would spread the disease by contact.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, it was claimed that not only had every Jewish community been warned not to drink the poisoned water, but all were aware of the plot to destroy Christians. As Balavignus, under prompting was forced to admit "for seven years back no Jew could plead innocence for all had known of it [the conspiracy] and are culpable in the said fact."<sup>54</sup> These "confessions" were confirmed by the discovery of scraps of "evidence", such as a rag found in a well in which poison was supposedly concealed, and little packages of poison purportedly placed by Jews inside wells or cisterns.

With this evidence and ten "confessions" similar to that of Balavignus's the scene was set for one of the greatest tragedies in Jewish history. The dossier of "confessions" gathered at Chillon, was quickly circulated to neighbouring cities for their information, so that appropriate action might be taken should the Jewish poisoners appear among them. The evidence was extremely incriminating, made more so by the fact, as Poliakov notes, that "the technique attributed to the poisoners, as well as the composition of the poison, was in every respect identical to that described thirty years before, during the 'shepherd' incident."<sup>55</sup> The populace, already terror-stricken, eagerly seized upon the familiar tale of the Jewish poisoner as an adequate explanation of the plague's origin. It was a tale which was already widely believed, and no doubt

the addition of detailed confessions, no matter how they were obtained, quietened the consciences of those who might otherwise have felt it necessary to protest against such a ridiculous tale.

The tale of the Jewish Conspiracy to poison Christendom almost immediately spread to Switzerland where, as early as September 21, 1348, just six days after the Chillon trials had started, a vote was taken in Zurich never to admit Jews to the city again.<sup>56</sup> Those Jews already in Zurich, and those of Bern and around Lake Constance were tried and executed. Official reports containing alleged confessions of the dreadful Jewish Conspiracy were sent from Switzerland to their neighbours in Germany. Thus in November 1348 the plague and the persecution of Jews simultaneously reached Germany. The people reacted in the manner that had marked the confrontation of German Christians and Jews since the *Rindfleisch* massacres of 1292: they gathered in great bands and set about massacring every Jewish community, burning and looting as they went. During 1348 and 1349 there was hardly a Jewish community, from Alsace to the borders of Poland and Austria, which escaped unscathed.

The first Jewish communities to suffer were those of the southwest where hundreds of Jews perished at the hands of the crazed populace. By January 1349 the Jewish communities of Freiburg, Ulm and Speyer, had been completely annihilated.<sup>57</sup> At Freiburg a number of Jews were interrogated and under severe torture one went as far as to supply a reason for the poisoning, allegedly claiming it was,

*Because you Christians killed so many Jews,  
because of what King Armleder did [1336], and  
because we too want to be lords, for you have lorded  
long enough.*<sup>58</sup>

As the plague spread throughout Germany similar incidents followed. At Worms, which boasted one of the oldest and largest Jewish communities on the Rhine, the majority of Jews anticipated the fate awaiting them and before the arrival of their executioners, set their houses on fire and perished in the flames.<sup>59</sup> Quite a few communities, after seeing their attempts to defend themselves fail, likewise, chose to follow their Worms brethren to the flames.



In Northern Germany Jewish communities were relatively small, but their insignificance was no protection when the Black Death kindled the anger of the mobs. The last Jewish community to face destruction during 1349, was that of Nuremberg, which suffered at the hands of the mob in December.<sup>60</sup> They were, however, not the last to pay the price for the alleged Jewish Conspiracy. Indeed, during the spring of 1350, the Jews of the Hansa towns who had escaped burning during the earlier massacres, were walled up alive in their houses and left to die of suffocation or starvation.<sup>61</sup>

In most cities the Black Death and the conspiracy rumour arrived together, so that the plague was already raging when the massacres of its alleged creators began. However, in some areas the news that the plague was approaching was enough to spark the fury of the populace, to the extent that in some areas provisions was made before the attacks had even begun. For example, in the spring of 1349, when rumours of the Black Death, but not the disease itself, reached Perleberg, in Brandenburg, the city authorities added a clause to the favourable privileges granted to Jews in the city provisions:

*Should it become evident and proved by reliable men, however, that the aforementioned Jews have caused or will cause in the future the death of Christians, they shall suffer the penalties prescribed by law, as it is said that the Jews have elsewhere dispatched many persons through poisoning.<sup>62</sup>*

The notice was meant, no doubt, as a clear indication to Jews that should the plague reach their city, they would be held responsible for it. The murder of two thousand Jews in Strasbourg, on February 14, 1349, occurred several weeks before the first cases of the plague were reported in the city. The mob there wanted Jewish money as well as Jewish blood, and went as far as to rip the clothes from the backs of Jews as they were led to their execution, in the hope that they might find gold concealed in the lining. The looting and murder of the Jewish people of Strasbourg lasted some three months. A contemporary chronicler puts the number of Jewish deaths in Strasbourg at sixteen thousand,

a figure which, as Zeigler points out, is not totally inconceivable, especially as the Jewish colony at Strasbourg was one of the largest in Europe.<sup>63</sup>

The plague, or its imminent arrival was not the only menace that Jews had to face during this period. There was also the problem of religious uprisings. As was demonstrated during the various crusades, in times of religious fervour Jews nearly always suffered greatly. The Black Death was to be no different. In the spring of 1349, a religious movement calling themselves the "Brotherhood of the Flagellants", or sometimes "Brethren of the Cross", began to march through Germany. The movement, already known from similar marches during the thirteenth century, grew to unprecedented proportions. The Flagellants, or "gashers" as one chronicler termed them,<sup>64</sup> wandered from city to city, publicly torturing their flesh with rods and whips. Their intention, they claimed, was to take upon themselves the repentance of the people for the sins they had committed, and through prayer, supplication and a personal imitation of the suffering of Christ, to appease the wrath of God and thus end the plague.

The Flagellants were at first welcomed as they wandered through Germany and into parts of France. News that they were coming was enough to set the church bells ringing and have the townsfolk pouring out to welcome them. Their arrival was an event in the otherwise drab lives of the peasants, and it was an occasion for celebration. The Flagellants brought hope where others had failed and the peasants were all too eager to meet the needs of the new arrivals. After all, it was a small price to pay, for if the plague was among them the Flagellants offered hope that God might be placated, if it had not yet come, then they were a cheap insurance policy against the ravages of death. So respectable, and indeed exciting, did the movement at first appear that a few rich merchants and nobles joined their ranks, and even the Pope personally participated in the whipping ritual.<sup>65</sup>

For the Jews, however, the Flagellants offered nothing but dread. Their entrance to a city inflamed passions in much the same way that crusading fever did, and this led to acts of violence. The victims of that violence were almost always Jews, already viewed as the enemies of God and Christians everywhere. In Frankfurt-on-Main, it was due to the influence of the Flagellants that

Jews were burnt, and in some cases the news that they were approaching was enough to start an anti-Jewish riot. Thus when the Flagellants entered the city of Mainz the process of killing Jews had already begun.<sup>66</sup> As I have said the Flagellants sought to prevent the plague, and therefore they appeared in most places before the plague had claimed any victims, thus even before the plague had claimed a single life in a city, the Jewish community was made to suffer.

The Flagellant Movement, however, soon fell out of favour with the Church, not only for their rejection of the Eucharist, but also for their antiestablishment tendencies. With their ranks swollen to some 42,000<sup>67</sup> in the eyes of the Church they became a dangerous phenomenon, and her fears were confirmed when the Flagellants started attacking priests, Dominicans, friars, the nobility and any forces who stood for an ordered society. On October 20, 1349 a papal bull was issued in which the pope denounced the Flagellants for contempt of Church discipline. He asked all prelates to suppress the pilgrimages, using force if necessary. Anyone who wished to entertain or join them, he threatened with excommunication. Pope Clement was also moved to observe in the bull that "most of them . . . beneath an appearance of piety, set their hands to cruel and impious work, shedding the blood of Jews, whom Christian piety accepts and sustains."<sup>68</sup> As quickly as they appeared the Flagellants vanished. Too much opposition after the appearance of Clement's bull no doubt led to a sudden disbanding of their ranks. In their wake they left new centres of infection, disillusioned people and the myriad corpses of innocent Jews.

For the Jews of Europe the Black Death must have seemed like the very nadir of existence. Not only did they suffer equally from the effects of the plague, but they faced hostility on all sides. If they expected help from those rulers to whom they paid dearly for protection, then they found that help was non-existent. Indeed, most rulers readily believed the conspiracy rumours and failed Jews when they most needed them. The German Emperor, Charles IV, made half-hearted attempts to protect Jews whom he considered his personal property but his aid was such that he granted practical immunity to the rioters

in advance and even made arrangements to protect his interests and for the disposal of Jewish property should a riot occur. For example, when he found that his orders to leave Jews alone were ignored, he busied himself collecting his share of Jewish goods and property. In Frankfurt he sold the city "his" Jews and their property for 20,000 silver marks, and signed away his right to claim against the city should they murder "his" Jews.<sup>69</sup> To favoured people he offered the spoils of riots long before they occurred. Thus, he offered the Archbishop of Trier the goods of those Jews in Alsace "who have already been killed or may still be killed"; to the Margrave of Brandenburg he offered the choice of the three best Jewish houses in Nuremberg "when the next massacre takes place."<sup>70</sup> In 1350, when it was well known that the accusation that the Jews had poisoned the wells was false, Charles IV, instead of condemning those who had murdered Jews, issued a formal pardon, stating:

*Forgiveness is [granted] for every transgression involving the slaying and destruction of Jews which has been committed without the positive knowledge of the leading citizens, or in their ignorance, or in any other fashion whatsoever.<sup>71</sup>*

Other rulers took a similar course of action treating the situation as a way of increasing personal gain. In many cases the failure of rulers to protect Jews was grounded in economic motives. However, there were some who actively supported the murder of Jews for antisemitic reasons. Margrave Fredrick of Meissen personally promoted shedding of Jewish blood in his area, whilst Landgrave Frederic of Thuringia not only ordered the burning of Jews, but in May 1349, wrote to the City of Nordhausen and advised them to do likewise for the honour of God.<sup>72</sup>

Of course not all rulers took such a despicable view of Jewish massacres, and many did their best, though often ineffectively, to protect their Jewish subjects. Pope Clement VI in particular did his best to stem the tide of hatred which threatened to engulf the Jewish nation. When the first rumours of a Jewish Conspiracy appeared in the spring of 1348, Pope Clement recognised the danger in which it placed all Jews and on July 4 he made a point of reissuing the papal bull forbidding violence against Jews. When this failed,

and the trials at Chillon had given the Pope cause for concern, Clement issued a second bull dated September 26, in an attempt to halt the persecution. In it he denounced the allegations made against Jews and called the massacres, "a horrible thing," made worse because "certain Christians, seduced by that liar, the devil, are imputing the pestilence to poisoning by Jews." He pointed out to Christians that

*Since this pestilence is all but universal everywhere, and that by a mysterious decree of God has afflicted, and continues to afflict, both Jew and many other nations throughout the diverse regions of the earth to whom a common existence with Jews is unknown [the charge] that the Jews have provided the cause or the occasion for such a crime is without plausibility.<sup>73</sup>*

Those who joined in the persecution of Jews he threatened with excommunication. Clement's words, as we have already seen, did not have a world-wide impact, and persecution of Jews continued. But, that is not to say that Clement totally failed the Jewish people, for in Avignon, the papal seat, and its environs, as well as throughout Italy, his words were heeded. In those lands the poisoner conspiracy libel did not spread and there were few serious incidents against Jewish communities.

Many others followed Clement's lead and did their best to protect Jews. The Austrian Duke, Albrecht II, protected and defended all the Jews of Austria, so successfully that only a few Jewish communities suffered an attack. In much the same manner Pedro IV of Aragon endeavoured to protect Spanish Jewry, imprisoning those who dared to ignore his orders. Casimir of Poland, who was probably the most successful Jewish protector, defended the Polish Jews to the extent that, with the exception of a small amount of persecution on the south-western border, the Polish Jews remained unmolested. Indeed, Poland, along with Lithuania, gave refuge to the many Jews who fled the mobs in Europe.<sup>74</sup> Palatin Rupert also admitted Jewish refugees from Worms and Spire to his city of Heidelberg. The town councillors of Cologne were also active in the cause of humanity, and wrote letters to the other cities urging them to deal moderately with Jews. Following three months of brutality and murder, the

municipality of Strasbourg held an investigation of the accusations made against Jews. They concluded that the Jewish nation was not guilty of a conspiracy to poison Christians, and this they announced to the people. However, such was the tide of hatred against Jews, and the need of the people to have someone to blame, that the mob overthrew the municipality and replaced them with one that was willing to round up 2,000 Jews the following day and have them burnt.<sup>75</sup> The course of events at Strasbourg illustrate the different attitudes of the people and the rulers towards Jews, in the time of the Black Death. It quickly becomes apparent that few rulers believed that Jews were guilty of spreading or causing the Black Death. It was also possible for an enlightened ruler, if he so desired, to prevent the killing of Jews in places under their direct control. Along with the rulers a large number of scholars, scientists, and intellectuals, also dismissed the notion that Jews had caused the Black Death by poisoning wells. The general attitude of both rulers and scholars is probably best summed up in the writings of the physician Konrad of Megenberg. In his *Buch der Natur* he stated:

*I know that there were more Jews in Vienna than in any other German city familiar to me, and so many of them died of the plague that they were obliged to enlarge their cemetery. To have brought this upon themselves would have been folly on their part.*<sup>76</sup>

Thus, he concludes, "There are those who say that this was caused by the Jewish people, but this opinion is without foundation."<sup>77</sup> At the plague's end the sentiments of Konrad of Megenberg were echoed in the chronicles of a German abbot: "As far as this persecution of the Jews is concerned, there are those who think that they are accused falsely."<sup>78</sup>

The horrors that Jews experienced during the period of the Black Death were the worst they had endured since the First Crusade, and the worst they would suffer for the rest of the Middle Ages, perhaps even until the twentieth century. Jewish communities in large areas of Europe were completely wiped out by a combination of the Black Death and man's inhumanity to his fellow man. There were some three hundred and fifty massacres of various dimensions which resulted in the complete annihilation of sixty large and one hundred and

fifty smaller communities.<sup>79</sup> There was also a large shift in population, for many of those Jews who fled France and Germany settled in Poland and Lithuania, never to return to their former homelands. Zeigler, in his study of the Black Death perhaps best sums up the horror of the events in Europe in the comment:

*It is a curious and somewhat humiliating reflection on human nature that a European, overwhelmed by what was probably the greatest natural calamity ever to strike his continent, reacted by seeking to rival the cruelty of nature in the hideousness of his own man-made atrocities.<sup>80</sup>*

### **The Changing Conspiracy Theory: From Crimes Against Christ to Crimes against Christians**

The well-poisoning conspiracy brought about the massacre of hundreds of Jews during the leper incident of 1321 and caused the deaths of thousands more during the Black Death. As with the earlier conspiracy tales, the well-poisoning conspiracy, which introduced the world to the Jewish mass poisoner, was little more than a false fantasy, unsupported by any real evidence. But, as cannot be emphasised often enough, in Medieval Europe evidence was not important, it was the will to believe the worst of Jews that counted. The Jewish Conspiracy charge was important in Medieval Europe because it was a means by which every crime, every disturbance, even every imbalance in society and nature, could be blamed on Jews.

In its earliest form the conspiracy charge contained few of the elements with which we are now familiar. The ritual murder conspiracy and the host desecration conspiracy were crimes with one purpose, that of killing Christ. In its nucleus form the Conspiracy Theory, as recounted by Theobald of Cambridge, was meant as nothing more than a means of proving the sainthood of William of Norwich, who died in 1144. Theobald claimed that every year the Jews of Spain assembled at Narbonne, the seat of Jewish learning in Muslim Spain, in order to arrange the annual sacrifice, which was prescribed in ancient Jewish writings. For the sacrifice a Christian child was chosen as a representation of Christ, and killed in His stead. The reason for the murder, he

said, was that the Jewish nation had been made slaves in exile by Christ's death, and therefore desired to take their revenge upon Him for their suffering. From Spain word was sent out to all Jewish communities concerning the sacrifice so that all might know where it was to take place.<sup>81</sup>

Thus in its earliest form the Conspiracy Theory was nothing more than a tale of a yearly sacrifice organised by a secret Jewish body, whose only desire was to seek revenge against Christ. However, the tale caught the imagination of the general populace, and more importantly of the Church. Since the early centuries of Christianity it had been preached in pulpits the world over that the Jewish nation was responsible for the death of Christ, not only that, but that it was part of the nature of all Jews to desire the death of Christ. For as surely as they had killed Him on the cross so they desired always to repeat the deed. Jews, they believed, were constantly looking for a way to murder Christ. Theobald's tale provided an outlet for that idea. Jews crucified Christ for real, and were crucifying Him still, through a substitute. Thus the basic idea, put forward by Theobald, that once yearly Jews made a revenge attack on Christ became twisted with the Church's idea of the deicidal Jewish nature. Jews were no longer taking revenge, they were doing to Christ what it was their nature and burning desire to do.

For the Church this version of the Conspiracy Theory was very important. It kept alive its anti-Jewish propaganda. From every pulpit it could be said, "see the Jews killed Christ, and are killing him still." Furthermore, the little Christ substitutes were lucrative business. Declared "saints", these little martyrs provided the church with a pilgrimage site and a steady income as long as the charge was kept alive. The blood libel in the same way served to provide the church with little "saints". It also helped promote the Church's teaching on the efficacious nature of Christ's blood, the theory being that Christ's blood was important to the extent that even the unbelieving Jews recognised its goodness and wanted to partake of it. Thus, with the blood libel the Conspiracy Theory altered slightly. The Jewish people still had a burning desire to kill Christ, but they were doing so because of a need for His blood also. A large number of reasons were put forward as to why Jews needed Christ's blood,<sup>82</sup> most of them



rooted in ideas about magic, but these are not important to the Conspiracy Theory. What is important is that the basic theory of the annual assembly of the rabbis at Narbonne, to plot a revenge attack on Christ, had been altered. Now the meetings in Spain were held in order to organise attacks on Christ for the purpose of fulfilling Jewish magical and medicinal needs. As we have already seen the element of revenge as a motive has died out completely, but also in part the blood theme seems to lessen the emphasis on the idea that it is the nature of Jews to desire the death of Christ. The emphasis is placed squarely on the Jewish need for blood. The blood libel also expands the basic Conspiracy Theory. The secret Jewish society in Spain no longer seems to meet annually to plot the kidnap and death of one Christian child, but is seen to be actively organising the kidnap of larger numbers of Christian children and overseeing the distribution of their blood among the Jewish communities. We can assume from this, and the fact that there was more than one blood related murder a year, that the secret rabbinic meetings were now a regular occurrence, and no longer an annual affair.<sup>83</sup> The crucifixion and blood conspiracy libels were probably both unconscious inventions of the Church. They weren't created deliberately, at least not in the sense that someone sat down and declared an intention to strike out at Jews by means of an outrageous lie. They were created by the Church, in that they grew out of Church teachings and the image that the Church projected onto Jews. All it took was the right people, in this case Thomas of Monmouth and Theobald of Cambridge, to take the teachings about the deicidal nature of Jews and to mix them with popular antisemitism to create a whole new picture. From there the Church could consciously manipulate that picture to serve her own ends.

This manipulation of the Conspiracy Theory becomes apparent when we consider the addition of the host and image desecration charges to the Conspiracy collection. The alleged Jewish crime of host desecration became part of the charge that pronounced that Jews constantly conspired together to kill Christ.<sup>84</sup> But, the charge of host desecration was little more than a Church invention. Unlike the ritual murder conspiracy, host desecration was not the synthesis of early doctrines and ideas concerning Jews, but a deliberate attempt

by the Church to use Jews and their alleged conspiracy in order to promote a Church doctrine that was causing problems.

At the time that the conspiracy by Jews to mutilate the host was supposed to have been discovered, the Church was in fact battling to quell the doubts that had persisted among the Christian community since the doctrine of transubstantiation had been accepted as official Church dogma in 1215. The debate over whether and how Christ's body and blood were present in the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist, had been a source of discord in the Church for many centuries, and the doctrine of transubstantiation was to be the final answer. The new dogma asserted once and for all that the wafer used at mass was miraculously transformed into the body of Jesus, and was to be regarded as such, and not as a mere symbolic representation. The Church did its best to promote the new doctrine, but doubts still continued amongst ordinary Christians. It was to suppress these doubts that the Church exploited Jews, according them a belief in a dogma, that by no stretch of the imagination would they ever accept, in order to prove its truth. Thus, it was asserted that Jewish desires to torture Christ had manifested itself in a series of assaults upon the host. Such charges served the twofold purpose of keeping alive the Conspiracy Theory and fanning the flames of hatred by constant emphasis upon the deicidal nature of Jews; and providing the Church with propaganda to promote the doctrine of transubstantiation, for it could be emphasised that the truth of the new dogma was such that even the unbelieving, evil Jews recognised Christ's presence in the wafer.

It would, therefore, be true to say that the blame for the promotion of the early stages of the Conspiracy Theory lies wholly with the Church. They either created or else manipulated the ideas to serve their own purposes. The masses, whilst they reacted violently whenever a new charge arose, were acting upon propaganda being fed to them by the Church. Thus, ultimately, the Church was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Jews, caused by nothing more than a propaganda lie.

With the introduction of the well-poisoning conspiracy, a new idea was added to the old formula, bringing about a complete change in the focus of the

conspiracy charge. Suddenly Jews were no longer plotting the death of Christ but of every Christian. They were no longer seeking to destroy Christianity's source but to destroy Christianity itself, by murdering each and every one of its adherents. The plot, it was said, was developed in Spain, although in this case its source is not as clear as before. Conspiracy tales had previously set the mythical Jewish society in Narbonne, an area in Muslim Spain which was well known in the twelfth century as a centre of Jewish learning. The poison-wells conspiracy, however, makes no mention of Narbonne. In 1321 all that was said was that the plot was organised by Jews with the help of the Muslim kings of Granada and Tunis<sup>85</sup> This statement retains the idea of a conspiracy between the two Christian enemies, Jews and Muslims, and implies that the secret Jewish society was still plotting evil deeds, but there is no mention of their meeting place. During the Black Death the formula changes again, in this case the poisoning of Christendom is organised from Toledo in Christian Spain. All mention of Muslims is lost, possibly to emphasise that this is a wholly Jewish crime, or perhaps due to the fact that by the thirteenth century a number of successful battles had been waged against the Muslim kingdoms of southern Spain, and that only Granada was left in Muslim hands.<sup>86</sup> The lack of a Muslim threat most probably meant that Jews were now elevated to the role of archenemy, hence, they alone are the poisoners. Furthermore, the meeting place of the Jewish conspirators is now in Christian Spain. It is difficult to ascertain why Toledo was chosen as the new centre of Jewish Conspiracy. Poliakov suggests that the choice of Toledo arose because of a confusion with the name of the sacrilegious biography of Jesus' life, the *Toldoth Yeshu*.<sup>87</sup> This is, indeed, possible especially as the work was known to be in circulation in ninth century Europe.<sup>88</sup> However, the choice of Toledo may have been influenced by little more than the fact that there was a large and flourishing Jewish community there.<sup>89</sup> The choice of meeting place of the secret Jewish body, is, however, not as important as the crime they were said to have devised. The decision to kill Christians is far different from the earlier alleged plot to kill Christ. The new plot leaves us asking two very important questions. Who changed the plot to involve all Christians, and why?

As I have already demonstrated, the Conspiracy Theory up until the thirteenth century had been created and shaped by the Church, to fit its own religious needs. Conspiracy and the resultant slaughter of Jews was therefore religiously motivated. Obviously then, it is a religious motive that we should first seek and, thereby, hope to discover who changed the plot and their reason for doing so.

The first evidence of the change in the Conspiracy Theory appeared in 1321, when an alleged plot to poison the wells of Europe, by Jews and lepers, was discovered. The whole event was short, the charge was made and resulted in several lynchings and murders of Jews. There seems to have been little official involvement in the event, by either the Church or the State. Indeed, the Church neither appears to have instigated, encouraged or condemned the rumour. Notable, however, is the fact that just a year prior to the first accusation of well-poisoning an uprising by the *Pastoureaux* had taken place. The *Pastoureaux* had seen themselves as crusaders, with a mission to defeat the Saracens in Christ's name and liberate the Holy Land. To this end, they marched on Paris, which Malcolm Barber, claims "may be seen as an attempt to rouse the king" before they turned south, "presumably heading for the Mediterranean ports."<sup>90</sup> That they were intent on a crusade is evidenced by their behaviour, which was consistent with behaviour seen during earlier crusades and crusade attempts. They carried the traditional badges of the pilgrim, the staff and the script and wore a cross on their clothes and carried banners bearing the sign of the cross. Their antisemitic behaviour was similarly consistent with that of earlier crusaders. Could this, therefore have been the religious influence that we seek for the well-poisoning conspiracy, especially in the light of the fact that crusaders were apt to turn on Jews with very little excuse?

Despite the fact that the conspiracy between the lepers and Jews came to light simultaneously in Aquitaine and Spain, both areas where the *Pastoureaux* had massacred Jews, it seems unlikely that there is a religious connection between the two. The *Pastoureaux* had been more of a peasant uprising than a crusade. Such uprisings were frequent events. For example,

there had been similar peasant uprisings in 1198 and 1202, a Children's Crusade in 1212, the *Pastoureaux* had marched to rescue St. Louis in 1251, and there had been an abortive popular crusade in 1309.<sup>91</sup> The movement of 1320 was therefore part of the tradition of emotional and irrational action taken by the peasants from time to time, and not seen as some kind of religious force. The chronicler, Jean de Saint-Victor, called the 1320 crusade, "a certain commotion, the course of which is utterly unknown"; the continuator of Nangis described them as being "like a whirlwind"; whilst Bernard of Gui says of their end that "like smoke they disappeared."<sup>92</sup> For the upper classes, as Barber points out, the peasants "were part of an environment which, like an earth tremor or a flood, occasionally became disruptive."<sup>93</sup> Thus crusades, such as that of 1320, had very little impact; they blew out of nowhere and fizzled quickly to nothing, and it is very doubtful that such a crusade could have influenced events almost a year later. Furthermore, the traditional crusade attitude towards Jews, i.e. the offering of baptism or death was not a feature of the 1321 libel case, thus, proving that the crusade motivation was not a likely influence of the 1321 conspiracy libel.

A religious uprising also marked the events of the Black Death. In this case a religious movement, commonly called the Flagellants, whipped up a great deal of anti-Jewish feeling amongst the masses. We must, therefore, ask ourselves if they played a part in causing or promoting the Conspiracy Theory. We can dismiss their involvement in the events of 1321, for despite the fact that they were already in existence then, there is no evidence to link them in any way with the birth of the new conspiracy. However, they were very active in the time of the Black Death, and seem to have caused the death of a number of Jewish communities. But, did they do so by whipping up religious zealotry, akin to crusading fever, or did they spread or even bring about the rebirth of the conspiracy rumour? It is very unlikely that the Flagellant movement had anything to do with the revival of the conspiracy rumour, especially when we realise that their reappearance in Germany, in 1349, occurred a full year after the rumours had first surfaced in France, and at least six months after the trials at the castle of Chillon, had firmly established the

rumour as truth. Thus, the conspiracy rumour was already circulating and established in the minds of the populace before the Flagellants arrived. Furthermore, it is obvious that the Flagellants held the theory that the plague was punishment from God, for they believed that by their suffering they could take upon themselves the sins of mankind, and thereby stem the plague. Such a theory implicitly rejects the notion of a human cause of the plague.

There is little evidence to suggest that the Flagellants were likewise responsible for purposely promoting the conspiracy rumour. The fact that Jews often died before the arrival of these people suggests that they caused a religious zeal, like that often seen during the crusades, which found its outlet in the murder of Jews. In his vivid description of the Flagellants, the chronicler Jean d'Outremeuse observed:

*In the time when these "Flagellants" went among the countries, there came to pass a great wonder that must not be forgotten, for when it was seen that this mortality and this pestilence did not cease after the penitences which these beaters [the Flagellants] caused, a general rumour spread; and it was commonly said and certainly believed that this epidemic came from the Jews, and that the Jews had cast great poisons in the wells and springs throughout the world, in order to sow the plague and poison Christendom; which is why great and small alike had great choler against the Jews, who were everywhere taken where they could be held, and put to death and burned in all the regions where the "Flagellants" came and went . . .<sup>94</sup>*

D'Outremeuse's description suggests a type of connection between the Flagellants and the well poisoning conspiracy. It tells us that after the Flagellants had left an area the rumour of conspiracy to poison Christendom surfaced. How then do we interpret this? It could be said that the Flagellants brought the rumour with them and when they left, it was acted upon. However, this would be a misinterpretation of what d'Outremeuse really said. He stated "when it was seen that this mortality and this pestilence did not cease after the penitences which these beaters [the Flagellants] caused, a general rumour spread;" the implication is that when the Flagellants had left, having failed to stop the plague

as promised, the people in their disillusionment rejected the theory put forward by the Flagellants, that God was punishing them, and set about finding someone to blame. That blame fell upon Jews, for the rumour was already established that they had poisoned the wells. Therefore, what can be said, is that whilst, on one hand, the Flagellants caused the deaths of some Jews by whipping up religious zealotry, on the other hand, they were also responsible for diverting attention away from the conspiracy idea when they visited a town or city. It was only after they left and were seen to have failed that the people rejected the idea of plague being from God, and concentrated once more upon Jews. If anything, in many cases the Flagellants gave many Jewish communities a few more precious days of life.

If we dismiss the notion of there being a religious motive for the Conspiracy Theory, which was caused by a religious movement, then we must ask whether the cause of the new libel was the Church herself; after all the Church was the main cause and promoter of the earlier libels. As we have already said, ritual murder and host desecration charges were both inventions of the Church which served the purpose of promoting Church doctrines about the being of Christ, and also provided a source of income, in cases where there had been a shrine erected. Thus, the libels were doubly profitable to the Church, and also had the added bonus of fanning the flames of hatred against Jews. The poisoned-wells conspiracy, however, was of little value to the Church. Claiming that there was a world conspiracy to poison Christendom did nothing to promote Church doctrine, nor could it bring about the erection of shrines. Indeed, the few memorial edifices which were erected after the Black Death, were nearly always a commemoration of a slaughtered Jewish community.<sup>95</sup>

There is also nothing to suggest that the Church actively promoted the poison-well conspiracy tale. Indeed, her teaching that the plague was a punishment from God for the sins of the Christian nations, discounts the idea that Jews were in anyway responsible for the disease. Furthermore, during the plague, Pope Clement VI, was very active in trying to stop the conspiracy rumour. Almost as soon as the accusation of a Jewish plot appeared in France

in the spring of 1348, the Pope made an attempt at counteracting it by reissuing the traditional papal bull forbidding violence against Jews. When this failed to make an impact and the trials at Chillon posed a threat to all of Europe's Jews, the Pope issued a second bull, in which he denounced the allegations made against Jews. The bulls show a clear desire to halt the persecution of an innocent people, and demonstrates that the head of the Church did not support such an outrageous theory.

As the Church did not support the well poisoning libel then it is hardly likely that she was the one who caused the libel in the first place. There is no discernible reason why the Church should want to inform the people that they were all going to be poisoned for being Christians. Mordechai Breuer has, however, suggested that there could have been an indirect link between Jewish murders and religious motivation.<sup>96</sup> He claims that the Church had taught that the lending of money at interest was a grave transgression of Church laws and its ethical code, and therefore, it was a sin to accept a usurer within Christian society. Thus, says Breuer, the crime of accepting usury is punishable from heaven. Having said this, however, Breuer then goes on to state, "The Jews were bringing catastrophe upon Christianity because of their sin, and must be excised from Christian society."<sup>97</sup> In other words he is both claiming that the Church taught that Christians were to blame for accepting usury, and were therefore punished accordingly from heaven, and that Christians were being punished for a crime which was not their own but a Jewish sin. Furthermore, he also goes on to state, "Even if they were not accused of ritual murders or poisoning of wells, the very readiness to tolerate the Jews was seen as a transgression in the eyes of heaven." Thus it was, says Breuer, that Christians believed that the very process of self purification and of seeking to avoid punishment often involved the killing of Jews.<sup>98</sup>

Breuer's somewhat confusing theory puts forward the idea that it was possible that Jews were often murdered for reasons that are religiously motivated in an indirect way. Thus, we could infer that Jews were murdered during the Black Death because their sins were bringing punishment upon society, or that Christians were being punished for tolerating Jews in society.



Thus, in a very indirect way, the Church was to blame for the massacre of Jews even though she did not support the poisoned-well conspiracy. Both reasons, however, are very tenuous. It was repeated over and over that Jews were causing the Black Death by poisoning the water supply. There is no suggestion of anyone accusing them of causing the plague by existing as a sinful nation. The people did not view the plague as a divine punishment for the sins of Jews, but saw it as a man made crime, a Jewish sin as it were. There is no evidence, except the most tenuous, to link the Church with this idea.

We cannot link the Church and the poisoned-well theory. There is no evidence to prove that she was the source of the tale, or was active in promoting it. Therefore, there seems to be no discernible religious motive behind this particular conspiracy libel. In much the same way we cannot link the secular leaders with the libel either. As I demonstrated earlier, all but a few leaders tried to do everything in their power to protect Jews from the anger of the mobs during the Black Death. Likewise, many city councils spoke out against the poisoning libel. In the Alsatian chronicle of Konigshofen, there are copies of letters from a number of city councils, among them Cologne, Freiburg and Basel, all of which express the opinion that the anti-Jewish movement should be stopped as early as possible. Indeed, in Heilbronn, Strasbourg, Cologne and Erfurt, they stated explicitly that they had never previously heard a disparaging word about Jews and there was no proof that they were guilty of poisoning any wells.<sup>99</sup> Of course, in many cases, the councils and rulers, tried to suppress the rumours of conspiracy, not so much for humanitarian reasons, but because of the fear that the anti-Jewish mob might oust them from power, as they did in Strasbourg.<sup>100</sup> But, whatever their reasons, the leaders did refute the poisoned-well libel at a time when it required great courage to stand up and endanger oneself by defending the Jewish people. In doing so these leaders demonstrated that they were neither the source or promoters of the conspiracy tale.

Many documents report, that during the Black Death those mobs which came to kill Jews were made up of "simple people" and "the ordinary folk."<sup>101</sup> These were the peasants, the farmers and the craftsmen, the people who

believed that Jews were capable of poisoning the wells, that Jews wanted to poison all of Christendom, and who murdered Jewish people because of these beliefs. There is little doubt that they were the ones who invented the tale of the Jewish mass poisoner. They were the ones who claimed that Jews wanted every Christian dead and who promoted this tale until it brought about the deaths of thousands of Jews. It was these ordinary people who opposed the authorities when they tried to protect Jews. It was the same people who stood to gain much when the Jewish usurer was dead and when Jewish property was distributed, or more often looted, following the massacre of the community. It was the ordinary Christian masses who stood to gain the most, who did nothing to protect Jews and therefore, without doubt, were the ones who invented, believed and acted upon the poisoned-well conspiracy myth.

Knowing that the ordinary people were responsible for the invention of the new conspiracy idea leaves us with one important question. Why did they invent a myth that focused upon themselves? Why did they fear that Jews were plotting to kill them, rather than stick with the old formula of having them plot against Christ? It couldn't be for the purpose of murdering Jews, for Jews had died because of their supposed plot against Christ for almost two decades. One theory, probably the most obvious one, for the rejection of the plot to kill Christ and the subsequent adoption of a plot focused on Christians, is the simple fact that the plot was thought up by Christians, and was not the usual Church instigated tale. Thus, it had lost the religious motive in favour of one which the masses could understand and react to. But of course, such a simple answer still leaves many questions unanswered. Likewise, we could suggest that the large number of plague deaths among the clergy and in the religious houses, suggested to the people a plot to kill Christians. However, this theory is flawed by the facts that the large number of Christian deaths was confined to the plague period, that there were in fact no recorded Christian deaths during the 1321 accusation of well-poisoning, which could have suggested that there was a plot to destroy Christians everywhere.

Kenneth Stow<sup>102</sup> suggests that the massacre of Jews during the Black Death was prompted by two levels of thinking. On the conscious level, the

people were taking vengeance on the Jews, whom they believed had poisoned the wells and thereby brought the plague upon them. Unconsciously, however, they were, according to Stow, trying to correct the balance of society. The Jew, says Stow, was looked upon by the people of all social levels as a mirror-image of themselves. His reflection embodied all of their personal inadequacies and imperfections, as well as all the flaws in society. In attacking Jews the masses were, in a sense, attacking their own failures and those of society with the purpose of restoring themselves and the world to perfection. A similar way of thinking was apparent in nineteenth and twentieth century Germany, where Jews had been mythified as Germany's "cultural despair", and their eradication was seen as a means of ending that despair.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, Stow observes that the Medieval people saw themselves as pilgrims seeking the road to God's kingdom. On earth, that kingdom was represented by the "Christian polity" which, says Stow, "thanks to the increasingly popular Corpus Christi civic processions - was being ever more likened to the body of Christ."<sup>104</sup> Thus, the masses believed that they had to protect the polity from imputed Jewish violence just as they had to take revenge upon Jews for their repeated attacks on Christ. If, we accept Stow's theory, then it becomes possible that the attacks on Jews during the Black Death, were instigated by the fear that Jews were trying to destroy the "Christian polity", that they were attacking Christ's body and not the people themselves. At the same time, they were also killing Jews to restore harmony and balance to a disordered society.

Stow's theory is in parts quite plausible when applied to events during the Black Death. Society had become disordered and needed to be balanced, and as far as the masses were concerned that balance could be restored by killing Jews but not, as Stow suggests, because those Jews reflected a disordered society, but because the masses believed they had caused that disorder. Likewise, believing that the masses unconsciously killed Jews because they thought that they were attacking the body of Christ, manifest as the "Christian polity", implies that the masses, which were composed of simple and largely uneducated people, possessed a very scholarly way of viewing society and its ills. If they had believed that the body of Christ was being attacked, I

think that this would have been reflected in the Conspiracy Theory. As it was, the people firmly believed that *they* as Christians were being made the victims of an evil Jewish deed, not a substitute Christ. Therefore, in the case of the Black Death, I believe the people reacted in the way we would expect an ignorant and uneducated mass to react when faced with a situation they could not understand. They sought someone to blame, and murdered them in the hope that they could halt the ills that were befalling them.

Malcolm Barber,<sup>105</sup> in his study of the poisoned-wells conspiracy of 1321, also comes to some noteworthy conclusions. He believes that the delusion that there was a plot to overthrow Christendom is a reflection of the "Medieval mental attitudes under the strains created by the economic and social problems of the fourteenth century."<sup>106</sup> He believes that the continuing emphasis upon the Jewish Conspiracy to kill Christ, combined with the trials of the Templars, between 1307-1312, in which a shocking catalogue of crimes had been recorded,<sup>107</sup> had led the masses to expect to find anti-social conspirators, ready to overrun society. Such an idea meant that the Christian masses were constantly affected by the stress of watching for these conspirators. This stress when combined with the series of natural disasters, such as the prolonged famine of 1315-1317 which affected northern Europe, and the flooding of Flanders in 1321, had found an outlet in the idea of a plot by the lepers and Jews. The Jews and lepers became the scapegoats for the stress of society, and the attacks upon them helped to relieve the pressure.

Barber's theory is a useful one. He observes that under too much stress and pressure, the Medieval people reacted by attacking a mythical plotter. They had reached a point where they had come to view the things that they couldn't cope with as part of some evil plot, because they had been conditioned by recent events to think this way. When there was too much to cope with they attacked the group they thought responsible for the plot. I believe that Barber's theory is accurate up to a point, the masses when faced with events beyond their control reacted, as he says, by blaming and attacking the mythical plotter. But, I believe that the pressure caused by the famine of 1315-1317 had already found its outlet in the murder of Jews during the *Pastoureaux* crusade, and

that we must go just one step further to find the reason for the alleged poisoning plot of both 1321 and during the Black Death.

If we examine the events of leading up to 1321 and again those leading to the period of the Black Death in 1348, an important sequence of events emerges. Between 1315 and 1320 a series of wet seasons brought northern Europe almost continual misery. Famine was rife, bad harvests followed one upon the other, and epidemics struck the starving masses. The peasants and ordinary folk were brought to the edge of despair by their suffering. The stress was enormous, and as Barber has pointed out, when the pressure was too great the people sought an outlet for it. They needed someone to attack, someone to blame. Thus it was in 1320, amidst a rising tide of social upheaval, an army of starving shepherds, the *Pastoureaux*, headed south in search of some form of relief. They found that relief in the massacre of Jews, whose blood marked their progress south through France, and their final act of violence in Spain. For some six or seven months they indulged in an orgy of murder, unopposed by those who had the power to stop the slaughter, no doubt because many approved of the killings. Only when the *Pastoureaux* turned their attention to the clerics of France were they finally stopped. Here we have Barber's theory demonstrated. There was a time of social pressure, followed by the attacks which alleviated that pressure. But, we have one more element. Less than six months after the dispersion of the *Pastoureaux* uprising, on the very sites of their murders, a wild accusation appeared. Jews, it was claimed, were plotting to kill all Christians, and, in spite of the lack of evidence to prove this, the slaughter of Jews began again.

Thus, a time of social upheaval and stress manifests itself in the slaughter of Jews, an ideal minority group. The slaughter is followed by an accusation that Jews are plotting to kill all Christians, the result of which is more slaughter. A similar pattern emerges when we examine the events leading up to the Black Death. In Germany, the scene of much of the killing of Jews during the plague, we find a country which had existed in almost permanent anarchy since the middle of the thirteenth century. Political chaos reigned as the pretenders to the crown waged endless and senseless wars. To this were

added small private wars waged by the petty lords, and a number of urban and feudal insurrections. In 1298 amidst this anarchy the *Rindfleisch* massacres occurred. These were the first in a series of massacres whereby every Jew in Germany was considered responsible for the imputed crimes of one community or indeed, one person. In the case of the *Rindfleisch* massacres the charge was host profanation, a charge which gave the rioters an excuse to murder several thousand Jews.<sup>108</sup> For a short time, the massacres no doubt gave the German Christians some relief from the pressures of society. But, such relief was temporary, and Germany continued to be torn by uprisings and petty feuds. In 1336 another large scale slaughter attempt was made on the Jewish community. This time from the midst of the permanent anarchy there arose a mob called the *Armleder*, or "Leatherarms" because of their custom of wearing leather bands on their arms. For two years, 1336 to 1338, armed with crude weapons, some 5,000 people followed the *Armleder* and slaughtered Jews from Alsace through the Rhineland into Swabia. Their excuse for the murders was the charge of host profanation, but the accusation was generally made after the slaughter, and rarely before. Neither the princes, the emperor or the common people intervened to protect Jewish communities, again suggesting that there was a silent approval for such massacres. Indeed, many more massacres and degradations of Jewish communities occurred over the next few years. For example in 1345, three years before the Black Death, King John authorised the inhabitants of Liengnitz and Breslau the right to destroy the Jewish cemeteries, so that they could use the tombstones to repair the city walls.<sup>109</sup> Again as we can see the pattern is established. Upheavals in society lead to the slaughter and degradation of the Jewish people, then after a short break, an accusation that Jews are about to murder all Christians appears.

The pattern that we have established leads us to one final question, the answer of which should in turn should help us understand why the conspiracy charge changed to focus its alleged plot on Christians. The question we have to ask ourselves is why did the charge of well poisoning almost automatically follow upon a period of Jewish slaughter? The answer can be found in the charge itself. After slaughtering Jews, the people suddenly became afraid that

Jews were going to kill them. As we have seen the people acted in a time of stress by murdering. These murders were a reaction, committed without thought or any actual reason. But, when the stress had gone, the people who had participated, who had watched, or had just done nothing to help the Jews, were left with nothing more than the enormity of the crime that they had committed, and a sense of fear that Jews might somehow seek revenge. This very apprehension manifested itself in the poisoned-well conspiracy libel, a libel which, as Poliakov states, could justify retroactively the crime already committed.<sup>110</sup> Thus, just six months after the *Pastoureaux* had murdered Jews throughout France with the silent approval of the masses, the enormity of the crime suggested that there should be an excuse for it, a reason which would appease the conscience, and so it was that the people claimed that there was a Jewish plot to poison them. Thus, justifying their earlier actions and provoking further bloodshed. In the same way the persecutions and hostility in Germany led to the same accusation during the Black Death. Perhaps even more telling in this case, is the so called confession of a Jew from Freiburg who was alleged to have said that Jews had poisoned the wells to destroy Christendom:

*Because you Christians have destroyed so many Jews, because of what king Armleder did: and also because we too want to be lords: for you have lorded long enough.*<sup>111</sup>

The confession, reflects the fears of those who tortured the Jew in question, and without doubt those who provided the text. It reflects their own guilt, their own crimes and their only form of justification, blaming the victim for their own cruelty.

It is a strange quirk of human nature, that Man when faced with the enormity of his own crime, seeks his justification in blaming his victims of forcing him to commit that crime. The ignorant masses of Medieval Europe by no means had the monopoly on such irrational thinking. Not so long ago the Nazi's justified the murders of innocent Jewish children, by terming them "potential avengers."<sup>112</sup>

# Chapter 3

## Religious Conspiracy After the Black Death

### Religious Conspiracy from the Black Death to the Eve of the Reformation

#### i. Religious Conspiracy as a Political Weapon

The sequence of events from Norwich, to Fulda, to the *Rindfleisch* massacres, the *Armleder*, and finally to the Black Death, catalogues the escalating violence and degradation to which Jews were subject during the Middle Ages as a result of the Conspiracy fantasies. The four fantasies- that Jews crucified Christian children, used human blood and in their rituals and medicine, tortured the Eucharist, and sought to destroy Christendom by means of a poison - are a clear example of irrational efforts by Christians to repress their doubts about their religion, their society and, most of all, about themselves. These fantasies which had been developed throughout Western Europe, were, in their earliest forms, the work of a minority of anxious Christians who used the label "Jew," as a menacing symbol of their own weakness, their own doubts and fears, and even more as a symbol of their own guilt. From these few, these irrational fantasies spread. Some found them appealing and believed them implicitly, some believed because they needed an external and real source to attribute their own disillusionment too, and others believed blindly, because the fantasies were given widespread expression in the literature, plays, and in the preaching of the day. Thus by the mid fourteenth century it had become extremely difficult not to believe, for the myth of the Jewish Conspiracy had become embedded in the mentality of millions of normally rational Christians.

As the dust of the Black Death settled it soon became apparent that Europe had changed radically. Hundreds of Jewish communities had gone, totally destroyed both by the plague and by the plague-engendered massacres. Europe was all but devoid of Jews. Christianity had triumphed, the final dream had been achieved, the Jewish infidel had been driven away from the heart of



Christendom. Yet, as soon Europe was freed of the Jewish menace, there came the cry to recall them. Jews may have been the Devil's own, but Europe needed them, and having driven them out, suddenly found that she desired their presence more than ever. Indeed, for a time following their supposed plot to destroy Christianity, Jews became a rare and much valued commodity in Europe.

In 1352 the German city of Speyer invited the Jewish community to return, with promises of protection and total security. Almost immediately Mainz followed suit, as did Augsburg, and eventually all the former cities that had once housed a Jewish community. Each offered special guarantees of protection.<sup>1</sup> Of course this interest in Jews was usually purely financial, and many of the invitations to return to Germany were prompted by the 1355 "Golden Bull" which permitted the re-admission and taxation of Jews.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in France, where Jews had suffered a series of expulsions and recalls since the beginning of the century, Jews were offered a return to the kingdom in 1361, under much more favourable conditions than they had enjoyed previously.<sup>3</sup> Of course such indulgences didn't exactly come cheap, and each Jew was subject to a heavy personal taxation.<sup>4</sup> Slowly several Jewish communities were reformed. They took up usury, but on a much smaller scale than before, and to this was added a new trade: traffic in old clothes. Magnanimous and indulgent though the offers to return had been, the condition of Jews remained as pitiable as ever, their status would never resemble in any respect what it had been in the previous century.

The period of tranquillity that followed the readmissions to France and Germany was relatively short-lived. Following the ascension of Charles VI in 1380, the Jews of France found themselves not only subject to heavy taxation, which rendered them virtual paupers, but also facing popular resentment on every side.<sup>5</sup> Despite this they struggled on for the next century or so, until finally, in 1394 the king, "moved by piety and fearing the evil influence of the Jews upon the Christians," ordered their final expulsion from the kingdom.<sup>6</sup> The Jewish situation in Germany followed a similar course. For a generation or two there was a period of relative peace. But, in 1384, quite unexpectedly, the Jews

of Augsburg, Nurnberg and other neighbouring small towns, were rounded up and released only after the payment of a sizeable ransom.<sup>7</sup> The following year, a meeting of delegates of thirty-eight cities, agreed to abolished one-quarter of all credits owed to Jews, and granted the residue to the cities. In 1388, the Jewish community of Strasbourg was expelled from the city. This was the first of a long series of expulsions that would plague German Jewry until the end of the fifteenth century. From the fourteenth century onwards, "the wandering Jew", long a legend of Christian folklore, became a reality. Jews were left the option of travelling from city to city, never settling for long, before the next expulsion drove them onwards. By the end of the fifteenth century there were just three or four German cities that still granted Jews a right of residence. The rest of the Jewish communities had fled Germany, settling in the more hospitable regions of Poland and Lithuania.

Before the final expulsions occurred, however, there was still much to be suffered. The reasons behind the expulsions were many, although the basic reason was usually economic. Less needed in the Medieval economy, Jews appeared not so much as sources of income, but as competitors and owners of valuable properties. Verbally, however, these reasons were very rarely given voice; instead religious arguments predominated as an excuse for expulsion.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the religious conspiracy libels, which had long been a useful weapon of the Church and a favoured excuse of the people for the massacring of Jews, now found new voice in the edicts of the city governments, the one body which had once protested so often against them. The conspiracy libels became the new political weapon against Jews. They were no longer used to stir up religious fervour or to settle the doubts of the people about themselves and their religion, instead they became part of the politics of Europe. The hatred they inspired was useful and every conspiracy libel found a place in the edicts to expel Jews from the cities of Europe.

Thus a number of libels underwent a transformation of purpose. Whereas during the Black Death, and the leper incident of 1321, the poisoned-well conspiracy libel had served as an outlet of guilt for previous massacres of Jews, during the latter half of the fourteenth century the

accusation took on the role of being revived, either whenever a plague occurred,<sup>9</sup> or whenever an excuse was needed for expelling Jews from a city. It may, therefore, be more than mere coincidence that Freiburg in 1401 charged its Jews with "planning to exterminate Christendom by poisoning the air," and in that same year revived the old accusation that Jews thirsted for Christian blood and used the latter as an excuse to ban them from the city.<sup>10</sup> The same may be said of Regensburg, one of the few cities to defend Jews during the Black Death, who having made the accusation of well poisoning in 1472, went on to make an attempt to expel its Jews in 1476 on the pretext that they had committed a ritual murder.<sup>11</sup> More explicitly, in 1424, just two years after Martin V's condemnation of the poisoned-well libel, the city of Cologne invoked that very charge as one of its reasons for expelling the city's Jews.

Expulsions, like violence, took place only under certain conditions, and whilst the poisoned-well libel was a hardy charge it by no means always provided the right excuse. Only very occasionally were the conditions necessary to expel Jews provided by a poisoning charge. More often than not, as in the cases of Freiburg and Regensburg, it can be observed, that the poisoning libel was used to pave the way for other charges, it was only used to cast the seeds of doubt. For expulsions the charges of ritual murder and host desecration were more often than not favoured no doubt because both charges, since their inception, had always provoked the strongest, and perhaps most violent response.

A prime example of the use of a ritual murder charge to provoke an expulsion of the Jewish community can be seen in the case of the little town of Endingen in Breisgau. Since 1331 Jews were known to have lived in Endingen, in what amounted to an uneasy tolerance of their presence. In 1470, at Eastertime, the charnel of Saint Peter's Parish Church in Endingen caved in and had to be demolished. Whilst removing the bones from the charnel for reburial, the workmen came across the remains of a man and woman, and what appeared to be two child sized, headless corpses. It was suggested that these were the remains of a beggar family, who some eight years previously had been given refuge by a Jew named Elias. They had been with Elias over the Passover

period, during which time there had been a large gathering of Jews at Elias' home for the celebrations. Suspicion of murder soon fell upon the Jews of Endingen.

On March 24, Elias and his brothers, Eberlin and Mercklin were arrested. Under torture they were forced to confess to murdering the family in order to obtain blood, "because Jews need Christian blood for their circumcision."<sup>12</sup> The three Jews were burned to death on April 4. Their confessions, however, served as information for the arrest of a number of Jews of neighbouring cities. Among them was Leo of Pforzheim, named as the purchaser of the blood, and four other Jews of his house. All died at the stake, but not before they had implicated the Jews of Worms, Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Selestat, and Pforzheim. It was only the intervention of Friedrich III which stopped the arrests, torture and executions of those communities and of the Jewish community of Endingen.

The Endingen case had nearly all the hallmarks of a typical ritual murder libel with a few interesting exceptions. The timing of the murder was as usual Passover, but the expected charge, that Jews needed blood for their Passover bread, was replaced by an obviously Christian conception of blood magic. Furthermore, the notion of a central Jewish body, which supposedly co-ordinated the ritual murders and blood collections as part of the Jewish Conspiracy, is not mentioned, but is instead replaced by a number of Jewish communities who were said to conspire together to bring about this and other murders. Whatever the differences the charge gave rise to a number of different records and lasting reminders. Copies of the various confessions were lodged in the cities of Freiburg, Frankfurt and Strasbourg. These records in turn provided the magistrates of the cities with documentary "evidence" of ritual murder, and thus gave them a guideline should they encounter similar cases. On the popular level the murders also gave rise to a ballad, "The Song of the Parents and the Innocent Children," and a play commemorating the occasion, the *Judenspiel*. The *Endingen Judenspiel* became an extremely popular drama during the Renaissance. Unlike the earlier ritual murder cases, there was no shrine established, revealing that the motive was not a religious one. The fact that the

Jews of Endingen were formally banned from the city, reveals that the reasons were wholly political especially as Friedrich III and his successor Maximilian granted the city the privilege of not having to tolerate Jews in the future.<sup>13</sup>

The Endingen case reveals how the flimsiest of evidence can be manipulated for political ends. On a grander scale the affair of "the Holy Child of La Guardia" helped win the consent of Ferdinand for the expulsion of Jews from Spain. There is no evidence to suggest that the alleged victim ever existed, but five Jews were made to confess under torture, that they had crucified a Christian child, abusing him to his face and cursing him, as was done to Christ in ancient times. This case of ritual crucifixion was avenged on November 16, 1491. Three of the five arrested by the inquisition were Jewish converts, and so were mercifully strangled and burnt for their part in the "crime"; the remaining two, who were Jews, were torn to pieces with red-hot pinchers. The whole affair was staged by Torquemada in order to strengthen his case for the expulsion of Spanish Jews, but, as in the case of earlier ritual crucifixions, a popular cultus grew up around the child.<sup>14</sup>

Charges of host desecration likewise played an important role in the expulsion of Jews from Europe. Host desecration, like ritual murder, was a charge that enjoyed extreme popularity, perhaps more so because it was an easier accusation to "prove" as there was no body, or problems of identification and so on, involved. For example, in 1420, following the failure of an attempt to use three drowned Christian boys as evidence of ritual murder against the Jews of Vienna, the wife of the sacristan of St. Laurenz church in Enns, Upper Austria, was accused of having stolen and sold hosts to a rich Jew named Israel. Israel, it was said, sent the wafers to Jews in and around Austria. As a result of the accusation many Austrian Jews were rounded up and imprisoned. Some committed suicide, whilst a further 200 or more were burned alive in 1421. Of those left, Archduke Alrecht V ordered the forced baptism of their children, confiscated their property, and forbade any Jew to remain in Austria.

This was one of many cases, and by the end of the fifteenth century accusations of host desecration became a much favoured pretext for confiscating Jewish property and expelling all Jews from the land. As a result

of a host desecration charge made by the Franciscan friar Johann Capistrano forty-one Jews were burned alive in Breslau in June 1453. The rest of the community, after their children had been taken from them by force and baptised, had their property confiscated and were expelled from the country. Similar events occurred in 1492 in Sternberg and Mecklenburg, in 1496 in Styria, Carinthia, and Carinola and in 1498, in Salzburg and Nuremberg.<sup>15</sup> In 1510, 38 Jews were executed in Knoblauch near Berlin, and all the Jews of Brandenburg were expelled, after a host was stolen, by what later was found to be a common Christian thief.<sup>16</sup>

The pre-Reformation years saw a dramatic increase in the conspiracy libel charges. Hsia has observed that in the period following the Black Death, ritual murder charges began an almost steady climb in numbers until they finally reached their peak during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>17</sup> Without doubt some of the impetus behind this increase must have been the desire to expel Jews, and the usefulness of the conspiracy libels as an excuse for this. Evidence of this can be seen from Hsia's table of charges and their origins.<sup>18</sup> From it we can observe that during the fourteenth century, which saw mass expulsions of Jews from France, there were four known accusations of ritual murder made. This may seem an unremarkable number, but when we compare it with the fact that the highest number of charges previously made by France was two (made in the twelfth century), and add to this the fact that the fourteenth century, due to the Black Death, had one of the lowest number of accusations, then the figures take on a different complexion. Germany likewise managed to produce a high number of charges during the fourteenth century, which gradually rose during the following centuries. Indeed, between them Germany and Bohemia in the fifteenth century, managed to produce twenty of the twenty-three charges made that century. The same century also saw an increase in the expulsions of Jewish communities from those lands.

## ii. Religious Conspiracy and the Printing Press: The Cases of Simon of Trent and the Passau Host Desecration.

An increased interest in the conspiracy libels during the last century before the Reformation, brought about some of the most infamous, and perhaps best known, cases. The new interest was sparked by more than mere politics and the desire to be rid of Jews, for the late fifteenth century saw the invention of movable type printing. Suddenly tales of Jewish murders and host desecrations took on a new lease of life. Stories that were once spread by travelling plays, or told orally, became the subject of chapbooks, song-sheets and broadsheets. For the uneducated, who had difficulty reading the written texts, printed woodcuts described by means of pictures the purported ritual murders and host desecrations.<sup>19</sup> The printed word made the conspiracy libels seem all the more real, the gruesome pictures and accompanying text were a far greater aid to belief than mere oral tales ever were.

The effect that the written word had on the conspiracy libels can be seen in a number of cases of ritual murder. Amongst the best known of these was the ritual murder charge brought against the Jews of the northern Italian city of Trent. During Easter 1475 a two and a half year old Christian boy, named Simon, went missing from his home. His father immediately went before the local judge and claimed that Jews had kidnapped and murdered his son. The secular authorities, aided by Bishop Hinderbach, acted quickly, rounding up a large number of Jews, both from the Trent Jewish community and from amongst the large number of German Jews who were visiting Trent. All were subjected to severe torture, until the confession required by their captors was extorted. Simon, it was claimed, had been crucified by Jews in order to obtain blood for the Jewish Passover bread and wine.<sup>20</sup> Samuel, the leader of the community and chief suspect, was tortured for two months before being burned at the stake on June 21, along with all the other captured Jews, even those who had accepted baptism.<sup>21</sup> The affair, however, did not end there and a further two trials followed at which it was established that confessions had been extracted under severe torture, and that the clerks of Bishop Hinderbach were guilty of forging evidence.<sup>22</sup> Pope Sixtus IV, however, did not declare the trial

invalid, but he did warn the bishop and Christians of Trent not to cause any further harm to Jews.

At first glance, the case seems to follow the standard ritual murder pattern. Christianity had been vindicated, the guilty Jews murdered, and the child became a "martyr" with the usual attribution of miracles, a shrine and pilgrimages. But, unlike the majority of earlier cases, the little "martyr" did not provide a short-lived moment of glory; instead the cult of Simon of Trent grew and grew. The reason for this sustained interest was the plethora of printed material concerning Simon, that followed his demise. First among these was a poem, in which the torments of Simon were described in vivid detail, and in which there was a call for action to be taken against Jews.<sup>23</sup> "Eyewitness" accounts followed, and chroniclers recounted the tale, also adding their own call to the rulers to get rid of Jews.<sup>24</sup> Soon nearly every city chronicle had an entry on Trent and the tale became official history. In Hartmann Schedel's, *Book of Chronicles from the Beginning of the World*, printed in Nuremberg in 1493, half a folio page is devoted to depicting the "martyrdom" of Simon. It is accompanied by a beautiful carved woodcut, which shows nine named Jews, holding the boy on a table while they collect his blood in a bowl.<sup>25</sup> *The Nuremberg Chronicle*, containing this and accounts of earlier ritual murders, had a press run of some fifteen hundred Latin and one thousand German copies. Pirated small folio versions followed, along with cheap chapbooks, broadsheets and pamphlets, all helped to spread the story worldwide. The "history" of ritual murder, thus became part of the general culture of Europe.

Thus with the aid of the printing press the tale of Simon of Trent took on a reality, unlike any ritual murder before it. It became more widely known than any other murder and was lifted out of the realms of folklore to become real and actual history. Furthermore, the broadsheets and chapbooks provided the peasants, who were unlikely ever to be able to make the pilgrimage to Trent, with a pious memento of the "little saint". It served as their own holy relic, something real to remember the affair by. It reminded them not only of their "little saint" but served to fan the flames of hatred and antisemitic feeling. It is easy to see why, just over a hundred years later in 1584, Pope Sixtus



V allowed the name of Simon of Trent to be placed on the martyrology, and why just three years later his cult was approved for the diocese Trent. Strack, in his investigation of the case of Simon of Trent, states that this papal approval "proves nothing as to the guilt of the Jews."<sup>26</sup> To the educated modern mind, maybe not, but to the Medieval masses already steeped hatred for Jews it proved more than anything that their hatred had a foundation, that Jews were evil, that they committed the most heinous of crimes, and that they should without doubt be destroyed.

So great was the effect of the Trent episode and its various depictions, that Simon was still revered as a saint by many Austrian Catholics at the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, in 1893 a pamphlet on the "Ritual Murder of Simon of Trent" was distributed free at the doors of Vienna churches. The pamphlet, written by Canon Joseph Deckert, a known disseminator of race hatred, was part of a campaign, begun a few years earlier, aimed at stirring up antisemitic hatred by reviving the blood legend.<sup>27</sup> Such an incident reveals the true power of the religious conspiracy libel, in that over four hundred years after a so called ritual murder, that mythical incident, could still be used as a powerful weapon of hatred against Jews.

The Trent episode was not the only conspiracy libel to benefit from the advent of the printing press. In 1478 a charge of host desecration, made in the city of Passau, on the Danube, was made famous throughout Europe, thanks to a plethora of printed material. The case began when Christoph Eisengreishamer, a Christian servant from Passau, was arrested for theft and confessed that the previous year he had broken into St. Mary's church in Freyung and stolen eight hosts, which he then sold to two local Jews, Unger and Mandel. He also claimed that in that same year he had stolen seven more hosts which he had sold to the Jew, Suttel of Regensburg. The magistrates at Passau rounded up and tortured many Jews and although testimonies conflicted, they came to the conclusion that Mandel had smuggled the hosts into the synagogue, where they had been stabbed until blood flowed. The Eucharist, it was said, then changed itself into a young boy, and in panic at this miracle, the Jews taking part in the

deseccration threw the remaining hosts into an oven from which the flames gave forth two angels and doves.

Suspecting a much greater Jewish Conspiracy the magistrates at Passau continued the torture until the arrested Jews confessed that they had sent hosts to both Prague and Regensberg. On March 10, 1478, all the purported participants in the host deseccration were sentenced to death. Four of those who had accepted baptism were decapitated; the accused torturers of the hosts and the thief Eisengreishamer, were tormented with glowing pincers and then burnt. Altogether forty Jewish families accepted baptism, and the rest were expelled from Passau. The following year the synagogue was razed and in its stead a church was erected to commemorate the deseccration.

Reports of miracles and cures began immediately after the executions, and Passau soon grew to be an important pilgrimage site. In 1480 a broadsheet was produced which was sold to pilgrims as a memento.<sup>28</sup> It contained twelve woodcuts, each captioned with a little verse, which told the story of the "deseccration", from the theft of the hosts to the erection of the church. As a pictorial narrative and a pious memento, the broadsheet increased the popularity of Passau as a place of pilgrimage. It was sold in massive quantities along commercial and pilgrimage routes, thus spreading the tale over a wide geographical area. Indeed, such was the fame of the Passau host deseccration that some twenty years later the broadsheet was still being printed and sold in Nuremberg and Augsburg.<sup>29</sup>

As the printed broadsheet spread the narrative of the Passau host deseccration among the people, so too, in a manner reminiscent of the Eendingen ritual murder case, the "official" record was passed among the magistrates of other cities. The record served as a guide for other cities and as part of the accumulated "evidence" of a Jewish Conspiracy. The printing press thus served as a chief outlet for antisemitic propaganda. Evidence of Jewish Conspiracies was circulated to a far wider audience than ever before. In the last few decades before the Reformation, the printing press served to turn traditional tales of Jewish Conspiracy into textual documentations. Thus, to the old formula of it being enough that a Jew was accused to prove his guilt, was

added a wealth of written evidence which made that guilt "provable". Slowly the legends, folktales, songs, altar panels, paintings, carnivals and Easter plays were replaced by printed texts as a means of spreading the most damning antisemitic libel.

The printers were not content to concern themselves with current events alone, but also drew on past events, making what was once tradition into historical fact. A prime example of this was the Deckendorf legend. According to tradition, the Jews of Deckendorf, in Lower Bavaria, encouraged a Christian woman to steal a host for them at Eastertide. Having obtained the host they proceeded to torture it; as expected it bled and miraculously turned into a child, who proved to be indestructible. The evil deed was discovered when a sentinel heard Mary lamenting the murder of her child near the house of a Jew. In fury the townspeople burned the city's Jews and a great number of miracles followed. The event took place in 1337 and for more than a century and a half the tale was primarily transmitted through oral and pilgrimage traditions. In 1492, the *Nuremberg Chronicle* included it as a factual historical entry. In 1520, almost two hundred years after the event a poem published in Augsburg commemorated the miracle of the host of Duckendorf. Thus what was once oral tradition and destined to be forgotten, was preserved in print and survived to our time.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Reformation: Two Different Approaches to the Conspiracy Libels**

During the sixteenth century Europe took its first hesitant steps out of the Medieval World and into what would become the modern age. Although its progress was not felt immediately, the cause of human rights and the call for greater religious freedom found a great deal of support throughout Europe. The new reform movements of the Renaissance and the Reformation ultimately opened a new chapter in the Jewish, as well as in the general history of Western Europe. At first the Renaissance seemed to offer much for Jews. The humanist learning which first blossomed in Italy turned attention to Hebrew as a language and literature, and witnessed the appearance of several Christian Hebraists. As

a result of this interest, Jewish and Christian scholars met on an academic level, but despite this new liberal attitude, the old anti-Jewish prejudices remained. The Protestant revolt against the Catholic Church brought few blessings to the Jewish people. For a while it offered some relief for Jews, for it split their enemies and the ensuing battle diverted some attention away from them, but in the early days Jews could only feel the impact of the Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire, and there were few Jews left in most of this area. A few persisted in Germany, where the Reformation had its main impact, but most Jews, following the expulsions, had settled in Poland and its surrounding territories, and Italy, all of which remained faithful to the Church of Rome and its Medieval doctrines.

For those Jews left in Europe the reform movements had a dualistic effect. The new movements intended to escape the shackles of Medieval thinking and practice, yet when it came to Jews they welcomed their Medieval image with open arms. Consciously they intended to make no difference to the "Jewish question", and made no changes as far as attitude towards Jews was concerned. Thus in the sermons and pamphlets of the humanists and reformers the Jewish status and image remained fixed in Medieval tradition. Jews remained archconspirators, Christ killers, the Devil's own, and few doubted that they thirsted for Christian blood. Yet, despite the reformers' intentions concerning the Jewish image, as part of the theological revolution they set out to undermine the teachings of the Catholic Church and in doing so also undermined many of the teachings that supported the conspiracy libels. The Reformation thus produced two approaches to the Religious Conspiracy Theory. On the one hand it supported it, yet on the other most of its teachings undermined it.

#### **A. The Scholars and their Attitude Toward Jews**

The first half of the sixteenth century saw the birth of the humanist movement. It was a time of liberalism and learning, and there abounded much learned debate amongst scholars. Christians and Jews came together in the academic arena and the growing interest in the Hebrew language and literature

saw Jewish printing presses producing the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud and other Hebrew studies for Christian scholars. The new cultural movement quickly spread from its roots in Italy into Germany, but although German scholars were not immune to the new spirit they received it a lot less enthusiastically. Unlike their Italian counterparts they did not have a liberal attitude towards Judaism;<sup>31</sup> indeed, as we shall see from their discourses, although Christian dealings with Jews was markedly less violent during this time, they were not different in kind from those of previous years. Yet, as they debated and argued the many points of the "Jewish Question" they began a process which both preserved and ultimately undermined the Conspiracy Theory.

#### i. Ulrich Zasius: The Man of Law

One of the first voices to be heard in the debate upon the "Jewish Question" was that of Ulrich Zasius, professor of civil law at the University of Freiburg. In 1508 he composed a treatise defending the forced baptism of Jewish children. His treatise was part of a lively debate which had taken place after Pastor Heinrich Kölher, of Münster, had attempted to baptise a Jewish boy in his care without the permission of his parents. The attitudes towards baptism and the arguments of what essentially was a legal brief are not important to us here,<sup>32</sup> although we should note that it received wide publication and formed part of later theological and legal discourses on Jews.<sup>33</sup> What is important to us, however, is the attitude towards Jews and to the Religious Conspiracy Theory which pervades the document.

Zasius's treatise, in its first section, deals with the question of whether the princes had a right to baptise children without their parents' consent. His answer to this is affirmative; they should do so, in order to grant these children a new life. But, he warns, care should be taken, for murder might result from this. This is the first hint that we have that Zasius believed not only in ritual murder, but that Jews would be evil enough to seek to murder their own children if they became Christians. Zasius, assures the princes, however, that with due care such parental murders could be prevented, although, he continues, even if some were murdered, "it cannot be doubted that these

children killed for the faith in Christ, and thus initiated by the baptism of blood (following the holy innocents), will share eternal life.<sup>34</sup>

If Zasius felt sympathy for the children of Jews, for the adults he displays nothing but hatred. Jews, he rages, are most ungrateful. Christians, through piety and grace, tolerate their presence among them, but are they grateful? No, answers Zasius, instead,

*Jews thirst after Christian blood, which these bloodthirsty bloodsuckers seek day and night. In these days and in our own land, they have spilled this [blood] more than once, . . . which I cannot speak of without feeling my heart beating with pain.*<sup>35</sup>

The spilling of blood "in these days in our own land" refers to a ritual murder trial which had occurred in Freiburg four years earlier. In this case, the Waldrich Jews had been accused of the murder of a young Christian boy, allegedly sold to them by his father. Despite two attempts at convicting Jews for the crime, the Freiburg magistrates finally executed three Christian criminals, the father, for the murder of the child and two others for admitting to selling Christian blood. Those Jews imprisoned for the crime were released on the orders of Emperor Maximilian. The case left a lot of bad feeling in Freiburg especially when pleas to the emperor to at least expel all Jews from the city went unheeded. To Zasius, who was possibly an adviser on the case,<sup>36</sup> and for the magistrates at Freiburg, there lingered a strong feeling of injustice and of innocent deaths unavenged.

To take a Jewish child, and baptise him into a different religion and to force him to live in a different culture, was not for Zasius an act of inhumanity or injustice, but of kindness and release for, in his opinion, he was taking the souls of innocent children away from their murderous parents and away from the religion of death. Through Zasius, the fantasy of ritual murder entered the realms of civil law and became part of the learned and legal discourses of the sixteenth century. Scholars, who should have been the first to condemn the fantasy, discussed it as a real and immediate problem, and there is no doubt that Zasius was partly blame for this. Zasius went on to greater and greater

fame; his scholarly reputation made him an important figure in intellectual circles and drew to him many students. To what degree he influenced these young minds with tales of ritual murder and antisemitic hatred we can only guess. But, as we shall see later, one student of his, Johann Eck, went on to win greater fame, and was one of the most vocal supporters of the ritual murder libel.

## ii. Pfefferkorn: The opinion of a Convert

Whilst Zasius was debating the problem of forced baptism, a second aspect of the "Jewish Question" on conversion was being played out in scholarly circles. In 1505, Johannes Reuchlin, a humanist and renowned scholar, especially in Hebrew, published *The German Missive*,<sup>37</sup> an open letter to an unknown nobleman who had asked his advice on how to convert Jews. In the letter he pictured the conversion of Jews as a social and cultural redemption, a way out of the persecution and God-given punishment that hounds them for their wickedness. Unlike many of his contemporaries Reuchlin saw the punishment of Jews as being a result of their hard-heartedness and not as a result of any so-called "crimes".<sup>38</sup>

Two years later the voice of Johannes Pfefferkorn joined that of Reuchlin. Pfefferkorn a young Jewish convert from Prague, burst into the debate in 1507 with the work *Mirror of Jews*, (*Judenspiegel*). Like Reuchlin, Pfefferkorn called for Jews to convert and similarly his stance was one of conversion as social redemption. But, unlike Reuchlin, Pfefferkorn advocated the destruction of all Jewish books, especially the *Talmud*. This call resulted in the "Reuchlin affair", a "battle of books and pamphlets"<sup>39</sup> which split the academic world for the next decade.<sup>40</sup>

The battle over the burning of the *Talmud* does not concern us here, other than to note that it catapulted Pfefferkorn very much into the limelight and ensured that his works were given much attention. In the same work as that in which he presented his call for the destruction of the *Talmud*, Pfefferkorn also, somewhat reluctantly, entered into a discourse on the blood libel. In the second section of *Mirror of Jews*, he advises the rulers on how to convert the

Jewish nation, warning them that conversion would never happen as long as Christians continued to damage their own cause by giving credence to stories about Jewish ritual murders.

*It is said among vulgar Christians that Jews need Christian blood for circumcision, for which they kill Christian children . . . most renowned Christians do not give credence to this . . . perhaps Jews can be found who secretly plot to kill Christian infants, but this would not be on account of the need to have blood, but because of their hatred and revenge against Christians.<sup>41</sup>*

Whilst Pfefferkorn does not attack the notion of ritual murder directly, in that he does not say that Jews do not murder Christian children, he does make a two fold attempt at undermining it. He does not deny that Jews may kill Christians, but if they do so, he says, it is because of their contempt for Christians, not because of their need for blood. By denying that Jews need blood Pfefferkorn removes the notion of magical or ritual elements in these murders. In believing such old wives tales, he tells his readers, "we are making fools of ourselves and exposing the Christian faith to ridicule and contempt."<sup>42</sup>

In his study of antisemitism in the time of the Renaissance, Oberman titles his chapter on Pfefferkorn, "Johannes Pfefferkorn: The Shrill Voice of a Convert."<sup>43</sup> Many scholars have seen Pfefferkorn as little more than a Jew-baiter, a convert stirring up trouble for his former people. Yet, Pfefferkorn was more than this. Like many converts he was zealous in his new faith, and went just a step too far in advocating the burning of Jewish books. But, he produced a tract aimed at a wide readership, in which he stood up for his former people, and declared openly that there was no reason for belief in ritual murder.

### iii. Andreas Osiander and Johann Eck: The Voice of Reason and Opposition

Pfefferkorn's statement was largely overshadowed by the controversy that followed his call to burn the *Talmud*. But, in 1529, an anonymous tract on



the subject of ritual murder appeared, which had far greater effect. The booklet, *Whether it be True and Credible that the Jews Secretly Strangulate Christian Children and Make Use of Their Blood*, is today credited with having been written by Andreas Osiander (1498-1552), the most prominent evangelical reformer in Nuremberg.<sup>44</sup> Osiander composed his tract in response to an inquiry from an unnamed nobleman, who questioned the veracity of ritual murder charges, specifically the 1529 Poesing ritual murder trial in Hungary. It is likely from his references that Osiander had read Pfefferkorn, and had found the convert's cautions a sufficient basis on which to build his own argument in the controversy.

Osiander saw the ritual murder libel as pure slander, mere rabble-rousing based, not on factual evidence, but purely on greed and envy. Unlike Pfefferkorn, Osiander was determined to tackle the question head on, to confront superstitious incredulity with facts and information. He began with an appeal to his readers to examine their consciences to see if they are doing Jews an injustice by their belief in ritual murder. For, he says "either the Jews are slaughtering Christian children most cruelly, or the Christians are slaughtering innocent Jews most shamefully, which a Christian should not do."<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, he adds, no baptised Jew has ever brought forth information to support ritual murder charges against his former co-religionists. As for himself, after extensive study, he concludes:

*I have not been able to find, to think of, or to hear of anything which could have moved me to believe such suspicion and accusation. Rather, I have found, on the contrary, so many circumstances and reasons which I hold to be completely true and certain (but without injury to anyone) that injustice has been done to the Jews in this matter.*<sup>46</sup>

Osiander then goes on to outline a number of obvious reasons why the charge of ritual murder was wholly false. Drawing on the law of Moses he points out that the spilling of innocent blood is forbidden; moreover, the Jewish dietary laws, obeyed to that day, forbade Jews from drinking blood or partaking of it in any form. There is, says Osiander, no reason why Jews should kill and

take blood. The lies that support the blood libels are nothing more than that - lies. How can it be said that Jews need blood to anoint their priests, when since the fall of Jerusalem there have been no priests, or that they need blood to cure their own haemorrhaging, when even in the longest prison confinement no Jew has been observed as having such an affliction? As for diseases inflicted by God, if there were such a thing, he reasons, no human cure would prevail against it. If Jews must have a Christian child's blood then, he asks, how do they manage in lands where there are no Christians? The libel, he concludes, is a blatant lie; Christians in the past have been accused of the same crime and the so called "proofs" of ritual murder are nothing more than contradictory statements extracted under torture. Every single murder to date has been in fact a criminal murder, nothing more, and the guilty parties were Christians, not Jews.

There are, Osiander states, several indications by which to discover the truth behind allegations of ritual murder. One should first turn to those who might stand to gain from shifting their own guilt onto the shoulders of Jews. One should seek out feudal lords, their functionaries, townsmen or others who have incurred financial debts and would benefit if Jews were falsely suspected. One should ask oneself "whether priests or monks do not long to whip up great miracles and institute new pilgrimages in order to gain the appearance of greater sanctity, or whether they are wont to exterminate the Jews."<sup>47</sup> One should look also to witches who practice child murders and parents guilty of lethal child abuse. Finally one should ask oneself if an alleged murder was nothing more than an accident disguised as a ritual murder by the guilty party.<sup>48</sup>

Osiander's treatise, flawlessly argued with a mixture of passion, wit and true humanism was aimed at turning the discussion on ritual murder inside out. He approached the problem from every angle and concluded that to accuse, imprison, torture and execute Jews on unproven charges, charges that stood against "God's Word, Nature and Human Reason," was to do the work of the Devil. Ritual murder, Osiander points out, was nothing more than the fabrication of evil men, which found a home in the beliefs of the superstitious masses and the vainglorious and greedy Roman clergy.

Osiander's discourse was one that should have had immediate and far-reaching consequences. Yet, unlike so many other contemporary works, it was not immediately circulated, but remained hidden away in its original manuscript form. However, shortly after Easter in 1540, in Middle Franconia, there arose a blood libel case in which the Jews of Tittingen and the surrounding area were charged with the death of a peasant boy, Michael Pisenharter. The mutilated body of the child, who had disappeared some time earlier, was discovered dumped in a wood. The corpse bore a large number of wounds, some of which had been cut in the shape of crosses, fingers and toes were missing, and the child had been circumcised. The Bishop of Eichstatt, Moritz von Hutten, having seen the corpse, ordered the arrest of all Jews in his domain.<sup>49</sup> The body was put on display in a church and five weeks later was said to have bled, "showing God's" mercy and giving Sappenfeld temporary fame as a pilgrimage site.

The Bishop of Eichstatt, meanwhile, held a hearing at which two Jews from Sulzbach, near Augsburg, tried to help those accused by presenting the Episcopal Counsellors with Osiander's treatise. The Bishop and his Counsellors, feeling that the case and, indeed, the defence treatise, needed further investigation called in a colleague from the University of Ingolstadt, the vice-chancellor, and former student of Zasius, Johannes Eck. During the investigation Eck was mortified at Osiander's treatise, which was now a printed pamphlet. Already a seasoned counter-reformer he saw in the tract the hand of a "Lutheran preacher",<sup>50</sup> and as he had already done battle with Osiander just one year earlier, the flames of fury were well and truly fanned.

Eck returned to Ingolstadt in a high rage, and set out at once to confute Osiander as thoroughly as he had been denouncing Luther for the last two decades. The result was a plump volume, titled, *Refutation of a Jew-book in Which a Christian, to the Dishonour of All Christendom, Claims that Injustice is Done the Jews in the Accusation That They Murder Christian Children*, which was published in September 1541. The work was dedicated to Bishop Christoph of Trent, in memory of the supposed ritual murder victim, Simon of

Trent, and was composed to refute the "evangelical scoundrel" (*evangelisch lumpen*) who dared to defend the "blood-thirsty Jews."<sup>51</sup>

The book served as a compendium of every horror story ever told, as well as providing a concerted attack on Osiander and his treatise. To begin with Eck called upon a number of examples of fratricide in the Old Testament as indications of the "murderous nature" of Jews.<sup>52</sup> Then, drawing on every Medieval conception of Jews ever created, he declared, that they hate Christians, and would gladly kill them all. They had already murdered Christians in Medieval France and had aided the Arab enemies of Christ. They practised medicine to kill Christian patients and had poisoned wells in 1348.<sup>53</sup> They blaspheme against Christians and curse them daily in their prayers.<sup>54</sup> Jews, according to Eck were all black magicians, and blood was central to their magic, they also needed it to anoint their rabbis;<sup>55</sup> to wash away the blood stain inflicted upon them by God for crucifying Christ; and because Jewish babies are born with two tiny fingers attached to the skin of their forehead, and without blood these fingers could not be removed without harming the child. "It is no wonder," Eck concluded, "that Jews now buy the blood of innocent children, just as their fathers bought the innocent blood of Jesus Christ from Judas with thirty pennies." <sup>56</sup> Eck does inject one note of Christian charity into this tirade, for despite his assertion that ritual murder did exist, he conceded that it was only a small number of Jews who secretly practised it. This however, does not stop him from going on to cite a catalogue of past ritual murder accusations and a number of host desecration cases.

How was Eck convinced of this long list of murder charges? Like many people, both peasant and scholar, he had read of them in the numerous broadsheets, pamphlets, ballad sheets, chronicles, anti-Jewish polemics and histories, which had served to consolidate the tradition of ritual murder in the period between 1470 and 1540. The printed works reinforced the oral legends of the murderous nature of Jews making them believable, sometimes even to the most scholarly. Eck, was also more than a credulous believer of all that he read, for he had had firsthand experience of a ritual murder case.

Eck had been a student in Freiburg in 1504, at the time of the celebrated ritual murder case there. The case had been a complex one. In that year a browsing oxen had uncovered the body of a young boy who had been bled to death. Suspicion immediately fell upon the child's father, who was already in custody on suspicion of theft. At first the father pleaded ignorance, but on being presented with the corpse of his son, he confessed that he had sold the boy to two Jews whom he believed would bleed his son a little, but would not kill him. On the basis of this confession the Jews of Freiburg were arrested. However, the magistrates decided to verify the confession and so questioned both the Jews and the boy's father under torture. The Jews steadfastly maintained their innocence whilst the thief confessed that he had slit his son's throat himself, in the mistaken belief that Jews would buy the blood. The confession left the Freiburg authorities in an embarrassing situation for they had already used the father's first confession to plead their case for expelling Jews from Freiburg. Unable to extract anything from the arrested Jews they were forced to release them and condemn the thief to be broken on the wheel after being torn with red hot tongs. As he stood on the scaffold, the thief once more changed his tale, no doubt in the hope of a reprieve. As Eck states, "he died confessing that the Jews had stabbed his child to death."<sup>57</sup>

The child was later put on display as a symbol of salvation and grace. Eck like many made a pilgrimage to the shrine to behold and touch the symbolic Christ, the sacrificial victim of Jews.<sup>58</sup> The centrality of Eck's personal experience in Freiburg was also manifest in a sermon he wrote for Good Friday. Christ's blood cries out for vengeance against the Jews, he preached, just as the blood of Abel cried out against Cain. Citing Saint Augustine, Eck reminded his flock that Jews carried a blood curse causing men to suffer menstruation, and to cure it they had to seek salvific Christian blood by murdering children. As notorious examples of ritual murder he singled out Trent and Freiburg.

Of course *Refutation of a Jew-book* was concerned with more than an attack on Jewish crimes. The fact that Osiander's treatise came from a known reformer and enemy of Catholicism, made it all the more galling for Eck. He didn't hesitate in attacking Osiander, whom he labelled a "Jew-protector" and

"Jew-father",<sup>59</sup> claiming that the reformer had taken bribes from Jews. Lutheranism, he stated, was the new Judaism, for it upset Church discipline and excused Jewish crimes. Indeed, he declared, just as the Devil inspired Jews, so too he inspired the reformers: "It is the devil who speaks through you Lutherans; he would like nothing better than to acquit the Jews of their murders."<sup>60</sup> From Eck's perspective Lutherans and Jews were allies in the war against the true Church; the Lutheran "desecration" of the Eucharist, was no different to Jewish host desecrations, and their questioning of the veracity of the ritual murder libel added up to nothing less than slander. Osiander, was doing nothing more than accusing Christians of murder, slander, magic and lies by defending Jews against the blood libel.<sup>61</sup>

Between them Eck and Osiander provided the two faces of scholarly views on Jews. Osiander wrote with knowledge, reason, sympathy, and humanism, whilst Eck echoed the anti-Jewish frenzy already rife on the streets. Eck's work is probably the worst book by a truly first rate mind of the Reformation. Not only did he succeed in outstripping all previous publications on the theme of ritual murder, but he also reinforced the lie of ritual murder by providing it with a scientific basis, and hence, greater credibility.

#### iv. Martin Luther

The German Protestant Reformation swept away most of the vestiges of the Medieval era. At its head was the young Catholic monk and university professor, Martin Luther (1483-1546). In a few short years he succeeded in overthrowing both the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman empire but even as he succeeded in breaking the hold of the institution he saw as being steeped in superstition and false piety, and ushering Europe into the Modern Era, he also managed to keep the image of Jews firmly based in the Medieval superstition he so hated.

From the outset the "Jewish Question" formed an integral part of Luther's reforms. At first he seemed to offer much to the few down-trodden Jews left in Germany. His sermons attacking the Catholic Church, contained seeds of hope for Jews, for in them he also attacked their treatment and attitude

towards Jews. But, as time went by, it became patently obvious that the attitude towards Jews that he so often denounced were in fact his attitudes too. As Osiander, Pfefferkorn and all the humanists who supported them had done much to destroy the power of the conspiracy libels, so Luther, encapsulated them into his new theology.

In his early days Luther displayed a certain amount of friendliness towards Jews, although behind much of this friendliness lay the desire for conversion rather than respect for the Jewish faith.<sup>62</sup> However, this early pro-Jewish attitude combined with the negative view of Catholicism offered some hope for the destruction of the conspiracy libels and an end to some of the persecution of Jews. In his lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews, delivered during 1517-18, he attacked Catholic priests for their part in the execution of Jews on the charge of host desecration, when, he declared, they committed far worse desecrations themselves:

*Inflamed with rage and dripping with piety, they [the priests] hasten to burn Jews for having pierced the host with daggers or cut it up with knives. Yet they themselves have killed not only the sacred host but its very substance, and not merely with daggers, but with the force of every kind of weapon.*<sup>63</sup>

Whilst Luther's accusation does not directly challenge the charge that Jews desecrate hosts, it does imply that they are not as guilty as his hearers suppose. Indeed, the priests who hasten to make these charges and burn Jews, are themselves more guilty of host desecration and all the more hypocritical in killing Jews for the same crime. A year later, commenting on Psalm 22, Luther stated, "Most Passion preachers [during the Easter Week] do nothing else but enormously exaggerate the Jews' misdeeds against Christ and thus embitter the hearts of the faithful against them."<sup>64</sup> Again whilst this is not a direct attack upon any conspiracy libel, it does attack the basis of both the ritual murder charge and the host desecration libel. Both these libels were based on the premise that Jews hate Christ and, having killed him once, long to do so over and over. Yet, Luther implies that Jews are not guilty of many accusations made against them concerning misdeeds against Christ, but

are victims of priestly malice. In 1523 Luther published his most famous pro-Jewish pamphlet, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*. The principal aims of the pamphlet was to refute a number of charges that had been levelled at Luther, namely that he had denied the virginity of Mary, that he had denied the presence of the body and blood in the mass, and that he was a Jew. The tract was also designed to seduce Jews into the new Protestant faith. In it Luther claims that Jews, being physically of the same stock as Jesus had been right in resisting conversion, especially in the light of the Catholic Church's treatment of them. Such treatment he saw as detrimental to any conversion attempts and advocated, therefore, a complete change of policy:

*That is why I advise being considerate of them. So long as we use violence and lies and accuse them of using Christian blood to eradicate their own stink, and I do not know what other absurdities; . . . how can they come to us?*<sup>65</sup>

Luther, thus advocated a more loving attitude to be shown toward Jews and the cessation of false accusations, especially the blood accusation.

The endless hope and effort of the Reformers and Protestants to convert Jews to Christianity, thus at first resulted in a denial of the veracity of the conspiracy libels. Indeed, in a pamphlet published in German in 1524, an unknown author illustrates the general Protestant point of view, as taught at first by Luther. *A Discussion Between a Christian and a Jew*,<sup>66</sup> records a discourse between a Jew and Christian who are guests overnight in an inn. The conversation lasts all night and when in the morning the Jew leaves, the Christian continues the discussion with the landlord. Many of the views that Luther expressed in *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*, find their echo here.

The author begins by listing all the Medieval anti-Jewish libels - the beliefs that Jews damned all Christians in their prayers, are greedy, have too much influence on government, and hate all authority. In this list he also includes the worst of the conspiracy libels, namely that Jews poison the drinking supplies of Christians and that they kill Christian children in order to drink their blood. Most of these points Luther had already touched upon in his earlier sermons and pamphlets, and like Luther, the anonymous author denied that



these libels were true and urges his readers to treat Jews with Christian love, so that they might accept the gospel.<sup>67</sup>

If the early works of the reformers offered any hope of an end to the Conspiracy Theory, then later works, especially those of Luther, would serve only to dash them. There are many theories as to why Luther suddenly changed from courting Jews to outright hatred and abuse; disillusionment at the lack of Jews converting being a favourite, but these do not concern us.<sup>68</sup> What does concern us, is that the Luther who denied so many of the conspiracy libels, who ranked with Osiander as a voice of reason, in the full blast of his hatred, turned upon the Jews and in 1542 began, in a series of pamphlets and sermons, to use those very libels against them. The voice of reason became the voice of hatred.

Luther firmly believed that Jews used magic against Christians. Furthermore, he subscribed to the notion that Jews were accomplished poisoners ever willing to poison Christians.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Luther seems to have believed that he had been personally singled out by Jews as a Christian enemy. In 1543, Luther made a journey through Eisleben, during which he became ill with a severe cold which lasted several weeks. In a letter to his wife, Katherina, Luther described the events:

*I became ill on my way just before reaching Eisleben. It was really my own fault. But if you were there, you would have said it was the fault of the Jews and their God. We had to pass through a village before reaching Eisleben which was inhabited by many Jews. Perhaps they were blowing hard at me . . . and it was done. When I passed through the village, a cold draft came into the wagon and almost froze my head. I swear.<sup>70</sup>*

If Jews used their magic to harm Christians then it was but a step to accuse them of actually killing Christians. Luther who had once defended Jews against the "absurdities" and "lies" of the Conspiracy Theory did not hesitate to take that step. At first Luther was somewhat ambivalent in his attitude, for example in the early part of *On the Jews and the Their Lies* (1542), he attacked the

Jews for rejecting Christ as the Messiah, and putting all their stock on blood and circumcision. "That is why," he wrote,

*One often accuses them in the histories that they have poisoned wells, stolen children and killed them with pins . . . They deny this. That may or may not be, but I know well, that they do not lack the full, whole and ready will, wherever they could come to do it, in secret or openly.<sup>71</sup>*

But, this ambivalence did not last long. Although Luther was at first willing to concede that Jews may not have committed the crimes that history ascribed to them, in the rest of *On the Jews and the Their Lies* and *On the Shem Hamphoras* (1543) his attitude quickly degenerates into stoic acceptance. He repeats over and over that history has taught him that Jews have been burnt for poisoning wells and murdering Christian children for their blood, they had done it in Trent and Weissensee and are still doing it in his day. In *On the Jews and their Lies* he proclaims:

*I have read and heard many stories about the Jews . . . Namely how they have poisoned wells, murdered in secret, stole children . . . For example, how a Jew sent another Jew over field a jar of blood . . . And for stealing children they have often been burnt and chased out, as I have said earlier. I know well that they deny all of this. But all of this agrees with the judgement of Christ, that they are poisonous, bitter, vengeful, deceitful snakes, assassins, and the Devil's children, who stab and do harm secretly, because they dare not do it in the open.<sup>72</sup>*

Luther also upholds one of the favourite Medieval reasons for the Jewish conspiracy libels, namely that Jews hate Christ and all Christians. Indeed, Luther depicts Christians as victims of Jewish venom, as surely as he once depicted Jews as victims of Christian violence and lies.<sup>73</sup>

*We do not curse them; we wish them all the good in the world, in flesh and in spirit. We give them shelter, let them eat and drink with us, we do not carry off their children, nor poison their wells, we do not slake our thirst on their blood. Have we then deserved the*

*fierce anger, the envy and hatred of these great and holy children of God?*<sup>74</sup>

Of course, Luther's voice was one of many reiterating the Jewish conspiracy libels during the 1540's. Eck had already preceded him with *Refutation of a Jew-book*, and there were numerous accounts of various ritual murder trials in circulation. Yet, Luther's works stand apart from these in that they were the words of a man of influence, a man who had the power not only to reform religion, but also the power to change the lot of Jews. He could have reformed their Medieval image and destroyed the conspiracy libels with ease, yet he chose not to. In the case of Jews he was a man who promised much but delivered nothing.

### **The Effects of the Reformation Upon the Conspiracy Libels**

The Reformation period caused a great deal of dualistic thinking with regard to the conspiracy libel. There were those Protestant reformers like Luther who firmly supported it, and there were others, like Osiander and Pfefferkorn, who took a more sympathetic view of Jews and opposed the lies told about them. However, among German Protestants, a sympathetic attitude towards Jews was far from the norm. Quite the opposite was true in fact. Many still continued to raise accusations of usury, blasphemy, and greed against Jews. Some, such as Martin Bucer, reformer and superintendent of the Protestant church in Strasbourg, clamoured for the expulsion of Jews from Protestant Christian communities.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, even as the reformers spoke out against Jews, even as they supported the Conspiracy Theory, their theological teachings, their attacks on the magic and superstition of the Roman Church and even their discourses, all served to undermine the various conspiracy libels. Charges of murder and magic although they would never die out completely, would, thanks to the Reformation, gradually fade to but a faint echo.

#### **i. The Effect Upon Host and Image Desecration**

One of the first actions of the reformers was to exorcise the magical and superstitious demons that had entered Christianity, and thereby create a "true

religion" based on pure faith and not on ritual and superstition. This action, which some scholars depict as a rite of purification,<sup>76</sup> also served to undermine many of the premises behind the conspiracy libels. In this campaign, the primary targets were the sacraments and rituals of the Catholic Church. Indeed, many of the second generation reformers began to collect stories of late Medieval legends in order to ridicule the Catholic sacraments and rituals. One of the best known collections, *One Hundred Selected Papist Lies*, was compiled by Hieronymus Rauscher (1515-64/65), the court preacher to Count Wolfgang von Zweibrucken, who had served as deacon under Andreas Osiander. *One Hundred Selected Papist Lies*, printed in 1562, as the title suggested offered Protestant readers one hundred Catholic legends as examples of the superstitions of the Roman Church. Central to this "unmasking" was the ridicule of Catholic beliefs about the power of the Mass and Eucharist. Rauscher took tales about the transformation of the Eucharist into the Child Jesus, about hosts that bled, and of apparitions of Christ and recounted them as tales of superstitious priests and examples of "papist" magic. Such tales, he said, were mere deceptions created by the Roman priests, in order to deceive pious folk into believing in the power of the Mass.

Rauscher's compilation enjoyed enormous success, and after the publication of the original work, another four collections of a further "hundred papist lies" were compiled and printed. For Jews these publications were a turning point. The host desecration conspiracy libel had long been a popular means of reinforcing the belief in the Christ killing Jew. Rauscher's compilation, however, tore this apart. These host tales, he said, weren't real, they were nothing more than lies created by clergymen. Suddenly there were no miracles, no bleeding hosts, no apparitions of the Christ child. Furthermore, if these never existed, then the criminals who stole the hosts and created these responses did not exist either. None of it was real, right down to the blood-thirsty Jew, whose only desire was to kill Christ.

Thus the attempts of Rauscher and other reformers to undermine the sacramental and magical foundations of the Medieval Church, also served to undermine the host desecration conspiracy libel. Of course the libel did not

die out immediately, but neither did it enjoy the bloody success of earlier years. The date of the last reported burning of a Jew for stealing a host is 1631 although a charge of host desecration was reported as late as 1836 from Rumania.<sup>77</sup>

In much the same way charges of image desecration were also undermined and ultimately destroyed by the Reformation. As with the Host, the veneration of images of Christ, Saints and the Virgin Mary, was ridiculed by the reformers and Protestant congregations. Indeed, the "Jewish crime" of image desecration, was practised by many early reformers, with far more imagination than the mere stabbing and tortures ascribed to Jews. Image desecration became, very early on in the Reformation, an act to prove that these objects were not laden with sacred power. There are numerous cases of Protestants destroying or mutilating such images for this purpose. For example, at Easter, in Esslingen in 1532, a former Catholic preacher married a former nun, and cooked the wedding feast upon images taken from his church. Such action neatly combined a show of contempt for the Catholic Church and contempt for her so-called "sacred" images. There are also many accounts of images being decapitated, having limbs cut off, being hung or held in stocks.<sup>78</sup> Again by questioning the sacredness of these objects, and displaying that they were not magical and would not bleed, cry out and so forth, the reformers undermined the basis upon which charges of image desecration could be made against Jews. Indeed, after the Reformation such charges became almost non-existent.

## **ii. The Effect upon the Legend of the Jewish Mass Poisoner**

Much of the legend of the Jewish poisoner grew up around the various beliefs about the Jews' ability at magic. Luther, as we have already seen, was a firm believer in the Jewish ability to render someone ill at a distance using magical powers. Magic, had preoccupied the masses of Medieval Europe for some time. Anyone they did not understand, who was not like them, stood the chance of being labelled a magician or, more often, a poisoner. The legend of the Jewish poisoner grew largely out of the inability of Medieval Christendom

to understand the Hebrew language and Jewish rites. They did not understand Hebrew letters, or words, therefore they concluded they must be magical signs, and Judaism, likewise, must not be a form of worship, but a system for the working of magic.<sup>79</sup>

A magical language, once dissected and studied, loses its aura of mystery and its force of enchantment.<sup>80</sup> The study of Hebrew by Protestants in the sixteenth century represents precisely such a process. What began as an attempt to recover the heritage of the Old Testament for Christianity, resulted in a new Christian knowledge of not only the Hebrew language, but of Jewish rites and writings. The language became no longer a system of mysterious, magical signs, but instead, became treasured as a divine language. Likewise, *The Entire Jewish Faith*, written by the convert, Anthonius Margaritha, in 1531, helped this process of disenchantment. The work provided a sort of encyclopaedia of Judaism, in which could be found German translations of the Jewish liturgy, prayers, and so forth, as well as commentaries on the history of Jewish feasts, ceremonies and customs. Every aspect of Judaism was laid bare. German Christians could learn how a Jew thought, what he ate, how he dressed and bathed, how he behaved, how he thought of Christians, how he cured himself, even how he prepared for death. With every aspect of Judaism known and the language no longer unknown, much of the aura of Jewish magic was destroyed. Indeed, Margaritha mentions only magic in reference to the Kabbalah, and even then he dismisses it as a mere superstition which does not really work, for as he puts it, "there is no people on earth who gets run over, robbed, and killed more often on the open roads than Jews."<sup>81</sup>

How did this effect the reputation of Jews as mass poisoners? Books like *The Entire Jewish Faith* which were extremely popular in Reformation Germany, tended on the whole to shift Protestantism away from the Medieval obsession with magic. Yet, for some reason the effects on the poisoner legend were in fact not as far reaching as one would expect. During the sixteenth century charges of poisoning continued to be made, although without the persecutions that followed earlier accusations such as the Black Death. For some strange reason the Jewish poisoner continued to charm not only the

masses but on occasion scholars too. Ten years after *The Entire Jewish Faith* had done much to dispel the notion of magic, the Jews of Brieg were accused of poisoning Christians. In 1543 the same charge was made in Schweidnitz.<sup>82</sup> In 1580 there was an epidemic in Aix, the ancient capital of Provence. Thomas Flud, an English physician and "expert" on poisons, who was then living in Avignon, is said to have attributed its cause to a "poison which the Jews rubbed on knockers of doors."<sup>83</sup> Another doctor, Abraham a Santa Clara of Vienna ascribed the pestilence of 1679, which first appeared in the Jewish quarter of Leopoldstadt, as being the work of Jews, for "it is well known that such pestilential epidemics are caused by evil spirits, by Jews, by gravediggers, and by witches."<sup>84</sup> Finally, in 1610 the Vienna medical faculty staked its professional reputation on the assertion that their religious law ordered Jewish doctors to eliminate every tenth Christian patient by prescribing wrong drugs.<sup>85</sup>

It is, perhaps, telling that in most cases the accusations of poisoning made after the Reformation came from physicians. Hostility between Jewish and Christian physicians had been a marked feature of antisemitism for centuries, caused mainly by jealousy on the part of the Christian doctors, for Jewish physicians had long been held as superior to them by both princes and peasants. However, the notion of the Jewish ability to poison large groups of people wasn't confined to physicians of the seventeenth century. Almost at the instant of assuming power, in April 1933, the Nazi party withdrew the right of access to typhus, cholera, and other disease germ cultures, permitted to all Jewish researchers at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin (and one presumes elsewhere). They claimed that this was to safeguard against Jews depositing these diseases in the reservoirs and other water sources. In September 1939, the *Volkischer Beobachter* published a report claiming that during the German invasion of Poland the Jews poisoned water supplies used by the German troops. Likewise a Berlin dispatch brought the news that the Jewish community of Warsaw would be strictly confined in a ghetto because "they are dangerous carriers of sickness and pestilence." Indeed, when a typhus epidemic struck the city, the ghetto was identified as the "infection area" and Jews there were forced to establish hospitals to tend both Aryans and

non-Aryans. A move which Trachtenberg comments was "doubly shrewd indeed: the Jews suffer all the expense and danger, while their reputation as epidemic makers is confirmed."<sup>86</sup>

### iii. The Effect Upon Ritual Murder Accusations

The Protestant Reformation, whilst it never managed to destroy the ritual murder accusation, brought about a number of changes in how it was perceived. As we have already seen some Protestant reformers, such as Osiander, had already inspired a widespread discussion on the subject, and their arguments, although often repudiated, served to generate cracks in the structure of the ritual murder myth.

As the second wave of Protestant reformers took the stand, the view of ritual murder was already changing rapidly. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the physician Johann Weyer, compiled a vast work aimed at exposing as superstition the theories surrounding magic and witches.<sup>87</sup> Part of Weyer's book deals with the notions of blood magic and child murders, both of which he denounces.

*It is a coarse and shameless lie, sheer devilish insinuation, and a roguish superstition, [to believe] that young children are sometimes killed in ceremonies. Also, [to believe] that they [witches] secretly dig [the children] out of their graves is nothing but a false delusion of the Devil, which has its source in the imagination . . . .<sup>88</sup>*

The passage refers to the belief that witches murdered small children or stole their corpses in order to make potions from their bodies and bones. Of course, Weyer was only concerned with witches and undermining general superstitions, but no doubt he must have had some effect on the ritual murder discourse, for, as Hsia points out, one has only to substitute "Jews" for "witches" and "blood" for "bones and bodies" to have in essence the notions underlying ritual murder.<sup>89</sup>

More telling still is the fact that this work, published in 1586, has no mention of Jews, and not one mention of ritual murder. This silence points to



a number of changes in the learned discussion of the two generations before the publication of Weyer's *De praestigiis daemonum*. Women, not Jews, were now identified as potential witches, demonic magicians, murderers and consorts of the Devil. They stood accused of kidnapping and murdering children and had supplanted Jews as practitioners of blood magic.

Another influential book which affected the concept of ritual murder was Anthonius Margaritha's *The Entire Jewish Faith*. As I demonstrated earlier, this work exposed every aspect of the Jewish faith and way of life. Margaritha, like Weyer, makes no mention of ritual murder, a fact that we could dismiss as of no consequence, for Margaritha was a former Jew. But, if we take into account the fact that *The Entire Jewish Faith* is interspersed with a great deal of anti-Jewish rhetoric, and Margaritha does not hesitate to mock his former co-religionists for their superstitions, blindness to faith in Christ and so forth, then his silence on ritual murder is extremely telling. In fact, this silence, coupled with the factual descriptions of Jewish rites and written by an avowed Christian who had had personal experiences of Judaism, must have had a profound effect on the readers of the book. Furthermore, the work opened up the mysteries of circumcision and the Passover ritual, and readers were able to discover for themselves that there was no use of Christian blood involved in these, or in any other aspect of Jewish life. In such a climate, the notion of ritual murder and the blood libel are difficult to sustain.

The Protestant era was also marked by a great deal of awareness for family life. Most reformers showed concern for family harmony and the proper upbringing of children. Pamphlets began to abound instructing parents on how to raise their children to be well-mannered, loving, God-fearing and so forth.<sup>90</sup> A number of pamphlets written by the humanists and reformers were also devoted to the subject of child abuse and attest to a greater understanding of violence towards children. Concomitant with this new attitude, public prosecutions for the crimes of infanticide and abortion began to make a steady increase. Indeed, such prosecutions, almost unknown before 1500, began to rise steadily especially during the latter half of the sixteenth century when the

growing recognition of infanticide as a crime began to express itself in both an increased number of convictions and severer punishments.<sup>91</sup>

It was about this time that child murders began to be publicised in Germany.<sup>92</sup> Chapbooks, recounting in gruesome detail such murders, appeared among the literature of popular entertainment. For example, in 1556 a chapbook appeared telling the tale of a vintner, from a small village outside Strasbourg who had one day flown into a mad rage and killed his seven year old daughter and his sons, aged four and two. The man had borrowed money and had promised to work for it, but having gambled the money away, had suffered an accident and had been unable to work to repay the debt. For the murders he was branded and broken on the wheel.<sup>93</sup>

But what significance did all this have for the ritual murder discourse? The greater awareness that there was such a thing as infanticide led, after 1540, to a direct decline in charges of ritual murder. If we recall Osiander's treatise, he did not deny that children were killed, but stated that they were killed often by negligent parents or vicious sorcerers, or died in accidents or from natural causes. In other words, Jewish ritual murder was only one of the possible causes which should be considered. A greater awareness that parents did murder their children, or that ordinary Christian strangers might commit such an act, meant that when a death of a child occurred, Jews were no longer the first and only suspects. Furthermore, the pamphlets which depicted these infanticides spread the same message among the masses. If we examine the 1556 tale of the vintner who murdered his children around Eastertime, the significance of this new understanding becomes apparent. Just a century or so earlier, the same crime, the murder of children at Easter, would have resulted in the execution of a number of Jews, regardless of whether the father was guilty or not.

In sum then, the rise of the new discourse on the family and the consolidation of the discourse of infanticide and witchcraft, appropriated elements that had once constituted the ritual murder libel. Violence against children came to be seen not as the sole preserve of Jews, but as a result of evil that lurked in the hearts of everyone. The result of this awareness was a reduction in ritual murder cases which came to trial and a greater tendency to

investigate these accusations fairly.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, ritual murder trials were condemned by Charles V in 1544, and the condemnation was renewed by Ferdinand I in 1562, Maximilian II in 1566, and Rudolf II in 1577.

The decline of trials, however, was never enough to end the myth of ritual murder. For although accusations of the crime were no longer functional (that is that beliefs and accusations no longer necessarily led to a trial and execution) the myth lingered on. There might have been no contemporary cases of ritual murder, but past events, such as the murder at Trent, remained real and irrefutable "historical facts" in the minds of the masses.

Indeed, it was not only the "ignorant" masses who were inspired by the "historical evidence" of ritual murder, for at the turn of the eighteenth century it again became a source of widespread scholarly interest. In 1700 the Protestant scholar, Johann Andreas Eisenmenger, professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Heidelberg, wrote a book entitled, *Judaism Unmasked*. In the massive tome, which was written in German in order to appeal to the popular press, Eisenmenger affirmed that history showed that Jews conspire to destroy Christians on every occasion, whether by violent murder or by means of poison.<sup>95</sup> Not only that, but in a section beginning, "concerning the horrifying murders of tender, innocent little children by Jews" he discusses at length the historical veracity of the blood libel, recounting the history of ritual murders from the fifth century onwards. Among these he mentions Trent (1475), Regensburg (1486) and Sappenburg (1540). Indeed, in the case of Trent he goes into gruesome detail reminiscent of the early chapbook accounts.<sup>96</sup> After giving contemporary examples of alleged ritual murder's in Poland Eisenmenger concludes:

*In the present day we no longer hear of such cruel deeds in Germany, aside from what I remember correctly, I read in a newspaper a few years ago, concerning a murdered child found in Franconia; the Jews fell under suspicion in the case. Because in former days Jews were dealt with very sharply when such crimes were committed, it is not to be doubted that they now refrain from shedding blood solely because of the fear of punishment. Certainly their hatred of Christians is as great as it ever was.<sup>97</sup>*

As well as recounting the cases of ritual murder, Eisenmenger also repeats the Medieval magical beliefs surrounding the use of blood. He claims that it aids Jewish women whilst giving birth, that at Passover it is mixed "in their sweet cakes, which they call matzos and mixed in their wine,"<sup>98</sup> and that it is used by rabbis in writing spells on amulets. Eisenmenger also recounts a number of denials by Jewish writers concerning the use of Christian blood, but having done so he concludes:

*However, many sound writers have written that the Jews do use Christian blood, and demonstrate this with examples, and because most of the children were murdered around Easter, we can suppose that not everything is untrue. . . . Undoubtedly, the Jews murder Christian children mostly at Easter because our Saviour Jesus Christ was crucified then They do it as a mockery of Him.<sup>99</sup>*

*Judaism Unmasked* appeared in print in 1710, six years after the author's death, and only when the Jews of Frankfurt failed in their legal attempt to prevent its publication.<sup>100</sup> Eisenmenger's book became the chief source of all future scholarly attempts to ground theories of Jewish evil and ritual murder in the sacred writings of Jews. In 1803 a Moldavian Monk, Neophite, published a similar work, claiming that Jews believed they served God by killing Christians. He also claimed that Jews used Christian blood to sprinkle over themselves as a symbol of Christ's blood, and as a precautionary measure in case Jesus was the true Messiah. Translated into Arabic and Greek, the book achieved a wide circulation, until the Russian State eventually condemned the book as unscientific and spurious.<sup>101</sup> In 1870 August Rohling, a Catholic priest, with no serious knowledge of rabbinic literature produced a blatant plagiarism of Eisenmenger in one of the most widely distributed pamphlets of all time, *The Talmud Jew*. In it, he claimed, to have "scientifically" proved that at the command of their religion, Jews are ordered to do physical or moral harm to persons of different faiths. Rohling was eventually exposed as a fraud, and denounced by such scholars as Herman Strack and Franz Delitzsch, but like all antisemitic works, Rohling's found a particular class of readers who were

not in the least perturbed by this. Indeed, his work was used frequently by the Nazis.<sup>102</sup>

If books and scholars kept alive the myth of ritual murder in academic circles, then the popular Catholic revival of the mid seventeenth century rejuvenated the myth in religious circles. One way the Catholic Church saw of combating the influence of the Protestant reformation was to reclaim the heritage of the Medieval Church, and thus offer to the people something that the Protestants could not, namely miracles, new saints and sacred legends. One such collector of sacred legends was the Tyrolean Jesuit, Matthaeus Rader. In 1615 he produced a four-volume compilation of biographies of saints, monks, bishops, holy women, martyred children, and pious Bavarian nobles, called *Bavaria Sancta*. The work traced the history of Catholic Christianity in Bavaria from the conversion of the Germanic people through to Rader's own day. Among the heroic tales of saints and martyrs Rader, gave a place of honour to the alleged victims of ritual murder in Bavaria. Among these he includes a boy of Munich, martyred in 1285, Heinrich of Munich, also an alleged victim of ritual murder, the six boys of Regensburg, martyred in 1486 and Michael of Sappendorf, killed in 1540. These tales are interspersed with engravings, depicting the sufferings of these children.<sup>103</sup>

Not only were old legends recorded in seventeenth century Catholic Germany but new ones were being made. The most successful of these was the creation of the *Judenstein* legend. According to oral tradition, on July 12, 1462, three-year-old Andreas Oxner of Rinn was sold by his godfather to a group of travelling merchants, who took the boy and murdered him in a nearby wood. Following the murder of Simon of Trent in 1475, the tale of Andreas of Rinn took on a number of embellishments. The travelling merchants became Jews, the murder turned into a ritual sacrifice, and the village adopted the name *Judenstein* (Jews stone) after the stone on which the boy was allegedly murdered. The bones of the boy were reburied in the parish church as relics for a local cult, and an inscription commemorated him as a victim of ritual murder.<sup>104</sup>

The tale remained very much in the realms of folk-legend, and was not committed to writing until the Catholic revival of the seventeenth-century, when Dr. Hippolytus Guarinoni took an interest in the little "martyr". He collected the oral traditions, interviewed people and discovered the 1475 inscription. Details of his quest were later published and served to elevate a folk tradition into a festival worthy of Catholic recognition. In 1670 a church was built in honour of Andreas and in 1753 Pope Benedict XIV sanctioned the use of a particular breviary and liturgy in his honour, whilst in 1754, plenary indulgence was granted those visiting the church at Rinn on July 12, Andreas' feast day. Thus, along with Simon of Trent, Andreas of Rinn became one of only two purported victims of ritual murder to be recognised by the papacy. It was also during this time that interest was revived in the 1477 Passau host desecration legend. Indeed, pilgrimages which had begun to grow during the seventeenth-century went on to reach a new zenith in the eighteenth. The Passau broadsheet was reprinted and sold to pilgrims, and a number of paintings and a new song, were used to introduce a new era of worshippers to the ancient "crime".<sup>105</sup>

Not surprisingly the new interest in Catholic heritage served to sustain a climate of suspicion of ritual murder in Bavaria. As late as 1732, five Jews were arrested for the murder of a boy in Ried. Although they were acquitted, due to their iron clad alibis, the jurists of the University of Ingolstadt, who had provided advice in the case, still maintained that "it was still a general opinion of this time that the Jews need Christian blood."<sup>106</sup>

Despite the scholarly tracts and the Catholic Church's revival of the ritual murder discourse, the myth of ritual murder never again arose to the level that it had attained in Medieval times. Fairer trials, plenty of acquittals, and virtually no more executions, along with scholarly examinations have served to demonstrate the falsity of the charge and thus have deadened its impact. Yet, the charge of ritual murder has never died out, indeed, it probably never will. The nineteenth century alone saw forty-two recorded cases.<sup>107</sup> Ritual murder, however, has strayed far from the original set pattern recognised up until the sixteenth century. In some cases the death of a young boy has still sparked the accusation of ritual murder. For example the Velizh blood libel of 1823

involved a three-year old boy; the Sartov case in 1852 involved, two young boys; the famous Belis case of 1911, which marked the first attempt of the Czarist Russian government to pin a ritual murder upon Jews, involved a five-year old boy.<sup>108</sup> However, some followed a more unfamiliar pattern, for example in the Damascus affair of 1840, the alleged victims were a Capuchin Friar and his servant. Whilst, at the end of the same century, several ritual murder trials, such as that of Tiszaeszlar in 1882, and the Polna trial of 1899, all involved teenage girls and were invested with overtones of sexual depravity.<sup>109</sup>

Even in this century, so-called "enlightened" society has demonstrated continued belief in the ritual murder accusation. A charge made in New York in 1928, following the disappearance of a child, sparked an official investigation into whether ritual murder was part of the Yom Kippur ceremony.<sup>110</sup> On May 1, 1935 Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer* devoted a whole issue to the revival of the ritual murder legend, and the Nazis issued periodical warnings to the general population to take special care of their children at Passover time in view of Jewish ritual requirements.<sup>111</sup> Ritual murder was the subject of a booklet published in Birmingham Alabama in 1962,<sup>112</sup> whilst as recently as March 1990, the British neo-Nazi movement made attempts to stir up interest in the subject with a pamphlet, entitled, "Jewish Tributes to our Child Martyrs".<sup>113</sup> The pamphlet combined details of "historical" ritual murders, such as that of William of Norwich, with accusations of anti-Christian hatred and attacks on the *Talmud*. In the same month a widely circulated leaflet, "The Snides of March", alleged that a ritual murder had taken place in Satmar Synagogue, in Clapton East London.<sup>114</sup> The effect of these modern leaflets is nothing compared to earlier centuries; we do not rush out and murder Jews; we do not put them on trial or call for expulsions. In fact, more often than not, they are followed by a wave of anger aimed at the authors. Yet, such literature cannot be dismissed lightly, for they are echoes of one of the bloodiest conspiracy libels, a libel that will never die as long as there is someone who will believe that there is a Conspiracy by Jews to murder little Christian children.

## **Section 2**

# **The Modern Conspiracy Theory**



## CHAPTER 4

# Conspiracy in the Modern World

Today when antisemites talk of a "Jewish Conspiracy" they no longer refer to the religiously based Conspiracy Theory, which so occupied the imaginations of Medieval Christians, but to an altogether different type of "conspiracy" - the Jewish World Conspiracy. This represents a modern adaptation of the older Religious Conspiracy myth, whereby it was alleged that a secret Jewish society plotted and carried out actions designed to destroy Christianity and its adherents. The reasons given for this evil plot were varied and colourful, but ultimately it was claimed that Jews sought to destroy the Christian world in order to build a Jewish one, and, as we have already seen, this was all bound up in a mixture of superstition and demonological tradition.

Our modern, and so-called "enlightened" society, prides itself on having largely done away with the demons and superstitions that haunted the minds of our Medieval brethren. But, having said that, the Conspiracy Theory continues to exist, albeit in a newer guise. Today the Jewish Conspiracy is a different one, although only in the sense that the focus is no longer religious, but secular and political. Many of the basic elements remain the same, the only difference now is that the plot is no longer aimed solely at Christians, but at mankind as a whole, and the Jewish aim is no longer the triumphal restoration of Judaism to a position of supremacy over Christianity, but Jewish dominion over the entire world.

How will this be achieved? According to the modern myth, there exists a secret Jewish government, not unlike the alleged secret rabbinic society of Medieval times, which, through a world-wide network of camouflaged agencies, controls political parties and entire governments, the press and public opinion, banks and almost all economic developments. This secret government, through its agencies, seeks total world control, supposedly in pursuance of an age-old

plan, and what is more, in the minds of the antisemites, its completion is imminent.

The Modern Conspiracy myth leaves us with many questions. As with the Religious Conspiracy Theory we cannot assume that the modern myth appeared out of nowhere. Neither can we assume that the former myth can be entirely blamed for the appearance of the latter. Whilst it is true that at the dawn of the modern era the idea of a "Jewish conspiracy" was already firmly rooted in the consciousness of Christian Europe, the "conspiracy" that they were familiar with was vastly different from the one which is in circulation in Europe, and indeed the world, today. This poses a number of questions, such as why and when did the change take place; where did the new accusations come from, and why does this Conspiracy Theory capture the imagination of a society so vastly enlightened in comparison to the Medieval society that conceived the original conspiracy myth?

### **The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion**

At the beginning of the twentieth century there appeared in Russia, and later throughout Europe, a fabricated document entitled *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. In it the tale of the fabled existence of a powerful Jewish secret world-conspiracy found a new and somewhat deadly voice. As Hugo Valentin puts it,

*It is no exaggeration to say that they cost the lives of many thousands of innocent persons and that more blood and tears cling to their pages than to any other mendacious document in the world's history. <sup>1</sup>*

However, one cannot claim that *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* are the only foundation of the Modern Conspiracy Theory. Indeed there are many documents and many other points in history where a study of this Conspiracy Theory could quite adequately commence. Logically one should start with the Enlightenment that marked the re-entry of European Jewry once more into public consciousness, or the Emancipation that marked their physical entry into European society. However, I have chosen to start with *The*

*Protocols* because this document embodies the centuries of suspicions and myths that together gave rise to the Modern Conspiracy Theory.

#### i. The Contents of The Protocols

*The Protocols* is divided into twenty-four chapters, or "protocols", which are asserted to be the minutes of the meetings of the "Learned Elders of Zion."<sup>2</sup> The reader is told very little as to the identity of these mysterious Elders, although the introduction informs us that they are rulers, and undoubtedly Jewish.<sup>3</sup> Beyond that the author, or authors, do not venture to commit themselves other than to state that "they are not the 'Board of Deputies' (the Jewish Parliament in England) or the 'Universal Israelite Alliance' which sits in Paris."<sup>4</sup> The introduction, however, assures us that these mysterious individuals desire nothing less than the subjugation of "the Aryan races" under Jewish sovereignty.<sup>5</sup>

The twenty-four protocols themselves do not read in any respect like the minutes of a series of meetings. Indeed, as John Gwyer states, "they have more the appearance of a course of lectures on a single theme, ill-constructed, frequently repetitive, and always verbose."<sup>6</sup> Thus the twenty-four protocols, varying greatly in length and covering a diverse range of subjects, set out the alleged Jewish plot for dominion over the whole world. The first nine protocols explain the methods which the Elders intend to employ in order to gain world domination, whilst the remainder set forth the plans for the new world order, to be established after the new Jewish empire has become a reality.

The first nine protocols, which cover the methods by which all mankind will be subject to Jewish power, set out a plan by which Jews will overthrow all kings and governments of the world and build their own kingdom upon the ruins. For this purpose it is asserted that Jews will draw upon the services of the international organisation of the freemasons, who will act as the invisible machinery for performing the necessary tasks involved in this plan.<sup>7</sup> The downfall of non-Jewish states will be achieved by introducing the idea of liberalism into the life of the nations. Indeed, it is claimed in the first protocol that Jews were responsible for inventing the slogan "Liberty, Equality,

Fraternity" and in the name of these ideas whole legions of the Goyim<sup>8</sup> had flocked to follow the banners of the Jewish leaders.<sup>9</sup> This surfeit of liberalism and freedom in turn will lead to chaotic corruption, as the youth are led astray by special agents and become drunken and immoral.<sup>10</sup> Further chaos will be wrought by means of controlled education and through Jewish owned Press. For those who doubt this ability the Elders point out, "Think carefully of the successes we arranged for Darwinism, Marxism, Nietzscheism."<sup>11</sup> The task of turning the Goyim into obedient, animals unable to think for themselves, has not only already been implemented, but is showing splendid results. In the third protocol we are informed,

*Today I may tell you that our goal is now only a few steps off. There remains a small space to cross and the whole long path we have trodden is ready now to close its cycle of the Symbolic Snake, by which we symbolise our people. When this ring closes all the States of Europe will be locked in its coil as in a powerful vise.<sup>12</sup>*

For, it should be stated, under the guidance of the secret Jewish world government, the people blinded by talk of equality, have destroyed the aristocracy, their natural defenders and helpers. The interests of the aristocracy were naturally bound to the welfare of the lower classes who formed their work forces and it was the aristocracy who made certain that the workers were well fed, healthy and strong. But, say the Elders, they are interested in just the opposite, for a hungry, weak worker is more easily subjugated to the Jewish will.<sup>13</sup>

Hatred and envy are to be sown among the workers, and they will be instigated into a general class war. When this social discontent reaches its climax, the Elders, with the power of gold, intend to arrange a general economic crisis. At the appointed time industry will come to a complete standstill all over Europe, and the working masses of Europe will be thrown onto the streets. The workers will then be delighted to shed the blood and loot the property of those whom they have envied from childhood. But, this of course will not be Jews, for they will already know the time appointed for this revolution and "will take measures to protect our own."<sup>14</sup> The point of all this will be to lead the people

into total disenchantment so that they will willingly accept the ruler whom the Elders have prepared.

*Remember the French Revolution, to which it was we who gave the name of "Great": the secrets of its preparations are well known to us for it was wholly the work of our hands. Ever since that time we have been leading the peoples from one disenchantment to another, so that in the end they should turn also from us in favour of that King-Despot of the blood of Zion, whom we are preparing for the world.<sup>15</sup>*

A detailed description is given of the work which has been carried out for the past twenty centuries according to the Jews' infernal plan for weakening all opposition towards them. All non-Jewish religions have been greatly undermined, and this in turn has weakened the power of those rulers once considered divinely appointed. A materialist spirit has been induced among the masses along with a thirst for speculative wealth. Gold has become god, and other religions have been greatly undermined, which in turn has undermined community and indeed all national spirit.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the fifth protocol declares, the danger of opposition from the Goyim has been warded off by confusing their minds, by discouraging individual initiative, and more importantly by inciting various nations, classes, races and religions against one another. The result of this: *Per Me reges regnant*, through me kings reign. All nations, all governments and all people will become so worn down with the general chaos and so despondent that they will gladly offer political power to the Jewish leaders.

*By all these means we shall so wear down the Goyim that they will be compelled to offer us international power of a nature that by its position will enable us without any violence gradually to absorb all the State forces of the world and to form a Super-Government.<sup>17</sup>*

Financial manipulation is the topic of the sixth protocol. It is claimed that in the days before the formation of the Super-Government the Jews will establish huge financial monopolies, upon which individuals and the State will be dependant. But, upon the formation of the new Jewish controlled

government these monopolies will be crushed destroying all non-Jewish wealth. Furthermore, the nobility will be crushed under increasing land taxes, and the encouragement of speculation will result in the ruin of rich Gentiles. For the general workers there will be an increase in wages, which in turn will bring an increase in prices, thus negating the benefit of higher wages. The workers will be led into drunkenness and this, coupled with their general dissatisfaction, will lead to numerous strikes, which will eventually bring industries to ruin and cause chaos.

Parallel to this policy of devastation on the home front it is claimed that Jews, with the aid of their gold and their control of the press, will involve all nations in wars, petty intrigues, conspiracies, and in diplomatic crises. Every means will be used to undermine the authority of governments until they are finally destroyed. Furthermore, if any country should oppose the Jews, its neighbours are to be forced to make war upon it, but should these neighbours choose to stand collectively against the Jews, they will reply with "a universal war".<sup>18</sup>

To ensure a smooth rise to power the plotters intend to surround themselves with Gentile bankers, industrialists, and capitalists, aided by shady politicians made subservient by fear of exposure. But, in case the Jewish intrigues should be prematurely exposed causing the Gentiles to attempt to throw off their Jewish oppressors, the latter have a plan of the most fiendish machinations:

*You may say the goyim will rise upon us, arms in hand, if they guess what is going on before the time comes; but in the West we have against this a manoeuvre of such appalling terror that the very stoutest hearts quail - the undergrounds, metropolitans, those subterranean corridors which, before the time comes, will be driven under all the capitals and from whence those capitals will be blown into the air with all their organisations and archives.<sup>19</sup>*

Thus *The Protocols* set out the Jewish plan for enslaving the world. The remaining protocols deal with the future order of things after the Jewish council

have the world under their control. In the first place a sham form of democracy will be set up, headed by a president who to all appearances will have been chosen by the people and will seemingly possess wide powers. However, in reality he will be little more than a Jewish puppet chosen because of "some dark, undiscovered stain, some 'Panama' or other"<sup>20</sup> in his past, and this will render him totally subservient to the will of the Elders. The president and his sham Council of State, will be made to promulgate laws and decrees which will severely curtail civil liberties - freedom of speech, voting rights, freedom of the Press and the like, but this will be said to be a temporary measure, to be ended when the enemies of the people have been subdued, although later on it will turn out to be permanent. Measures will be taken so that all newspapers hostile to the new government will be destroyed by heavy taxation, and in their place newspapers supported by the government will present the news as the new masters desire.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, all religions will be destroyed and all men encouraged into the clutches of atheism. This, however, will merely be a transitory stage for all nations will eventually be converted to Judaism.<sup>22</sup>

Of course the Jewish Elders do not believe that the establishment of the new world order will be an easy one and measures will be taken in order to avoid outbursts of popular wrath. Thus, for example, distraction will play a major role in the new scheme of things. Public attention will be diverted by a series of fads and amusements carefully fostered by controlled journals. Likewise, the liberals will be encouraged to waste their time on fruitless utopian schemes. However, should gentile anger boil over they will be pacified by their fellows who have been skilfully enticed into Masonic lodges.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Masonic lodges will be used to enrol the more revolutionary elements among Gentiles, whose plots will then be utilised by the Jewish leaders for their own ends. Any masons showing signs of suspicion or protesting against the role given them, will be secretly executed in such a way that it will appear that they have died from natural causes.<sup>24</sup>

The new Jewish world will have a controlled system of education whereby the young will be given training closely corresponding to a particular station in life for which each is destined. All lawyers are to be made officers of

the state, and the rising profession will be that of the secret police. Finally, the influence of the Christian clergy is to be destroyed, and "the King of the Jews will be the real Pope of the Universe."<sup>25</sup>

The financial program of the new regime is the subject of the twentieth and the twenty-first protocols. The rich will be heavily taxed, whilst the poor will be relieved of the tax burden. Other financial innovations will include a tax on the transfer of property or money and the issuing of large sums of currency based on the size of the population rather than on the gold standard. In this way large government loans will be avoided and a free circulation of money achieved. Instead of bond issues, defaults, and conversions, the new government will meet the problem of credit by establishing huge institutions to buy vast quantities of industrial securities, which will enable it to control the credit of the whole world.

The reign of Israel, it is finally declared, will be one full of blessings. The Elders will prove to mankind that they are benefactors who can restore true well-being and happiness and bring the benefits of efficient, powerful rule. Morals will be improved, and the interests of the small man furthered by the stimulation of small-scale industry. All violence and injustice will be done away with, and so happy will be the peoples of the earth, that they will be moved to rejoice at their good fortune in having such rulers.

Of course the people will never see these invisible rulers just their carefully selected king, born of the House of David. This king will be specially trained for his great task of world dominion, but should he show signs of incapacity, the Elders will be empowered to set him aside in favour of another heir, better fitted for the post. Once installed on the throne, the king must endear himself to his people by meeting and talking with them in the marketplaces and by sacrificing his personal desires for the good of his subjects. Thus will the alleged Kingdom of Zion endure.

It is inconceivable that such a gross fabrication could be taken seriously, even in the lowest circles of society, let alone in the more respectable stratas. But, *The Protocols* reached wide audience even becoming popular in America and England. *The Morning Post* devoted no less than sixty columns to *The*



*Protocols* when they appeared in English in 1920, whilst *The Times*<sup>26</sup> called for a prompt and thorough investigation into its allegations. Indeed, from May 1920, when *The Protocols* were reviewed in *The Times*, until August 1921, when they were exposed as a fabrication, that they were genuine was widely accepted with little question despite the fact, as Valentin points out,

*The slightest reflection ought surely to have told any person in his senses that the very idea of policy of the Great Powers being directed by a secret body of Jews operating in conjunction with the Freemasons and working the statesmen like marionettes had nothing to do with reality.*<sup>27</sup>

Having examined the contents of *The Protocols* one cannot help but question what processes could bring such a forgery to life and cause it to be so widely believed.

## ii. The Immediate Sources of The Protocols

The public revelation of the Jewish plot for world domination occurred between 1903 and 1905, when a number of editions of what we now call *The Protocols*, appeared in Russia. The earliest version, with a slightly shortened end, appeared in the St. Petersburg newspaper, *Znamya (The Banner)* from August 26 to September 7, 1903. *Znamya* was edited by the notorious antisemite P.A. Krushevan.<sup>28</sup> Krushevan, does not reveal who gave him the document, only that it was a translation of a report written in France. Some two years later the same version of *The Protocols*, but no longer shortened, appeared in the form of a booklet entitled *The Root of our Troubles* and subtitled, "Where the Root is of the Present Disorder of Society in Europe and Especially in Russia. Extracts from the Ancient and Modern Protocols of the World Union of Freemasons." No editor was given for the book, but Cohn believes that this version came from G. V. Butmi, a retired officer and close associate of Krushevan.<sup>29</sup> This can be supported by the fact that a further publication appeared in January 1906, this time from the presses of the extreme right wing organisation, the Union of the Russian People, commonly known as the Black Hundreds. This organisation was founded with the help of Krushevan

and Butmi, and the new pamphlet bearing the title *The Enemies of the Human Race* and subtitled "Protocols Extracted from the Secret Archives of the Central Chancellery of Zion (where the root is of the present disorder of society in Europe in general and of Russia in Particular)," bears the name of Butmi as editor.

*The Root of Our Troubles* and *The Enemies of the Human Race* were both cheap pamphlets, concerned with the situation in Russia and meant for mass distribution. They were quite unlike the elegantly printed version that appeared in Russia in 1905, and which was destined to become a force in world history. This version of *The Protocols* appeared as an appendix to an extended edition of a mystical book entitled *The Great in the Little. Near is the Coming of Antichrist and the Kingdom of the Devil on Earth*. The work, which had first been published in 1901 and 1903 without *The Protocols*, was written by one Serge Nilus, a man variously described as a "mystic-saint", "distinguished orientalist" and "professor".<sup>30</sup> The edition of 1905, which significantly enough was a product of the Imperial printing office at Tsarskoie Selo, bears the title *The Great in the Little, or Antichrist as an Imminent Possibility. The Confessions of an Orthodox Believer*.<sup>31</sup>

It is significant that this version along with Butmi's first pamphlet appeared in 1905, after the Russo-Japanese War, during which the Russian revolutionaries made an attempt to overthrow the Tsar's government. It was following this revolution that the Black Hundreds were formed as a support for the Russian throne. The Black Hundreds held the Jews responsible for Russia's defeat and for the attempted revolution, and it was they who helped Russia adopt a definite anti-Jewish policy - a pogrom policy. A work such as *The Protocols* could only have been meant to fan such hatred. The Nilus edition with its superior printing, its mystical overtones that the Tsar so loved to read, and its references to French events and personalities, unlike the Krushevan-Butmi version, could only have been meant for one purpose, to influence Tsar Nicholas II.<sup>32</sup>

Examining *The Protocols* point by point it is possible to notice that the first half gives a fair picture of the conditions in Russia at the beginning of the

twentieth century. For instance Protocol No. 10 quite obviously refers to the contents of the manifesto of October 1905, in which the Tsar promised the people full freedom of conscience, liberty of the press and licence to hold public meetings. The second half of *The Protocols* on the other hand is written with a certain amount of sympathy, in that it describes a new almost ideal universal kingdom. Could it be that the first part of *The Protocols* were written as a warning to the Tsarist Government, whilst the second part was written as advice to that same Government by providing a blueprint of an ideal new order which should be established in Russia?<sup>33</sup>

So far, the purpose of *The Protocols*. But what about the author? As we have seen Nilus, Krushevan and Butmi were editors and not the authors of the original work. Between them, however, they tell somewhat fantastic and utterly confusing stories of how the work came into being. The earliest edition, that in *Znamya*, instantly plunges us into confusion. Whilst we are told that the document was taken from "the Central Chancellery of Zion, in France", the editor admits that "we do not know how, where or by what means the minutes of these meetings, which took place in France, could be copied down, nor above all who copied them . . .". Furthermore, the translator, in his postscript warns against confusing the Elders of Zion with the representatives of the Zionist movement - but this does not prevent him from claiming that *The Protocols* reveal the menace of Zionism "which has the task of uniting all the Jews in the whole world in one union - a union which is more closely knit and more dangerous than the Jesuits."<sup>34</sup>

Butmi, likewise gives the same source for his copy of *The Protocols*, but embellishes the tale somewhat. He claims that *The Protocols*, being secret documents, were extracted with great effort, as detached pages, and translated into Russian on December 9, 1901. It is almost impossible to penetrate a second time into the secret archives where they were kept and that is why they cannot be precisely confirmed with regards to when and where they were written. But Butmi is convinced that any reader who is at all familiar with the Masonic mysteries will be convinced of their authenticity when he learns of the criminal plan they contain.

Nilus is by far the most communicative, so much so that not only does he end up contradicting the former two editors, but ultimately ends up contradicting himself! In the 1905 Nilus claimed that *The Protocols* were removed from a larger collection of "protocols" and obtained by "my correspondent from the secret archives of the Central Chancellery of Zion, which is at present situated in France." This corresponds well enough with the two earlier claims, but unfortunately in the same edition of *The Protocols* Nilus has also inserted a note saying that they were "stolen by a woman from one of the most influential and most highly initiated leaders of Freemasonry, after one of the secret meetings of the 'initiated' in France, that nest of Masonic conspiracy."<sup>35</sup> In 1911, Nilus again asserted that his friend, "the correspondent" of the first edition, had himself stolen *The Protocols* from "the headquarters of the Society of Zion in France."<sup>36</sup> In 1917, however, Nilus confuses the issue still further and asserts that *The Protocols* were

*A plan worked out by the leaders of the Jewish people during the many centuries of dispersion, and finally presented to the Council of Elders by 'the Prince of the Exile', Theodor Herzl, at the time of the first Zionist congress, summoned by him at Basel in August 1897.<sup>37</sup>*

Nilus could hardly have made a worse choice. The first Zionist Congress, had been a wholly public affair, held in Basel, which at the time was overflowing with journalists. Are we to understand that they overlooked so extraordinary a meeting as this, or that somehow the congress in the three days it was assembled managed to cram in an extra twenty-four highly secret meetings that went totally unnoticed by everyone? To Nilus's further discredit, the meetings were held totally in German, Herzl himself was Austrian, and there wasn't a single French delegate there. It seems somehow strange, therefore, that in the original manuscript the supposed meetings should be recorded entirely in French. To muddy the already cloudy waters even further, Nilus in his first edition of *The Protocols* had categorically stated that the twenty-four meetings were held in 1902-3; the Zionist Congress meanwhile was held in 1897.<sup>38</sup>

As if such confusion were not already sufficient, the editors of later editions further embellished the tale. The editor of the first German edition, Gottfried zur Beek, maintained that *The Protocols* were the minutes of the First Zionist Congress, but adds that they had been obtained by a wily Russian Governmental spy, who had bribed the Jew entrusted with the job of delivering the minutes to the "Jewish Masonic lodge" at Frankfurt-on-Main, into lending them to him for one night. During this night, the Russian, who no doubt had with him a whole army of copyists, had managed to copy most of these French minutes, and pass them on to Nilus for translation. From another German editor, Theodor Fritsch, we have a totally different tale. He claims that *The Protocols* were stolen from the house of a Jew by the Russian police, and that they were written in Hebrew. Roger Lambelin, in the French edition, claimed that *The Protocols* were stolen from the cupboard of the leader of the Alsace Freemasons. The list of fantastic claims as to the origins of *The Protocols* goes on and on, and certainly goes a long way to proving that they, no doubt, came from a very different source than its editors would have us believe.<sup>39</sup>

*The Protocols* are such a transparent and ridiculous forgery that one wonders why anyone would have accepted them as factual. Indeed, one need not have any great knowledge of history, or even of Jewish matters to see through such an obviously mendacious work, even after the most cursory glance. Even the title, "Wise Men of Zion", makes one more than a little suspicious. Such a mysterious term, unknown in Jewish linguistic usage, could only have been written to have some sort of antisemitic effect, especially upon the ignorant masses, or a mystically minded Tsar. The expression *per me reges regnant* (Proverbs, vii. 15) is another *faux pas*. The quotation is taken from the *Vulgate*, the official Roman Catholic translation of the Bible. Why would a Jew not make use of the Hebrew version of the Bible, or quote in his mother tongue? Furthermore, there are references to events much later than 1897, for example the Panama scandal and Léon Bourgeois' educational reforms.<sup>40</sup> The whole work is just one absurdity after another, and one might well wonder why it was ever necessary to prove the whole thing a forgery. But the fact remains that in the years immediately after the First World War, when *The Protocols*

became a world-famous document, there were many people who did take it seriously. To realise this one has only to consider that *The Times*, in its issue of May 8, 1920, in all seriousness commented,

*What are these "Protocols"? Are they authentic? If so, what malevolent assembly concocted these plans, and gloated over their exposition? . . . Have we, by straining every fibre of our national body, escaped a "Pax Germanica" only to fall into a "Pax Judæica"?*<sup>41</sup>

A year later, in August 1921, *The Times* found their answer. Philip Graves, their correspondent in Constantinople revealed that *The Protocols* were indeed a provable forgery.<sup>42</sup> Graves had recently been given a book by a Russian immigrant, which turned out to be *Dialogue aux Enfers entre Montesquieu et Machiavel*, by a French lawyer called Maurice Joly, and originally published in Brussels in 1864. The work consisted of a series of imaginary conversations, held between Machiavelli and Montesquieu in the afterworld which were aimed at attacking the domestic and foreign policies of Napoleon III. The work had earned Joly a fifteen month prison sentence in 1865, and the immediate ban and confiscation of his book.<sup>43</sup>

That Joly's book inspired the forger of *The Protocols* is all too obvious. In his comparative study, Cohn found that over 160 passages in *The Protocols*, totalling two-fifths of the entire text, are clearly based on passages in *Dialogue aux Enfers*. In nine of the chapters the plagiarisms amount to over half, and sometimes to three-quarters of the text. In Protocol No. 7 the entire text is taken from *Dialogue aux Enfers*. Moreover, with but a few exceptions, the order of those passages "borrowed" remains exactly the same in *The Protocols* as they are in Joly. It is almost as if the forger sat down and worked systematically page by page, copying literally the text before him into his "protocols"<sup>44</sup>

The connection between *The Protocols* and *Dialogue aux Enfers* is undeniable, and Graves' exposure caused many problems for those antisemites who held faithfully to the notion of a Jewish World Conspiracy. Indeed, many maintained that Joly was a Jew, and they were right in calling *The Protocols* the offspring of a Jewish mind. However, in 1924 Joly's autobiography turned up in

Paris, confirming that not only was he descended from a strictly Catholic family, but was also a fierce antisemite. Undaunted, however, the antisemites merely claimed that Joly wasn't Joly after all, but someone else. At the Berne trial in October 1934 and May 1935 it was claimed by one antisemitic expert that Maurice Joly was really called Joe Levy, whilst another swore that he was really named Maurice Joel. In Britain, Lord Alfred Douglas of the antisemitic society The Britons, suggested that Joly was in fact a Jew called Moses Joel.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the revelations of the die-hard antisemites, it soon became apparent that it was not Joly's work alone which had been plagiarised to form *The Protocols*. Indeed, the actual framework into which the thoughts and observations from *Dialogue aux Enfers* were incorporated, came from a second work, a cheap and trashy novel published in 1868, called *Biarritz*. The novel, written by Hermann Goedsche,<sup>46</sup> included a chapter entitled "The Jewish Cemetery in Prague and the Council of the Representatives of the Twelve Tribes of Israel." Here the author tells a lurid tale of how a converted Jew and a German scholar chance upon a Jewish centennial meeting held before the devil, on the Feast of Tabernacles in 1860, in an ancient Prague cemetery. At this midnight meeting the princes of the twelve tribes of Israel (the ten lost tribes being represented, in spite of the fact that they had disappeared more than two thousand years before) assemble at the tomb of the holy rabbi Simeon ben Jehuda. There the twelve, who come from the great cities of Europe, collect around the eldest of their number and announce, one by one, what measures each will take to guarantee that the Jewish nation will gain power and supremacy over all the other nations of the world. Speculation, promotion of atheism, pacifism, control of the press, domination of the key positions of government and the professions, monopolisation of the land, are among the devices that the Elders advocate for accomplishing their aims. The meeting ends with the command, "Renew our oath, sons of the golden calf, and go to all lands of the world," whereupon the twelve tribes each throw a stone upon the grave and invoke "a monstrous golden figure of an animal" before they each leave to carry out their dreadful tasks.<sup>47</sup>

Goedsche's fictional tale was eventually separated from the original novel and was published separately in several editions. However, among these editions a new trend began to take place, the suggestion that the story was based on fact. It was Russian antisemites who first used this device, for in 1872 the chapter appeared as a pamphlet in St. Petersburg, with the sinister comment that although the story was written as fiction, it had a basis in fact. Four years later, and again in 1880, a similar pamphlet appeared in Moscow, with the title *In the Jewish Cemetery in Czech Prague (the Jewish sovereigns of the World)*. Likewise, again in 1880 similar pamphlets appeared in Prague and Odessa. A year later a rewritten condensed form, in which the speeches of the twelve representatives of Israel were condensed into a single speech and put into the mouth of a rabbi, appeared in France. Now it was no longer presented as a piece of fiction based on fact, but as a single speech supposedly made by a chief rabbi at a secret Jewish meeting. The authenticity of this speech was vouched for - in fact it was claimed that the speech had been taken from a forthcoming historical work by an English diplomat entitled, *Annals of the Political and Historical Events of the Last Ten Years*. Goedsche, had written his novel under the name Sir John Retcliffe, so it was only appropriate that the English diplomat should be called the same, or perhaps a little more carelessly, Sir John Readclif.<sup>48</sup>

This then is the origin of what was to become known as *The Rabbi's Speech*. That this speech was well known in Russia is without doubt.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Krushevan used a pamphlet containing *The Rabbi's Speech* as a help in provoking a pogrom at Kishinev in Bessarabia in 1903. A few months later as we have seen, he went on to publish *The Protocols*. This then was the framework into which the novel of Joly was inserted, a fictional speech, supposedly made by a rabbi at a secret meeting. It is but one small step from the Prague cemetery to the secret meeting place of the Jewish World government, and from the mysterious rabbi to the Elders of Zion. Of course Joly and Goedsche were not the only unwitting contributors to *The Protocols*; evidence has shown that whilst there are no passages corresponding word for word, there are a certain number of theoretic similarities to the



writings of antisemites such as Gougenot des Mousseaux, Abbé Chabauty and Edouard Drumont, among others.<sup>50</sup>

We can never be totally certain what purpose *The Protocols* was meant to serve, where they were written or by whom. That they were part of a tradition of antisemitic forgeries prevalent in Russia at the turn of the century is undeniable. For example in 1901 during an inspection of the archives of the Russian secret police, a document, even more bizarre than *The Protocols*, called *Tayna Yevreystva (The Secret of Jewry)* and dated February 1895, came to light. This somewhat ridiculous essay tells of an imaginary secret religion which, after being held by the Essenes in the time of Jesus, is now supposed to be cherished by the unknown rulers of Jewry. To all appearances *Tayna Yevreystva*, with its emphasis that a secret Jewish government is trying to turn Russia from an agrarian, semi-feudal country into a modern state with a capitalistic economy and a liberal middle class, is little more than a somewhat crude prototype of *The Protocols*.<sup>51</sup> Beyond this, however, trying to unravel the early history of *The Protocols* is an almost impossible task, as Cohn so rightly points out, "one comes up against ambiguities, uncertainties, riddles,"<sup>52</sup> all of which can so easily mask what is truly important about *The Protocols* - the great influence which they, as a vehicle of the modern conspiracy myth, have exercised upon twentieth-century history.

It is, as has already been said, almost impossible to unravel the true origins of *The Protocols* themselves. However, it is not quite so difficult to unravel the beginnings of the concepts they contain. As I stated at the beginning, *The Protocols* were merely a culmination of ideas and attitudes that already existed in modern Europe, and to understand why such an outrageous fantasy of this kind was taken quite seriously in even the most respectable circles, we must first understand its origins.

## **The Origins of the Modern Conspiracy Theory**

### **i. The Jew on the Eve of the Modern Period**

The political, cultural and religious changes of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, which led Europe out of the Middle Ages into the modern

era, did very little to affect the lives of the majority of Europe's Jews for the better. The forces of the Renaissance and Reformation may have set in motion the gradual destruction of the Religious Conspiracy Theory, but otherwise they affected Jewish lives very little in a positive sense. For the Gentile the Middle Ages had ended and a period of rapid development begun, but for the Jew the Middle Ages would endure right up to the nineteenth century. In the midst of great change he faced little more than stagnation, and isolation.

For the most part, the life of the Jew at the end of the Middle Ages was little more than marginal. He lived in what most scholars call "the age of the ghetto". The ghetto, as Litvinoff points out, "defined in physical terms the gulf separating Jew from gentile, while their mutual religious repulsion defined their cultural separation."<sup>53</sup> The ghetto took one of two forms, in some cases it was an actual place, a separate quarter where Jews were made to live behind high walls, almost entirely cut off from the general populace. In other places it was little more than the usual Jewish quarter combined with a series of restrictions and laws which kept Jews out of the social and cultural life of Europe. In both cases the effect was the same; the ghetto was a prison.

Life in the ghetto was, by the standards of the changing Gentile world around it, almost stagnant. Secular learning was generally shunned in favour of more traditional Talmudic and Midrashic studies. Whilst this resulted in a deepening of Jewish spiritual life, it also meant that Jewish scholarship largely lost touch with the great currents of learning sweeping Europe.<sup>54</sup> There was of course some contact with the outside world, but this contact was often of a vicarious kind as few Jews were permitted to leave the ghetto, and those who could found that they were excluded from most of the city.<sup>55</sup> Business was still permitted outside the ghetto walls, but this was greatly restricted. Indeed, the Jewish role in the economy of this age was considerably altered from previous centuries. A new wave of capitalism had come into being which cut the usual dependence on the Jewish moneylender and trader. The Jewish monopoly on usury was reduced to a more petty kind, and Jews often found themselves reduced to pawnbrokerage, peddling and dealing in second-hand clothes.

During this time the image and role of Jews began to change somewhat dramatically. The new spirits of humanism and scepticism, which had appeared with the Renaissance and Reformation did much to destroy the fearsome image which had been fostered upon Jews during the Middle Ages. Gradually the Gentile world began to feel at ease with Jews. Understanding, compounded with the sense of protection which having one's enemy severely restricted engenders, led to a new appraisal of that enemy. Here was the demonic being non-Jews had feared, the mighty sorcerer who had once murdered at a glance, the Christ-killer and enemy of all Christendom. Here he was, a pathetic creature, poor, without status or self respect. Thus, whilst he remained an object of aversion the Jew was no longer feared. Indeed, in time the mobs who had once massacred Jews, fearing their supposed evil powers, now followed them in the street, their only form of attack being insults, abuse and ridicule.<sup>56</sup> If there were accusations to make against Jews, they became petty. Where once he was accused of killing Christian children and poisoning Gentiles, the Jew now faced charges no greater than that of price cutting, sharp practice and dealing in stolen goods.<sup>57</sup>

In effect the ghetto became yet another powerful nail in the coffin of the Religious Conspiracy Theory. Nobody could look upon these pathetic and poor Jews and see in their isolation and degradation the monstrous and powerful Jew of the Middle Ages. Thus by the dawn of the Modern era, the once all powerful effects of the Conspiracy Theory had dwindled almost to nothing. Of course, as I demonstrated earlier, there were still to be flashes of some myths that made up the Religious Conspiracy Theory, such as the accusations found in Eisenmenger's *Judaism Unmasked*, or the later blood libel cases, but these would never have the effects they had in the centuries before. Thus the Jews of the ghetto entered a vacuum period as far as the Conspiracy Myth is concerned. But, as with all vacuums, this one would, in time, be filled with something, either good or bad.

## ii. Enlightenment and Emancipation

At the close of the eighteenth century it was already becoming apparent that change, with regard to the Jews of Europe, was becoming inevitable. There were many reasons for this. Europe itself was at the time undergoing a process of change. The capitalist revolution, already in the course of development, had swept aside the old feudal economy with its guilds, bans on usury, and its doctrine of an unalterable just price. These changes cast the role which many Jews played in economic life in a far better light. Their involvement in money lending, their connections in the international commercial world, and their willingness to speculate were now looked upon with a new kind of respect, especially by those statesmen anxious to improve the economies of their countries and by the new large-scale capitalists less sensitive to the old economic traditions. Moreover, many Jews had left those "Jewish" trades of peddling and usury in favour of more respectable jobs as shopkeepers and craftsmen. As the general economic conditions improved and prosperity became more common, Jewish wealth, where it existed, no longer stood out. It became almost inevitable that such developments should lead to a lessening of restrictions on Jewish trading and travel. Thus, as Flannery points out, "the ghetto walls, so carefully designed to cut off the Jew from all Christian contact, began to crumble well before the political edicts of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries abolished them altogether."<sup>58</sup>

On the social level, changes had likewise begun to take place, especially in Berlin, the capital of Prussia where a number of cultured and "protected" Jews, who longed to become equals among their Christian neighbours and participate in the Germanic-Christian culture around them, were allowed to leave the ghetto. Among these were the brilliant Jewish thinker, Moses Mendelssohn (1728-86), who having left the poverty of the Dessau ghetto, rose by sheer talent to the heights of German cultural life. His association with Gotthold Lessing (1729-81) - who modelled his play *Nathan the Wise* upon Mendelssohn - did much to reinforce the spirit of humanism in Germany. This coupled with the adulation Mendelssohn received from Berlin society for his philosophical talents, for his translation of the *Pentateuch* and the *Psalms* into

fine German prose, led to the building of a bridge between the Hebrew and German cultures. A bridge strong enough to force the two cultures to review their attitudes towards one another.<sup>59</sup>

Just as there were changes in economic and cultural attitudes toward Jews, so too in the Christian world there was a shift in the climate of thought, albeit much less palpable, concerning Jews. The Christian conscience, was becoming, ever so slowly, aware of the contradiction separating its attitude towards Jews and Judaism and the Gospels' doctrine of universal love. The old complaint, that Jews constitute a "state within a state" also lost force in an age when the concept of a unified "Christian state," where only Christians could enjoy full citizenship, was under sharp attack. The idea of a secular state, where class or religion was not a determining factor in the granting of citizenship, was swiftly gaining momentum.

Thus a number of new and refreshing moods spread through eighteenth century society. All of which could offer something positive to Europe's Jews. Furthermore, the spirit of scepticism engendered by the Enlightenment, which encouraged indifference to religious beliefs, was also colouring the atmosphere. Acceptance would not be easy; Christian-Jewish mutual hatred still existed as the ultimate obstacle, but the portents of change were in place, and ultimately that change would take place, despite the strident voices, such as that of Voltaire, who still opposed it.<sup>60</sup>

In 1782 the first stirrings of political Emancipation appeared in Austria, when Emperor Joseph II proposed the *Patent of Tolerance*. In it he abolished a number of disabilities, including the Jewish badge and the body tax, granted Jews access to schools and universities, and ruled that all Hebrew schools include the teaching of the German language and other liberal subjects. At the same time similar efforts to further Jewish Emancipation were also made in Alsace, Tuscany and England. However, Emancipation in the true sense did not occur until the French Revolution, and the proclamation of religious freedom contained in the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. But, even then, the newly won freedom had to be fought for, for whilst the bill did not exclude Jews, neither did it specifically include them. For two more years the Jews of

France worked towards the legal removal of disabilities and for equal civic rights, and did not rest until they were fully rewarded in 1791.<sup>61</sup>

Thus the deed was done. French Jews were free and a whole new era was opened up before them. Moreover, as the new Republic looked towards imperialism, Jewish Emancipation doggedly followed the footsteps of the French armies. The ghetto and Jewish closed quarters were broken into in papal Avignon (1791), Nice (1792) and the Rhineland (1792-3). The spread of the revolution to the Netherlands, and the founding of the Batavian Republic, led to Jews being granted full and formal rights by law there in 1796. In 1796-8 Napoleon Bonaparte liberated many of the Italian ghettos. The welcome that this move received was so great that the French troops found themselves aided by numerous young Jews and local enthusiasts, who often tore down the crumbling ghetto walls with their bare hands. The gates of the first ever ghetto, that of Venice, were burned, and in Rome, where Jews had been particularly unhappy since 1775, the gates were destroyed amid great celebration, as Pius VI was taken a prisoner of war.<sup>62</sup> Thus, wherever French domination and influence went, Jewish Emancipation followed. In Germany its influence reached the newly formed Westphalia, Frankfort, Baden and Hanseatic cities. In Prussia, progress towards Emancipation was slower but, in 1812, Jews already resident were granted full citizenship and all disabilities and special taxes were abolished.<sup>63</sup>

Whether they wanted it or not, Jews once again found themselves part of European society. The battle for Emancipation was over, but the battle for survival in society had just begun. Political Emancipation was one thing, social Emancipation, another. The situation was, if anything, precarious. Even political Emancipation could not entirely be relied upon. Indeed, in 1807 Napoleon announced a series of measures aimed at his Jewish subjects which had the effect of accentuating, rather than diminishing their feelings of discrimination. The measures, which were to remain provisional for ten years, included the suspension of debts owed to Jews, conscription into the army, restrictions on moving homes and clauses which required all Jews entering commerce to obtain a special certificate and a licence to prove that they did not intend entering a

trade connected with usury. Furthermore, the downfall of Napoleon brought about a backlash of antisemitic feeling which undid whatever Emancipation had achieved in Germany, Prussia and the Papal States.

Despite the regressions, however, Jews were never as badly off as before the French Revolution. There was disappointment, but there was the consolation that Emancipation could never be fully reversed, and there was a way forward, albeit a way that would have to be fought for.

### **The Problems of Emancipation and the Conspiracy Theory**

With the French Revolution and the coming of the nineteenth century, Europe entered a period of turmoil and exceptionally rapid change. The slow-moving, conservative life of the countryside was increasingly challenged by the new innovative and dynamic urban civilisation. Industrialisation wrought great changes, bringing to the fore a bourgeoisie intent on increasing its wealth and extending its rights. Gradually a new class, the industrial proletariat, began to exert pressure on its own account. Soon democracy, liberalism, secularism, and, by the mid-century, socialism, were all forces to be reckoned with. Throughout Europe life as it had been was changing, and there were many who faced that change with fear and loathing. Thus a long and bitter struggle began between those who accepted the changes, and welcomed the opportunities they offered and those who continued to cling to, and long for, a restoration of the old ways. It was into this turmoil that the gates of the ghetto were opened and the Jews within thrust out. There lay before them many opportunities, but equally many perils.

During the period following the French Revolution and the Emancipation in Western Europe new forms of antisemitism and, eventually, new forms of the Conspiracy Theory began to grow. These new Conspiracy Theories were often a reaction to the changes that were taking place at the time. Jews became, as usual, the scapegoat for the general discontent and fears that prevailed as nations watched the old order crumble, and the new order come to the fore. Development, however, was not entirely uniform across Western

Europe, and this in turn effected the development of the Conspiracy Theory. In the earliest stages the accusations levelled at Jews differed according to the speed and type of changes that occurred in individual countries.

#### i. The Reaction in France

The Revolution in France engendered a Jewish political Emancipation that was, for the most part, swift and sudden, especially when compared to other countries in Western Europe where Jews had to struggle for many years - and sometimes, as in the case of Germany, even for centuries - to gain political freedom. Within two years of *The Declaration of the Rights of Man*, the Jews of France were freed of all legal disabilities and became part of society. However, whilst Jews appreciated the changes in France, there were many who did not. As Byrnes points out, "All of French history since the French Revolution has in a sense been a reaction to the Revolution."<sup>64</sup>

The traditional reaction that one would expect to the sudden change in France, especially one which led to Jewish political Emancipation, would, of course, be one of extreme antisemitism. Yet, the traditional role of Jews as the scapegoat for all society's ills was slow in coming to the fore. Indeed, for almost a century after the Emancipation there was apparently very little overt antisemitism in France. Jews assimilated to a great degree and were protected by the French tradition of tolerance. The racial doctrines of Count de Gobineau passed unnoticed in France, while similar attempts in the 1870s by Fustel de Coulanges were ridiculed and ignored.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, a great deal of pro-Jewish sentiment was prevalent where we would expect antisemitism. Indeed, the French were extremely outspoken against antisemitism. For example, there was an outcry against the Russians for their pogroms against Jews in the early 1880s, and there was general bitter criticism of the Hungarian antisemites, and the Hungarian government for not thwarting them, during a ritual murder trial in Hungary in 1883. Equally caustic was the press criticism of the Algerian Radicals, especially during their June 1884 outbreak of antisemitism.<sup>66</sup>

On the whole then it seems that for almost a century general antisemitic feelings did not exist in France, so much so that the publication in 1886 of



Drumont's antisemitic *La France juive* came as almost a shock. Yet, the explosion of antisemitism that Drumont engendered bears striking testimony to the fact that antisemitism did exist, albeit in a mild and somewhat latent form, and that Drumont was merely the spark that ignited the already present touch paper. Strangely enough, it was this latent form of antisemitism that also contained the foundation of the Modern Conspiracy Theory.

The reaction to the French Revolution not only shaped French history as we know it, but also shaped the Modern Conspiracy Theory. Many conservatives, particularly the monarchists and the Catholics, throughout the nineteenth century fought against the ideas and the ideals of the Revolution and sought a return to the Old Regime. Particularly vehement in this fight were the Catholics for whom the changes wrought by both the Enlightenment and the Revolution were nothing but an anathema. On all sides the Conservative Catholics felt threatened by the changes around them. The Medieval Christian world where they had held so much sway had given way to a new modern and secular society, in which they found their former influence dwindling rapidly. Furthermore, there was also a certain amount of anticlerical legislation to contend with, especially during the six years of Opportunist rule. All this played upon the insecurities of the Catholic Conservatives and invariably they cast around for a scapegoat upon whom to place the blame for their predicament.

One would have thought that the choice of scapegoat would immediately have been Jews, the usual target of Catholic Christian hatred. Yet, whilst ultimately Jews would be cast in that role, in its early stages the anger of the Catholic conservatives was vented upon a number of totally different minority groups, in whose ranks they saw some sort of conspiracy against them. The earliest of these "suspicions" was expressed in the writings of the canon of Notre Dame, Abbé Barruel. In 1797 Barruel, in his five volume work, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme*,<sup>67</sup> argued that the French Revolution represented the culmination of an age-old conspiracy which had begun with the medieval Order of Templars, which had not really been destroyed in 1314, but had survived as a secret society pledged to overthrow all monarchies, depose all popes, to preach unrestricted liberty to all people and

eventually aimed to establish its rule over all the world. In the eighteenth century, this secret society had captured and become one with the order of Freemasons. In 1763 this group, which he calls the "Sophisters of Rebellion" had set up a secret literary academy, consisting of Voltaire, Turgot, Condorcot, Diderot and d'Alembert, who became the "Sophisters of Impiety" and whose purpose it was to form an anti-Christian conspiracy, "to undermine morality and to overthrow every altar where Christ was adored."<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, these "Sophisters of Impiety" had built up a vast revolutionary organisation, which had become the Jacobins of the Revolution. But, at the heart of the conspiracy, the true leaders of the Revolution were those "enemies of the human race, sons of Satan, the Bavarian Illuminati."<sup>69</sup> To this handful of Germans all the Freemasons and Jacobins of France owed blind allegiance; and it was Barruel's view that unless it was stopped, this triple Freemason/Illuminati/Jacobin alliance would soon dominate the world.

There are of course many errors in Barruel's work. To begin with, he completely ignores the fact that the Freemasons and the Illuminati, were in fact rivals. Furthermore, the Illuminati had been dissolved in 1786. However, the errors in Barruel's theory do not concern us here.<sup>70</sup> What does, is the fact that in his "conspiracy theory" there is no mention of a Jewish role. Of course, this is somewhat understandable when we consider that Barruel's main concern is the cause of the French revolution, and no Jew played any significant part in either the Revolution itself, or the Enlightenment that preceeded it.

Others, however, were less inhibited than Barruel. In 1806, he received a letter ostensibly written by an army officer called J. B. Simonini. The letter hailed from Florence but apart from that very little is known about it, or about the mysterious Simonini.<sup>71</sup> In the letter Simonini congratulates Barruel for having "unmasked the hellish sects which are preparing the way for Antichrist" and draws his attention to the one sect he forgot, "the Judaic sect".<sup>72</sup> Simonini then goes on to reveal the most extraordinary information. He claims that he once pretended to a group of Piedmontese Jews that he was also a Jew, but had been separated from the Jewish community at an early age. Thereupon, the Jews showed him "sums of gold and silver for distribution to those who

embraced their cause" and promised to make him a general if he would join the Freemasons. Moreover, they presented him with weapons bearing Masonic symbols, and also revealed to him their most hidden secrets.

These secrets were indeed surprising. Simonini learned that the founder of the Persian religion of Manicheism, Mani, was a Jew, as was the Old Man of the Mountain, the supreme ruler of the Muslim sect known as the Assassins. He also discovered that both the Freemasons and the Illuminati were founded by Jews. Furthermore, he uncovered a plot by Jews to dominate the Christian religion. In Italy, he claimed that more than 800 ecclesiastics were Jews, from humble priests right up to the highest cardinals, and it was hoped that one day there would be a Jewish Pope. Equally menacing was their political and economic plans. Simonini claimed that through plots and money Jews would eventually gain freedom in all countries, and once this was achieved would set about buying up houses and land in order to force out the Christians. Having done this, the final stage of the plot would be carried out, for Jews had "promised themselves that in less than a century they would be masters of the world, that they would abolish all other sects and establish the rule of their own sect, that they would turn Christian churches into so many synagogues and reduce the remaining Christians to a state of absolute slavery".<sup>73</sup> According to Simonini only one obstacle at present threatened the Jews' fiendish plot, the House of Bourbon, which was the Jews' worst enemy, but plans were already afoot to remove that final obstacle.

The Simonini letter contains the whole myth of the Judeo/Masonic conspiracy which later formed the basis of *The Protocols*. Moreover, it also outlines very clearly the circumstances which gave birth to that myth. Needless to say it had very little to do with the real relationship between Jews and Freemasons, which at that time was almost non-existent. Indeed, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Freemasonry remained on the whole hostile towards Jews<sup>74</sup> (as for that matter did the Bavarian Illuminati). Thus at the time Simonini wrote his letter, few Jews had even managed to enter Europe's lodges, let alone risen to a point where they could be said to be "in control". But facts such as these did not matter; what did matter was that

someone had to be blamed for the French Revolution, and who better than an alliance of Jews and Freemasons? Had not Barruel demonstrated that the French Revolution was the work of Freemasons, and had not the Jews benefited from the revolution? Little more was required to establish that Freemasons and Jews were closely associated, indeed, almost identical.

It is, of course, true that the Jews did benefit from the French Revolution, and perhaps more spectacularly than other minority groups. Since it proclaimed "the rights of man" and championed the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, it was logical that civil rights would be granted to Jews as to others. But, more than that, wherever Napoleon's power extended Jewish Emancipation followed. Thus, as Cohn points out, "in the Simonini letter one can hear the crash of the Italian ghettos as they fell before the French armies."<sup>75</sup> This was already enough to convince many that Napoleon was an ally of the Jews, or even, a Jew himself. Those who identified themselves with the old régime had to find a way to account for the collapse of a social order which they regarded as ordained by God, the myth of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy supplied the answer.

In May 1806, the same year that Simonini wrote his letter, something happened which seem to confirm the Jewish plot theory - Napoleon summoned an Assembly of Jewish Notables from all over the French Empire and the Kingdom of Italy. The idea was to create a permanent relationship between the new state and Jews, on the lines of those Napoleon had already concluded with the Catholics and the Protestants. The 111 strong body, elected by the Jewish community leaders, met from July 1806 to April 1807. The purpose of the meeting was purely political and administrative, and aimed at providing answers to questions on Jewish attitudes to the state, internal organisation, marriage-laws and usury. On the basis of these meetings Napoleon was able to form a general Jewish statute which relegated the conduct of those now seen, not as Jews, but as "French citizens of the Mosaic faith."

This in itself was nothing sinister; after all Napoleon had already held similar meetings with other religious groups. Unfortunately Napoleon chose to supplement the secular Assembly by convening a parallel meeting of rabbis and

learned laymen, whose purpose it was to advise the assembly on technical points of Torah and halakhah. Between February and March 1807, in considerable splendour and with great ceremony, this second body met. In reality this group was as innocuous as the first, but Napoleon chose to dub it "the Great Sanhedrin" after the supreme Jewish court of antiquity. This second group, as Johnson points out, "attracted infinitely more attention than the serious secular gathering, and lingered in the European memory long after Napoleon's Jewish policy had been forgotten."<sup>76</sup> Why this should be so was simple enough; in a society already violently suspicious of the motives of any minority group the appearance of the fake Sanhedrin - a body which had not existed for over a millennium and a half - stirred up "a powerful conspiratorial chemistry."<sup>77</sup> One suspects that many questions began to form in the minds of the people. Was this gathering merely a meeting of a conclave which had been secretly meeting all the time? Memories stirred of the secret international Jewish government which had supposedly met throughout Medieval times to pick the town for the annual ritual murder. Furthermore, in the minds of many, if there was still a secret Jewish government, then there could only be one person behind their fiendish plots, the Antichrist. Who, was this Antichrist? None other than he who had convened the meeting, Napoleon. After all, was not the Antichrist in the last days of earth going to appear as the Messiah of the Jews, would he not establish their freedom and lead them in their attempt to overthrow the Christian World? The journal of the French émigrés in London, *L'Ambigu*, commented:

*Does he hope to form, from these children of Jacob, a legion of tyrannicides? . . . Time will show. It remains for us only to watch this Antichrist fight against the eternal decrees of God; that must be the last act of his diabolical existence.<sup>78</sup>*

The Simonini letter, with its mention of the Antichrist and its prophetic tone fitted perfectly into such an atmosphere, and Barruel duly passed it around the influential circles in France.

The triple alliance of Jews, Freemasons and the Antichrist inspired little interest in France in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, that does not mean that it died away. For, in 1869, Henri Gougenot des Mousseaux, a

Catholic theologian, revived the tale again in his work, *Le Juif, le Judaïsme et la judaïsation des peuples chrétiens*. In this massive book, Gougenot des Mousseaux draws on every form of antisemitism possible. He reiterates the Medieval charges of usury and the blood libel accusations alongside the allegation that Jews were utilising eighteenth century liberal ideas and the secret force of Freemasonry to overthrow Christianity and to obtain rule over the entire world. Like Simonini, Gougenot des Mousseaux ascribed to the Medieval notion of the Jewish/Antichrist connection. Indeed, in a flight of prophetic fantasy, which would later find a place in *The Protocols*, he claimed that in the midst of a great European war the Jews will raise up a Messiah, "a man with a genius for political imposture, a sinister bewitcher, around whom fanatical multitudes will cluster."<sup>79</sup> This man will destroy the authority of Christianity, unite mankind and bestow upon it a wealth of material goods. Blinded by this generosity the Gentile nations will also accept him and begin to worship him as a god. But, in reality, he will be Satan's instrument whose apparent benevolence is merely a mask for his aim to bring mankind to perdition. But, if Gougenot des Mousseaux revived the archaic in drawing on the Antichrist imagery, he likewise was very modern. One cannot deny that his long chapters on "The Press" and upon "Gold" belong entirely in the world of modern, political antisemitism. It is important to note also, as Cohn points out, that certain phrases in *The Protocols*, on the subject of gold and the press seem to have been lifted straight from the pages of *Le Juif, le Judaïsme et la judaïsation des peuples chrétiens*.<sup>80</sup>

In France the initial impact of Gougenot des Mousseaux's book was minimal, as was that of his successor Abbé Chabauty. In 1881 Chabauty published a 600-page volume called *Les FrancMaçons et les Juifs: Sixième Age de l'Église d'après l'Apocalypse*. In it he argued that Satan through the Judeo/Masonic conspiracy, was preparing the way for the Jewish Antichrist and the world dominion of the Jews. Furthermore Chabauty emphasised the role of both parties in the Judeo/Masonic conspiracy, in that he claimed that Jews gave the orders and the Freemasons carried them out. Thus from Barruel to Chabauty we can see a clear development of ideas concerning the

Jewish/Freemason conspiracy theory. Initially the Freemasons were the main conspirators, then, according to des Mousseaux,<sup>81</sup> they formed an equal partnership with Jews, which developed, finally, to an alliance in which the Jews formed the dominant partner.<sup>82</sup> From Simonini onwards we can also see an apparent growth in interest in the Antichrist motif and the charge that Jews intend to dominate the world. All these themes would later find a place in *The Protocols* and in the Modern Conspiracy Theory.

This Catholic thread of Jewish Conspiracy thinking was supplemented in 1882 by a new way of viewing Jewish power. In that year the *Union générale* bank, founded in 1878 by Eugene Bontou crashed, creating not only a mass of disgruntled Catholic investors but also a myth of omnipotent Jewish financial power. The bank had recommended itself to its prospective clients not only in businesslike terms, but also as a Catholic institution. Intrigued by this and by the fact that Bontou was an avowed opponent of the alleged Jewish and Protestant financial monopoly, many Catholics, from Bishops to the simple folk, entrusted their fortunes to the bank. When it went bankrupt in 1882, the theory that Jewish machinations had caused the disaster found easy credence among the losers. Indeed, although there was no supporting evidence, the name of Rothschild loomed large in the rumours and the overt accusations. Viscount de Voguë, the French ambassador in St. Petersburg, claimed that the bank had been "killed by the Jews,"<sup>83</sup> and the Catholic newspapers and journals, such as *Univers* and the *Revue du monde Catholique*, were eager to put the downfall down to a Jewish plot. However, all quietly forgot the affair when a judicial investigation in December, 1882, revealed that the bank's downfall had been caused by Bontou's reckless policies and wild speculations, and that there were no Jews involved in the disaster whatsoever. But, the damage had already been done and the fable of the Christian firm ruined by the omnipotent Jews, headed by Rothschild and his lackeys in the stock exchange and the government, was already firmly established.<sup>84</sup>

Like the right wing Conservative Catholics, the left wing also expressed an interest in Jewish Conspiracy, especially in the form of the Rothschilds. Amongst the Socialists however, the emphasis was placed upon financial

capitalism, for which they selected Rothschild as the main image. Thus the great banking family became the symbol for all the evils of international capitalism, and with them Jews everywhere suffered, for "Rothschild" served also as a symbol of Jewry and Jewish power.

The main claim of the French Socialists was that Jews had brought about the Industrial Revolution and the vast increase in commerce and materialism which marked the beginning of the nineteenth century. In a book published in 1808, François Fourier identified commerce as "the source of all evil" and Jews as "the incarnation of commerce".<sup>85</sup> Fourier also had a particular dislike, and perhaps even envy, for a rival Socialist group based on the "new Christianity" of Saint Simon. The Saint-Simonians were few in number, but their influence in the July Monarchy, particularly in reorganising French industry and promoting railroad development, was very considerable, a fact which irritated and incensed Fourier. If this wasn't bad enough, the leading Saint-Simonians were all Jews and although most Jews associated with Saint-Simonianism abandoned Judaism for the "new Christianity" and although there was considerable criticism of this school of socialism from Jewish circles, the Fourierists considered its success as further evidence of the evil Jewish influence.<sup>86</sup>

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's thinking went even further than Fourier's. Proudhon believed that Jews, led by Rothschild, were the masters of French finance, the bringers of capitalism. He also declared on many occasions that Jews controlled all power in France.<sup>87</sup> As part of their Conspiracy the Jews had also, he claimed, "rendered the bourgeoisie, high and low, similar to them, all over Europe."<sup>88</sup> But for this he had a solution, "We should send this race back to Asia, or exterminate it."<sup>89</sup> Fourier's follower, Alphonse Toussein, editor of the antisemitic journal *Phalange*, in 1845 produced the first full-scale attack on Jews as a network of commercial conspirators against humanity, *Les Juifs: rois de l'époque: histoire de la féodalité financière*. In it he declared that Jews had achieved nothing less than the ownership of France. Indeed he said, France should be wrested from their grasp as they had wrested it from the Church, and



the military. France he declared should be returned to what it had been before 1791, and citizenship should be denied the "tribe of Satan."<sup>90</sup>

As I stated earlier, although antisemitism existed in France in the early nineteenth century in both Catholic and Socialist circles, it was on the whole latent. Thus at this point in history the Conspiracy Theory in France was confined to a few political groups and not to the populace as a whole. However, it must be noted that this Conspiracy Theory, although held by a few, was almost perfect in structure. From the Catholics we have a perfect reconstruction of the Medieval Conspiracy theory; the secret Jewish government has become a Jewish/Masonic coalition, whose purpose was to destroy Christianity and dominate the world. From the Socialists we see evidence of that plot for world domination, in that already, in their view, Jews controlled the financial world.

But, all this was very much suppressed, bubbling away below the surface, waiting for the spark that would detonate it. That this spark would come was almost certain for already by 1886 a certain air of repressed emotion pervaded France. There was, at this time, two general sources of agitation. The first was the Third Republic. This third generation offspring of the great Revolution of 1789, although more conservative than its ancestor, was strongly anticlerical, and in the minds of the traditionalists, too alien and radical. Opposition to the Third Republic came from many sides, and all were united in their conservatism, their anti-Republicanism and in varying degrees in their adherence to the Conspiracy Theory. All frowned upon Jews as a power in France, bent upon dominating French life and subverting French traditions. More ominous for the Jews, however, was the fact that they associated Jews with the hated Republic. Most Jews did in fact support the Third Republic, probably for no greater reason than they were grateful for their Emancipation by the First Republic. It was but one step to translate that Jewish support for the Republic and the myth of Jewish power in France, into a myth whereby both Jew and Republic become synonymous and where Jews could carry the blame for the other. The second source of agitation, and one perhaps more widespread than the first, was the ongoing economic crisis, caused by the collapse, in 1882,

of the *Union générale* bank. As we have seen, the crash brought financial ruin to people across the whole spectrum of society, and caused a recession that was still being felt as late as 1886. All this required an explanation, an answer to the ills that were plaguing society.

Thus, the time was right for the appearance of someone who could provide the answers. In April 1886, Edouard Drumont, the evil genius of French antisemitism, presented to France the two volume, twelve hundred page, *La France juive*. This classic of polemics, as its title suggests, was written to prove that France had fallen into the clutches of the Jews, who were plotting to destroy Christianity and thereafter to obtain world domination. Drumont appealed to every spectrum of society as he drew on every form of antisemitism possible to support his theory. He subscribed to the growing racist trends of his day, using the works of the race theorist Ernst Renan to draw comparisons between the handsome Aryan and the hooked nosed, eager fingered, and unpleasantly odorous Jew. Furthermore, he claimed that Jews were by nature spies, traitors, criminals and carriers of disease.<sup>91</sup> A staunch Catholic, he appealed to his Christian brethren by railing against the anti-clericalism of the "Jew Republic" and depicting himself as a Crusader in the campaign for the defence of Christendom.<sup>92</sup> More importantly Drumont subscribed wholeheartedly to the Conspiracy Theory. Every bad thing in French history, he claimed, was in some way the work of Jews. They were the architects of the Albigensian heresy, the root of the depravity of the Templars and the cause of all the Medieval epidemics. After asserting that every Protestant was half-Jew, and that Protestantism was only a Jewish device for re-entering Christian society, he disclosed the sly hand of Jews and Freemasons in the ejection of the Jesuits, the execution of Louis XVI, and the victorious coalition against Napoleon. Saint-Simonianism was a Jewish device to lift Jews from their moral ghetto, whilst the War of 1870 was the most successful financial speculation ever manipulated, contrived by German Jews to obtain French gold to support the new German paper currency. Thus was the history of France according to the new prophet of Conspiracy.<sup>93</sup>

It soon became plain that Drumont had touched a vital spot. Here was a nation seeking answers to the problems of its Republic and its economic crisis, and Drumont provided those answers. None of this would be a problem, if it were not for Jews. The Republic, the economy, indeed everything, had been corrupted as part of the Jewish plan. The appeal of this explanation soon became apparent. From its publication in April 1886 to the end of that same year *La France juive* sold more than seventy thousand copies;<sup>94</sup> within twelve months it had run to some fourteen editions.<sup>95</sup> Drumont became a public hero, opening the way for overt forms of antisemitism. Indeed, within two weeks of the appearance of his book, *Le Pilon*, the most violent of the anti-republican newspapers of that era, which had, from the beginning, evinced strong traces of antisemitism, made its first appearance. Drumont followed the success of *La France juive* with three more books, a series of pamphlets, the foundation of the Antisemitic League in 1889, and finally the establishment of his own newspaper, *La Libre Parole*, all of which were devoted to his original goal of focusing censure upon the Jewish nation and their supposed ally, the Republic. His cause was greatly helped by the Panama Canal scandal in which hundreds of thousands of investors were ruined financially and which involved some Jews, among many others, in bribery. Drumont depicted the whole scandal as part of a Judeo-German plot, another chapter in the "myth of Jewish power".

Drumont thus brought antisemitism, and with it the belief in a Jewish World Conspiracy, back into popular consciousness. The people needed something to believe in, something to explain their misfortunes, and the Conspiracy Theory provided just the explanation they needed. The depth of this belief and its results were soon to become tragically apparent.

In September 1894 a memorandum was discovered by French intelligence indicating the sale of French military secrets to Germany and Italy. The following month Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the sole Jewish member of the French general staff, was arrested and tried behind closed doors, for the crime of treason. By a unanimous verdict he was found guilty, stripped of his military rank and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island. It is true that in the

beginning, as Marcel Thomas, one of the most authoritative historians of the Dreyfus Case writes:-

*It would be impossible, without a great deal of speculation, to determine exactly to what extent the fact that Dreyfus was Jewish made the scale tip the wrong way.<sup>96</sup>*

But, the situation can be gauged from that moment, in November 1894, when it hit the newspapers, until the end, some twelve years later. The gist of the story was expressed by Theodor Herzl, who, as a journalist attended the trial and saw the very public humiliation of Dreyfus being stripped of his rank. He noted, "They didn't shriek 'Down with Dreyfus!' but 'Down with the Jews!'"<sup>97</sup>

Indeed, the Dreyfus case went far beyond the question of one man's act of treason, because that one man was Jewish, and in him they saw not one man, not Alfred Dreyfus, but an archetype for the whole nation, and in his alleged crime, the confirmation that a Jewish Conspiracy did exist. The whole situation was ridiculous, as the contemporary journalist Saint-Genest, the military specialist of *Le Figaro*, pointed out:-

*There are 40,000 officers in France. This captain is merely one of these 40,000 . . . If he had been Catholic or a freethinker, he would have been considered an isolated, monstrous case, like those found throughout history, and the next day the public would have gone on to other things . . . whereas now in France everybody talks of one man, of the treason of one man, because this man is Jewish.*

*Well, before he is judged, I must say once again that all this is mad. Dreyfus is nothing, the trial is nothing . . . What is serious is the spectacle we present to Europe.<sup>98</sup>*

Few, however, are the contemporaries who did not succumb to the antisemitic frenzy of the day. Indeed, in the same newspaper Léon Daudet writing on the ceremony which saw Dreyfus degraded from the army, crowed, "Dreyfus plotted our disaster. But his crime has exalted us."<sup>99</sup> Likewise Jean Jaurès, succumbed to the collective psychosis and insinuated that Jewish money probably led astray Dreyfus's military judges.<sup>100</sup> Edouard Drumont,

unsurprisingly enough, also took up the tale of the conspiratorial Jews, keeping it alive in the pages of *La Libre Parole*, long after the trial had been forgotten. After all, Drumont had opened his newspaper with a polemic against the traitorous Jewish penetration of the army, and had not Dreyfus vindicated this argument? Furthermore, said Drumont, Dreyfus was just the tip of the iceberg. Jews were scheming to deliver France to her German foe, and the many true Frenchmen who consorted with Jews, pandering to their wealth, should be branded equally as enemies of the state.<sup>101</sup>

Why, then was all this important? After all, Dreyfus, whether tried as a Jew or not, had been found guilty of treason and sentenced accordingly. The simple reason was that Dreyfus was innocent, and this was the most classic and public example of both the scapegoat syndrome, and the paranoid character of the type of antisemitism which finds its form in the Conspiracy Theory. Furthermore, from 1897 onwards, the whole spectacle, as Poliakov points out, "of a cold civil war, revolving around the fate of a Jew, a war spiced up for the majority of anti-Dreyfusards by 'the pleasure of feeling in the right against everybody'"<sup>102</sup> was played out before the whole world.

In November 1897, the first dramatic development came, with the identity of the real traitor, Major Esterhazy. But, since he was not Jewish only a group of intellectuals believed in his guilt. On the popular level the anti-Dreyfusards with their rabid antisemitism and their conviction of a Jewish Conspiracy to undermine France, continued to hold sway. The fable of the "Jewish syndicate" in possession of all the gold of the world had gained a substantial following. Other thunderbolts followed, *The J'accuse* of Emile Zola and his conviction in a criminal court, the trial and acquittal of Esterhazy, and the arrest of his accuser Colonel Picquart, all of which only served to strengthen the anti-Dreyfus beliefs of the majority of Frenchmen. Of course the affair had to come to an end, especially after it was revealed beyond doubt that much of the evidence against Dreyfus had been forged, and the forger, Colonel Henry, sealed his confession with suicide. But, even then it was an uphill battle, with many in the anti-Dreyfus camp, Drumont among them, claiming that if there

was a forgery, it was a patriotic forgery and Henry was a martyr of their cause.<sup>103</sup>

Passions became heated and open civil war threatened to engulf France as a victory for Dreyfus seemed almost inevitable. However, a compromise was reached. Dreyfus, white-haired, gaunt and old beyond his thirty-nine years was released from his colonial prison and retried. He was convicted of the same crime a second time, but pardoned due to extenuating circumstances. Dreyfus was thus still considered a guilty man and it was 1906 before he was fully able to clear his name and resume a place in the army.<sup>104</sup>

In the end it seemed that everything worked out well, and yet there was a price to be paid for victory, and it was the Jews who paid it. Antisemitism became institutionalised, and antisemitic leagues flourished. Moreover, the victory of the Dreyfusards established in the minds of many Frenchmen that the Jewish Conspiracy was an incontrovertible fact. Moreover, it was in the midst of this period, in the years between 1897-99, when the Dreyfus affair was at its height that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the bible of those who hold to the Conspiracy Theory, was drafted. To say that the situation in France did in some way contribute to it would be an understatement, especially when we realise, that the original draft probably hailed from Paris during this period.

## ii . The Reaction in Germany

Whilst the Revolution in France brought about an Emancipation that was swift and sudden and marked by a lack of overt antisemitism, the situation in Germany was vastly different. Emancipation came to Germany and Western Europe as part of French influence during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, often as part of the French conquest. For that reason it was anything but welcomed by the majority of Germans. Whilst it should be noted that this "Emancipation" was by no means on a grand scale, and was largely confined to a repeal of those laws which, from considerations of economic policy, restricted Jewish freedom of movement, it came as a shock to the patriotism of not only many contemporaries, but future generations of Germans, who came to regard it as a measure imposed by "foreign tyranny".<sup>105</sup> Thus

many opposed the process of Emancipation and this left the Jews of Germany with a long struggle for their rights of freedom, which would last well over a century.

The anti-Jewish reaction of German patriots to the process of Emancipation in Germany was almost immediate. For example in 1803 Karl Wilhelm Grattenauer produced a pamphlet entitled *Wider die Juden* (*Against the Jews*) in which, among the usual collection of general antisemitic accusations, he raised anew the spectre of a Jewish Conspiracy for world domination.<sup>106</sup> The pamphlet sold some 13, 000 copies in one year and found spurious evidence in Napoleon's calling of a modern Sanhedrin some four years later.

The patriotic reaction to the Napoleonic invasion resulted in a wave of Romantic Nationalism in Germany, a nationalism that was in striking contrast to the message of universal liberation proclaimed by the French conquerors. The new form of nationalism concentrated on the cultivation of unique and authentic German roots. It disparaged intellectual abstraction, seeking instead to cling to real life; to vent emotions, especially those of the people; to emphasise the rootedness of the people in the landscape of the homeland; and to encourage a genuine German creativity. Its mood and ideology would, by the end of the century, evolve into the Volkish movement. The awakening of Romantic Nationalism, also brought about a rejection of everything considered un-German. It objected to the influence of the materialist Western society, and, because of its emphasis on the past, rejected nearly all change and innovation.<sup>107</sup> In his polemical essay, *Germanomanie*, written in 1815, Saul Asher provides us with a credible contemporary description of Romantic Nationalist ideology:

*Germany, it is said, has since time immemorial been bequeathed to a people that is distinct from all others in character, mode of thinking, language and customs. It is the duty of every true German to restore this individuality, undermined by the passage of time and the course of events. Thus the primary condition thereof is to remove from German soil all things alien, brought in from the outside, and to declare Germany at the same time a closed state.*<sup>108</sup>

The notion of what is "alien" to Germanic culture became a central theme of the Romantic Nationalist Movement. Hatred of the Napoleonic national oppression found expression not only in anti-French feelings but also in anti-Jewish, for every alien who might be supposed to exercise an un-Germanic influence was looked upon as an enemy. This nationalism with its motto "one state, one nation" aimed its venom at the Jewish inhabitants of the state, even if they had resided there for generations and, like the already assimilated Jews, were fervent patriots. Likewise, the reaction against the free thought of the Age of Enlightenment also found an anti-Jewish expression, since it was considered that as Jews had benefited from Enlightenment ideology, they must have been behind it all along.<sup>109</sup>

Whilst on the eve of the French Revolution it seemed that Jew-hatred in Europe would gradually give way to tolerance, following the fall of Napoleon that promise was left all but in tatters. The rights accorded Jews in Germany during the Napoleonic conquest were reduced and effectively revoked. The fact that those rights had been granted through the agency of the French conqueror had marked the imposed Emancipation with a certain stigma. The antisemitic reaction which broke out almost immediately effectively destroyed the work of Emancipation in Germany. Indeed, at the time Germany overflowed with malicious and libellous anti-Jewish pamphlets and became an extremely vivifying source of antisemitism for its neighbours. Hatred of Jews became the height of fashion.

Among those writers hostile to Jews two deserve special mention with regard to the promotion of the Conspiracy Theory. The conservative Berlin professor of history Friedrich Rühs, an adherent to the theory of the Christian state, called for a return to Medieval Jewish restrictions. Jews, he claimed, were nothing more than a nation of extortioners ever conspiring against Germans. They ought, he recommended, to wear special badges on their clothes in order that true Germans might recognise "the Hebrew enemy". But, he conceded, baptism would make a Jew eligible for German citizenship.<sup>110</sup> This, however, was not the view of the Heidelberg professor J. F. Fries. Led astray, as he expressed it, by the Humanism of the eighteenth century, Germany had



committed a grave error in admitting Jews into civil life. Only those people who saw in Jews a nation hostile to Germany and had regarded them as corrupters of the people and stealers of their bread, had been guided by a true instinctive feeling. Indeed, he warned, if Jews were not checked soon their conspiratorial nature was such that the "the sons of the Christian houses would soon be drudges in those of Jews."<sup>111</sup> Such theoretical disputes were but faint echoes of a much wider stormy public debate which, between 1812 and 1819, was marked by violent outbursts, culminating in the Hep-Hep riots of 1819.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, among German students Romantic Nationalism expressed itself in a revolutionary movement which was marked by an intellectual and emotional hatred of Jews and demanded their total extirpation from German life. In the outbursts of many of these revolutionaries we can see both the importance of the Conspiracy Theory and, as Rose observes, view "shocking glimpses of the real ancestry of Nazi antisemitism."<sup>113</sup> For example, as one tortured soul puts it:

*The shameful confederation against Prussia which, as everybody knows, was made possible by the typically treacherous Jewish espionage, makes me feel as if limbs were torn from my own body . . . I now swear that my whole life will be dedicated to the resurrection of the Reich.*<sup>114</sup>

During the 1830's a new liberal mood swept through Europe. The young liberal generation of that day embraced whole-heartedly the ideas of equality, liberty and philanthropy which the laws directed against Jews appeared to challenge. The struggle against traditional attitudes became, at the same time, a struggle for Jewish Emancipation. Everywhere the educated middle class took the lead in championing the Jew's cause. The burgher who had once looked upon the Jew as an odious usurper intent on encroaching upon his rights, in the spirit of liberalism now looked upon the Jew as an ally against absolutism and feudalism. The fight for Jewish Emancipation became a fight for the sacred cause of religious liberty. By the end of the 1860s Emancipation was accomplished, broadly speaking, all over central and Western Europe: in Austria in 1867, in the North German Confederation in 1869 and after the unification of the empire it was extended to the whole of Germany.

The spirit of Enlightenment marked by the liberal call for Emancipation in Europe also found a second outlet far more ominous for Jews. In Germany of the late 1830s and early 1840s radical circles began to place great emphasis on the critique of religion and the Scriptures. Their aim was to examine the basic properties of Christianity and to penetrate through to its very essence. Many sought to derive a new philosophy of religion, a philosophy based more on atheism than Christianity. Of course there was nothing new in this; the English Deists and the French Materialists had already undertaken similar studies, but what is important about the studies in Germany is that they altered and redefined the Conspiracy Theory, taking it from its Christian roots and giving it a firm footing in secular society. Foremost among these groups were those known as the Young Hegelians, who devoted attention to the study of both Christianity and its relationship to Judaism and to Judaism in its own right.<sup>115</sup>

The early works which came from the Young Hegelian school still relied very much on the old Christian tradition concerning the Jewish Conspiracy Theory - namely that Jews literally indulged in ritual murder. First among these literalists was probably the eccentric poet and theologian Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800-75). Daumer, caught up in the spirit of the time, sought to abolish the reign of Christianity and replace it by that of German philosophy. Although Daumer claimed a certain affinity with the Jewish religion,<sup>116</sup> in the course of his attack on Christianity, Judaism, as the parent of Christianity, became the first victim of his vendetta. In *Sabbath, Moloch and Tabu* (1839) Daumer concluded that the Sabbath was instituted as a day of sacrifice to the ancient Canaanite god Moloch,<sup>117</sup> who had in the course of time become disguised as Jehovah. Indeed, he claimed, the ritual had been spread by ancient Jews to lands as far away as Tahiti and Australia. The Trojan War, he likewise maintained, had been a "struggle of enlightenment and humanity against Moloch and the regime of semitic-oriental priests."<sup>118</sup>

It was the Damascus Affair,<sup>119</sup> however, that really prompted Daumer into action. In April 1842 he excitedly informed his friend Ludwig Feuerbach that on exploring the cellars of the old synagogue at Nuremberg he had found

an underground oven and human bones. There was he felt a clear correspondence between these remains and those relics of Christian human sacrifice now to be found in the city. To be fair to Daumer, his letter was as damaging to Christians as it was to Jews,<sup>120</sup> but ultimately his letter promised to publish "unheard of, incredible things" about how

*The Jews slaughtered their own and gentile children, about the sacrifice of rabbis and the worship of their remains, about the drinking of human blood at the festival of Purim . . . no one has an inkling of the cannibalism in the Talmud.*<sup>121</sup>

Daumer divulged these secrets in 1842 in his grotesque work, *The Fire and Moloch Cult of the Ancient Hebrews*, which began by asserting the truth of the Damascus Blood Libel, which he claimed was evidence of an enduring Jewish ritual murder cult. Indeed, he continues, the Jewish tradition of ceasing movement on the Sabbath symbolised the destruction of life by Moloch/Jehovah, the devourer of the first born. Moses, and the prophets had tried to replace the sacrifice of the firstborn by inventing the Passover festival and replacing the sacrifice of humans with that of animals. But, their efforts had been resisted by King Solomon and his descendants and the cult had survived, as the sacrifice of Christian children at Passover proved. Daumer was convinced that among Jews there still existed a predisposition towards the barbarism of the Old Testament, and he warned his readers that the cult's persistence,

*Can be doubted only by those unacquainted with the history and character of this race, or those blinded by prejudice and self-interest . . .*

*One must seriously consider that [modern] Jews, even if not Jews by belief or morality, remain Jews by ancestry.*<sup>122</sup>

In his sequel *The Secrets of Ancient Christianity* (1847) Daumer, reiterated that the Medieval Blood Libels were rooted in fact, but tried to show his lack of hatred for Jews by pointing out that most of the Jewish nation had not been involved, and just a small sect had continued to "perpetuate the old cannibalistic horrors."<sup>123</sup> Indeed, he goes on, Jesus himself had become leader

of this sect and the Last Supper had been a cannibalistic meal.<sup>124</sup> In this light the mysteries of Christianity thus become clear:

*It follows. . . that the idea of the human victim, sacrificed to God, is the fundamental idea of Christianity. . . . How so? You no longer know therefore that it teaches the bloody sacrifice of the body of its God? Once at Golgotha in the original, and an infinite number of times in imitation?<sup>125</sup>*

Thus it was for Daumer, that Christianity too became the victim of his bloody accusations. All of Christian history he saw as somehow part of this cult which had originated within Judaism. The Medieval blood accusations, "the psychological and physical mortifications, the inquisitions of the orthodox faith, the scaffolds, stakes, Saint Bartholomew massacres, trials for sorcery, massacres of the Jews,"<sup>126</sup> all pointed to the Christian sect of human sacrifice. Even the Pied Piper of Hamelin became, under Daumer's pen, a purveyor of flesh to the Church.<sup>127</sup>

To be fair to Daumer he seems to have criticised both Jews and Christians equally in his two books. In fact, if we are being honest, in his second book he seems to have criticised Jews only when the nature of the task made it inevitable. Indeed, in this work the original cannibal Jews became the Christian sect headed by the cannibal Jesus. Whereas the enlightened Jews, rejecters of the bloody sect, are headed by Judas, whose betrayal of Jesus, Daumer claims, was prompted by his disgust and horror over what he had witnessed at the Last Supper.<sup>128</sup> In this light Daumer's letter to Feuerbach is also interesting; at first it may seem like just another attack upon Jews, but it attacks Christians equally, and furthermore, the only praise it contains is for a Jewish sect.

*Amongst the Jewish sects, as far as I know them, the Karaites are pure of all atrocities, and worthy folk. But the Rabbinites and Talmudists, the Sabbatians who border on Christianity, and the Hassidic sects who are so numerous in the Slav lands, have their bloody mysteries. . . .Christianity also, which is a kind of Sabbatianism and Hassidism of earlier times, long performed human sacrifices. . . .The bones of the sacrificial victims were preserved and*

*worshipped in the churches as relics, as was the case with us in Nuremberg. . .*<sup>129</sup>

Daumer at most can be summed up as a misled eccentric, whose concern with ritual murder did not stem out of hatred of Jews, but more out of his search for a religious revolution that would destroy those blood-thirsty enemies of mankind, traditional theology and religion. The same excuses, however, cannot be made for his pupil Friedrich Wilhelm Ghillany (1807-76). Ghillany, who had once been a theologian and pastor in Nuremberg purposely used the Moloch/Jehovah thesis in a political campaign of revolutionary Jew-hatred. In his eight-hundred page *The Human Sacrifices of the Ancient Hebrews* (1842) Ghillany asserted contemporary Jews committed murder in pursuit of "their religion of hatred for all humanity."<sup>130</sup> Indeed he warns his readers

*The blood accusation against the Jews is taken by modern people for a Medieval fairy-tale . . . In fact the rite is the prescribed religion of the ancient Hebrews.*<sup>131</sup>

The Old Testament, Ghillany argued, consisted of barely concealed rules and justifications for human sacrifices. The Jewish Jehovah, whom he maintained had no connection with the loving father of Christianity, demanded nothing more than the destruction of all other religions and peoples, and in his image Judaism is a religion of hatred and its adherents haters of humanity. Passover, he claimed, was a time when Jews sacrificed non-Jews in order to get the blood they needed to make the Passover bread.

Many Jews and non-Jews alike were outraged by Ghillany's work, but this did not deter him from applying his theories to the Jewish Question of the day. Indeed, in two contributions to the Bruno Bauer controversy of 1843-44,<sup>132</sup> he insisted that their abominations and human sacrifices barred Jews from civil emancipation.

*How can political rights be granted to such men, who adhere so rigidly to old inhuman prejudices, who regard us as impure, like serfs and dogs, just as their ancestors did, even if they do not flaunt it in our face.*<sup>133</sup>

Should Jews be granted power they would, he claimed in his first essay,<sup>134</sup> slaughter all non-Jews, as their messianic hope rested on the premise that Jews would one day dominate the world. Indeed, Ghillany pointed out, the recent ritual murders in both Damascus and Germany suggests that their messianic age had already begun.

Rights, said Ghillany, should only be granted Jews if they abandoned their human sacrifices and their religion of hatred of humanity. However, in his second essay, Ghillany expressed the belief that Jews would never change. Reformed Judaism he dismissed as a contradiction in terms, for these Jews still worshipped the god of vengeance and hatred for humanity, and so still retained the same hatred for humanity as all other Jews. In his first essay, Ghillany put forward a solution to the Jewish Question :

*We must either help them towards the land of their fathers, or fuse completely with them. . . . But it would be best for Europe if they were to emigrate . . . to Palestine . . . or to America.*<sup>135</sup>

One year later he put his case more vehemently. At no matter what cost to Germany Jews should leave "and so free our fatherland of its foreign element" and from the " revolting oriental stamp that cannot ever be in accord with the Germanic."<sup>136</sup>

Thus the Blood Libel in the guise of philosophical inquiry entered into secular society. The literalist school held that Jews had remained acolytes of Moloch and therefore still practised human sacrifice, and furthermore, had passed this cult on to the early Christians. However, this was not the only path that the secularised Blood Libel developed along. The second came from the radical socialist movement which claimed that Jews had transformed their cult of actual blood sacrifice into a metaphorical shedding of blood. Human life blood had now been replaced by money, the life blood of society. In other words the cult of Moloch had been transformed into the cult of Mammon.<sup>137</sup>

One of the first expressions of this development came from the unlikely source of "the communist rabbi" and the founder of Zionism, Moses Hess (1812-75). Hess was part of the Young Hegelian movement, but unlike his fellow revolutionaries he was moved by profound Jewish sympathies which put

him slightly at odds with his fellows.<sup>138</sup> For example whereas the Damascus Affair had driven Daumer and Ghillany into a reiteration of the Medieval Blood Libel, for Hess it brought a painful confrontation with his own Jewish identity.<sup>139</sup> It is odd, therefore, that just three years later in an essay entitled "Philosophy of Action",<sup>140</sup> in which Hess specifically identifies bourgeois society and egoism with *Judentum*, that he should set his attack in the context of "Molochism". In the aftermath of the Damascus Affair this had become one of the most emotionally charged themes of Jew-hatred. Yet not only did Hess use it, he also joined Daumer and Ghillany in identifying Jehovah with Moloch and asserted that this god was still active in modern life, both literally and symbolically:

*The essence of religion and politics consists of absorbing the real life of the real individual by means of an abstract universal that is in reality nothing. . . . That is the conception and also the history of this noble pair of sisters, religion and politics. And Moloch is their archetype. Human sacrifices form everywhere the keynote of divine and state service. "Absolute spirit," which celebrates its realisation in the "state," is an imitation of the Christian God who allowed his firstborn son to be crucified. . . . The Christian God is an imitation of the Jewish Moloch-Jehovah to whom was sacrificed the firstborn to conciliate Him; with Him the *juste-milieu* Age of Judaism came to terms by means of money, the firstborn being "redeemed" and animals instead of men being sacrificed. **The original slaughtered sacrifice was everywhere man** and, if he later sought to be "delivered" or "redeemed," yet he remained sacrificed in a figurative sense as long as religion and politics existed and is just so sacrificed today.<sup>141</sup>*

There is in this statement an important double transformation. It is not just a matter of the humanitarian development of human sacrifice being replaced by money or animal sacrifice, but, rather that literal human sacrifice has been replaced by the sacrifice of humanity itself to money. Moloch has become Mammon, blood has become money.

In *The Essence of Money*, written in 1843 but not published until 1845, Hess took the money-blood theme to gruesome extremes. He characterised the "Christian world" of bourgeois Europe as a mass of alienated, egotistic men living off the metaphorical "blood" of money.<sup>142</sup> Not only this, but unable to resist the seduction of the radical critique of Judaism, he went on, via another bloody set of metaphors to characterise Christian Europe as essentially "Jewish":

*We find ourselves at the apex of the social animal world; we are now social beasts of prey. . . . We are no longer herbivores like our gentle ancestors. . . . We are bloodsuckers. . . . Man enjoys his life in the form of money in a brutal, bestial, cannibalistic way. Money is social blood, but alienated spilled blood.*

*In the natural history of the social animal world the Jews had the world-historical mission of developing the beast of prey in mankind and they have now completed their task. The mystery of Judaism and Christianity has been revealed in the modern Jewish-Christian peddler-world. The mystery of the blood of Christ, like that of the ancient Jewish reverence for blood, appears now finally unveiled as the mystery of the beast of prey.<sup>143</sup>*

Of course, as Rose suggests, Hess was probably not writing out of malice, but rather out of a somewhat misguided attempt to rescue Jews from the blood libel, which had been brought to public attention by the Damascus Affair.<sup>144</sup> He was trying to show that Jewish interests lie, not in Christian blood, but in money, the metaphorical blood. Unfortunately, Hess chose to blindly evoke one of the most anti-Jewish metaphors of Christian history, namely that Jews were to blame for shedding the blood of Christ. Furthermore, even though Hess intended the thrust of his argument to be against the capitalism of Christians as well as of Jews, he carelessly singles out Jews for special mention: "beasts of prey, bloodsuckers, Jews, money-wolves."<sup>145</sup> Ultimately Hess's defence of Jews did them more harm than good as he gave to world the secularised, blood libel, the money libel.



With Karl Marx (1818-83) the money libel reached its final form. But, whilst Marx's *On the Jewish Question* parallels Hess's *Essence of Money* on the theme of the "Jewish peddler-world," Marx is more reserved on the matter of "blood" and refrains from the vivid imagery of his fellow communist. Even in 1847 when commenting enthusiastically on Daumer's book on Jewish/Christian human sacrifice, Marx emphasised its anti-Christian significance rather than dwelling on its Jewish aspect. This, however, is not an indication that Marx was in any way pro-Jewish, on the contrary Marx's antisemitism ran deeply indeed, despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that he never completely escaped the fact of his Jewish ancestry.<sup>146</sup>

Marx's antisemitism found expression in a two part essay written in 1843 in response to Bruno Bauer's publication that year of *The Capacity of Present-day Jews and Christians to Become Free* and the reissue of his *The Jewish Question*. Marx approved of and accepted completely the savagely antisemitic context of Bauer's essays, and he quoted with approval Bauer's maliciously exaggerated assertion that "The Jew determines the fate of the whole [Austrian] empire by his money power . . . [and] decides the destiny of Europe."<sup>147</sup> But where he differed was in rejecting Bauer's belief that the anti-social aspect of the Jewish nature was religious in origin and could be remedied by tearing the Jew away from his religion. In Marx's view the evil was social and economic in origin. "Let us not," he wrote, "seek the secret of the Jew in his religion, but let us seek the secret of religion in the real Jew."<sup>148</sup> What, he asked, "is the profane basis of Judaism? *Practical* needs, self-interest. What is the worldly cult of the Jew? *Huckstering*. What is his worldly god? *Money*."<sup>149</sup> Jews had gradually conveyed this "practical" religion to society. Indeed, said Marx, Bauer and his supporters were wrong in assuming that Christianity had abolished Judaism and now ruled society; it was rather that Judaism, having subsumed Christianity, through it governs society.

*Christianity issued from Judaism. It has now been re-absorbed into Judaism. From the beginning the Christian was the theorising Jew; Consequently, the Jew is the practical Christian. And the practical Christian has become a Jew again. . . . It was only*

*then that Judaism could attain universal domination.*<sup>150</sup>

Thus, in the guise of Christianity Mammon, the god of Israel had become the fetish of bourgeois society.

*What was the essential basis of the Jewish religion? Practical need, egoism. . . . These are the principals of **civil society**. . . . Money is the jealous God of Israel before whom no other god may stand. . . . Money has robbed the whole world of man as well as of nature, of its proper worth. Money is the alienated essence of man's labour and life, and this alien essence dominates him as he worships it.*<sup>151</sup>

The Jew, thus, in Marx's view rules all of society by his "essence" or "spirit". Much of Marx's persuasive power depends on the use of the term *Judentum*, a purposely ambiguous word that represents, at times, commercial society and at other times the economic spirit of the Jew. Thus the distinction of the Jew as real and as a metaphor are intentionally blurred, as the following passages demonstrates.

*The Jew has emancipated himself in a Jewish way, not only by acquiring financial power, but also because both through him and without him **money** has become a world power and the practical Jewish spirit has become the practical spirit of the Christian peoples. . . .*

*Not only in the Pentateuch and the Talmud but also in the present-day society we find the essence of the modern Jew . . . not only as the narrowness of the Jew, but as the Jewish narrowness of society.*<sup>152</sup>

In Marx's *On the Jewish Question* we see the foundation of a highly secularised form of the Conspiracy Theory. Jews become conspirators, not so much by their actions but by their very being. By his use of the term "spirit" Marx ensured that his readers viewed all Jews both as capitalists and as capitalism personified. Thus, every Jew, from the banker to the beggar became a capitalist because he possessed the Jewish "spirit". However, in Marx's

opinion this "spirit" could be overcome and both Jews and society could find redemption.

*As soon as society succeeds in abolishing the empirical essence of Judaism - huckstering and its conditions - the Jew becomes impossible. . . . The social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from Judaism.<sup>153</sup>*

Richard Wagner (1813-1883) likewise went on to develop the theme of Conspiracy being part of the very "spirit" of Jews. For Wagner, however, the issue wasn't merely confined to capitalism, for he saw in the Jewish spirit an attempt to take control of all spheres of life, especially that of his much loved world of art.

Many of Wagner's anti-Jewish ideas were developed in the period following the failure of the revolutions that had swept Europe during 1848. Wagner had been a committed revolutionary,<sup>154</sup> and indeed, had also supported the cause of Jewish Emancipation. However, following the revolutionary collapse, Wagner was one of those, who in the climate of pessimism shifted from the radical Left, to the radical Right. Disappointed with the revolution and its goals, he began to express ideals infused, as Kulka points out, "with a romantic longing for regeneration through a return to the values of the past, and a rejection of the impact of rationalism."<sup>155</sup> In fact, what Wagner had returned to was the Romantic Nationalism which had appeared during the period of the Napoleonic Wars. In this conception the Jew became totally alien, an un-Germanic outsider, a parasite and what is more, in Wagner's writings, these traits became racial, and therefore unredeemable.<sup>156</sup>

Central to Wagner's ideology was the belief that Jews constituted a corrupting force which had caused the disintegration and decay of the organic wholeness of life. Nowhere was this better demonstrated than in the world of music:

*The Jews could never take possession of this art, until that was to be exposed in it which they now demonstrably have brought to light - its inner incapacity for life. So long as the separate art of music had a real organic life-need in it, down to the*

*epochs of Mozart and Beethoven, there was nowhere to be found a Jew composer: it was impossible for an element entirely foreign to that living organism to take part in the formative stages of that life. Only when a body's inner death is manifest, do outside elements win the power of lodgement in it - yet merely to destroy it. Then indeed that body's flesh dissolves into a swarming colony of insect-life: but who, in looking on that body's self, would hold it still for living?<sup>157</sup>*

For Wagner then, the Jew is a parasite upon society, a corrupter of purity, whose corruption has manifested itself as the Judaization of society and this Judaization is evident everywhere.<sup>158</sup> Through this process, Jewish capitalism has taken over society, as Wagner lamented:

*[All] is turned to money by the Jew. Who thinks of noticing that the guileless looking scrap of paper is slimy with the blood of countless generations?<sup>159</sup>*

Wagner also held Jewry responsible for the emergence of the modern press and believed that through it they controlled public opinion, literature (on which they had inflicted their sterile style), and had even undertaken a personal campaign against him following the publication of his anti-Jewish essay *Judaism in Music*.<sup>160</sup>

One could say that Wagner identified the "spirit" of Jews and all Jewish actions with the process of modernisation, although not in the sense of progress, but as an expression of man's decadence and subjugation. During the 1870's Wagner took this theme to its ultimate end. The Jewish "spirit" progressed from the abstract to the actual, as the term "spirit" gave way to the more racial term, "blood". In the essay which accompanied Wagner's *Parsifal*, he identified the Jewish corruption of the purity of the Aryan Christian world with the bloodiness of war, the glorification of the state, the "daily bloodbath of animals . . . for luncheon feasting upon the limbs of murdered household animals," and the purchase of land by money in the bourgeois state.<sup>161</sup> True redemption from these Jewish horrors meant the racial redemption of Aryan blood itself to its original purity. German blood had to be cleansed of its three contaminants, loveless marriage, the eating of meat, "and above all the degenerative mixing of

the heroic blood of noblest races with that of former eaters of humans, now trained to be the business-agents of society."<sup>162</sup> The Jews are the obstacle to human redemption, not just metaphorically, but by reasons of their physical blood which, as Wagner pointed out in *Know Thyself*, never fades no matter how mixed.

Thus Wagner made the idea of the Jewish Conspiracy to corrupt society, not only an abstract thing caused by the Jewish "spirit", but a very real physical trait. The Jews had in effect poisoned the Aryan world with their own blood.

During the last part of the nineteenth century antisemitism in Germany reached a new peak as Jew-hatred entered the political arena. The year was 1879. Germany had only just realised her unity. It had taken three wars -against Denmark Austria and France - plus all the skill and lack of scruple of Bismarck to unite the kingdoms, principalities, dukedoms, free states, and so on, into which Germany had been divided. By this time Jewish Emancipation had also been quietly achieved throughout the German empire,<sup>163</sup> and it seemed that anti-Jewish sentiments were at last waning. However, in 1879 antisemitism reached new heights, and the period of seeming calm was but a period of incubation for political and social antisemitism,<sup>164</sup> an antisemitism that would base itself firmly on theories of Jewish Conspiracy.

Trouble began early in the 1870's with the onset of a cycle of economic crises which continued intermittently until 1896. In 1873 there was an appalling crash which brought about the failure of many financial enterprises, and ushered in the great depression which marked the Bismarck years.<sup>165</sup> It was easy to blame Jews for the economic disaster, because they had, after all, partaken, along with everyone else, in the phoney economic boom which had preceded the crash. There was also a link between Jewish interests and the political and economic liberalism of the system in which the catastrophe happened. Moreover, there was a growing reaction among the general public to the Emancipation of Jews. Many felt that the obvious successes enjoyed by Jews had been at the expense of non-Jews. This all rendered the Jew the ideal scapegoat.

One of the first articulate voices to sound this discontent was that of the journalist, Wilhelm Marr.<sup>166</sup> In 1873, almost immediately after the crash, Marr's pamphlet *The Victory of Judaism Over Germanism* appeared. Its whole thesis was contained in the title: Jewish dominance in Germany was not a danger to be feared for the future, it was already fact. The Jews had conquered Germany.

*You have elected the foreign rulers into your parliaments, you are making them legislators and judges, you are making them dictators of the financial system, you have surrendered the press to them . . . The Jewish people is flourishing with its talent and you are beaten.*<sup>167</sup>

Marr goes on to develop an argument which, though deliberately avoiding many of the traditional clichés about Jews, succeeds in frightening the reader with the spectre of this cunning, rootless, worldly-wise race, condemned to wander, and destined to conquer wherever it can.<sup>168</sup>

Marr was among the first of those who at this time placed their antisemitism firmly in the racist camp. Marr's reasons were simple. Emancipation had been justified on the grounds of religious tolerance, and any antisemitism would thus face the charge of religious prejudice, whereas biological racial charges could be considered, in the wake of Darwin's theories, "scientific".<sup>169</sup> Marr was joined in his crusade by Otto Glagau, who in 1874 wrote a series of antisemitic articles for the literary magazine *Die Gartenlaube*, entitled "The Stock Exchange and Speculation Fraud in Berlin". In these articles Glagau claimed that through their enterprises Jews were nothing more than parasites, seeking to establish racial domination over Germans:

*It knows nothing any more but trade, and of that merely haggling and usury. It does not work but makes others work for it, it haggles and speculates with the manual and mental products of others. Its centre is the stock exchange . . . As an alien tribe it fastens itself on the German people and sucks their marrow.*<sup>170</sup>

This extremist form of racial antisemitism made Conspiracy a Jewish racial trait. Jews were depicted as a malevolent nomadic race, bent on imposing its racial

domination over Germany, through the banks, the stock exchange, the state and through political parties. This theme was to be echoed again and again in the last part of the century. Indeed, in 1881 the philosophical extremist, Eugen Dühring pointed out that "The Jewish skull is no thinker's skull - all the time the Lord God and business affairs have claimed all the space in it."<sup>171</sup> It was, he claimed a question of "racial honour" to rid all public offices, business, and finance of this "incomparably inferior race."<sup>172</sup>

German antisemitism, however, truly entered the political world in 1879, when chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) abandoned the liberal coalition that had brought him to power, in favour of a conservative policy. This move heralded far reaching changes for both Germany and Jews. The discontent brought on by the crisis of 1873 hardened opposition to economic liberalism and weakened the National Liberal Party. Concurrently, a conservative alliance was formed of the haute bourgeoisie, the aristocracy and the Catholic Centre, all of whom were staunch Jew-haters. These conservative parties, along with the Catholic press, attributed the financial crisis in Germany to a Jewish plot directed at wrecking the German economy. Moreover, the National Liberals went into decline and began to recant their traditional principles, which in turn was interpreted as a reaction against Jews, who were identified with liberal tendencies in the economy and politics. Blame for the failure of liberalism was placed firmly upon those Jews, who had been among its chief supporters.

By 1879 Germany had reached a crisis of political and moral disorientation, and of course extreme economic distress. The common man was searching for a defender against the malevolent conspiring Jew, and that defender came in the shape of the Court Preacher of Berlin, Adolf Stöcker. In 1878 Stöcker founded the Christian Social Worker's Party, a Protestant conservative organisation, through which he hoped to agitate for social reform. At first Stöcker's party gained little support, but following the political reforms of 1879 and his change to an antisemitic platform, he began to attract a number of lower middle class conservatives. Stöcker described Jews as harmful to the realm, of alien nature and more influential than was warranted by their

number.<sup>173</sup> Stöcker, himself was a relatively moderate antisemite, but it was he above all who made the Jewish Question and the Conspiracy Theory a common topic of debate in German speaking countries, and opened the way for other political antisemitic groups to follow.

In Austria Georg Ritter von Schönerer took up Stöcker's mantle, adding to the relatively mild conservative antisemitism a tone of racism. Schönerer, a former liberal, founded the German National Party, an antisemitic, racist and national socialist party, which stood firmly on three foundations: anti-liberalism, anti-capitalism and anti-clericalism. Schönerer's anti-capitalist rhetoric called for, among other things, an end to "the Semitic domination of money"<sup>174</sup> and a call for the end of Jewish influence from all areas of public life, especially in banking, credit institutions and the press. At the high point of his career in 1884, Schönerer also attacked the Austrian Rothschilds, accusing them of transport usury.<sup>175</sup>

Nationalist antisemitism was only one symptom of the reaction to the failure of liberalism in Austria. The second was provided by Judaism's oldest opponent, Catholicism. The Catholic antisemitic campaign had opened in 1871, when the theologian, Professor August Rohling, published his notorious book, *Der Talmudjude*. The book was little more than a rehash of Eisenmenger's *Entdecktes Judentum*, of 1708, and sought to prove the depravity of the Jews by means of erroneous extracts from the *Talmud* and by reiterating the blood libel accusation. The work was well received by the Catholic Press in Austria and, as Valentin points out, "contributed to an enhancement of antisemitism in much the same way as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in our day."<sup>176</sup> The following year Pope Pius IX further enhanced the Jewish conspiratorial image by declaring that Jews, especially Jewish journalists, were at the centre of all the Church's troubles.<sup>177</sup> It was, however, from the Conservative political spectrum that the greatest damage came. In 1887 Karl Lueger appeared for the first time as a speaker in a public meeting for the Christian Socialist Party. Lueger, a former member of the radical wing of the liberal camp, was an instant success, and soon became leader of the party, making it one of the most powerful in Austria. Lueger's party appealed to the mass of small-scale producers, such as



craftsmen and shopkeepers in the Austro-Hungarian capital, in that it seemingly represented their interests. The party policy was a threefold one: anti-capitalist, in that it stood against the modern manufacturing methods pioneered in Austria by Jewish entrepreneurs, whose methods were represented as a Jewish ploy to swamp small businesses; anti-liberal, which represented the Jews as the backbone of liberalism in Austria; and anti-immigrant, which was directed against the poor Jewish immigrant peddlers of Galicia, Hungary and Russia, who were also seen as part of a Jewish plot to undermine Austrian businesses.<sup>178</sup>

The mass appeal of Political Antisemitism is evident from the fact that Lueger, by protesting against Jewish dominance of Viennese life, was able to persuade Emperor Franz Joseph to make him the lord mayor of Vienna. Through these socialist antisemitic organisations the Conspiracy Theory was absorbed by wide sections of society in Germany and Austria. Even when these political parties failed to realise their objectives and quietly faded away, the Jewish image they had helped to create remained. It is no coincidence that at the time Political Antisemitism was at its height in Europe *The Protocols* were being written, and whilst it is true that they were produced in Russia, it is important to remember that they were wholly of European origin. Not only was the framework of *The Protocols* taken from a French novel and a German short story, but every sentiment contained therein was no doubt of European origin. One has only to scan the pages to find the French Conservative's fear of a Jewish/Masonic Plot, to find the Young Hegelian money libel, the German Conservative's fear of Press domination, the Wagnerian attitude of the parasitic Jew dominating society, and so on. It is perhaps important to realise that although *The Protocols* were Russian, they were written in France at the same time that the Modern Conspiracy theory reached its zenith, and are part and parcel of that particular aspect of antisemitism.

# Chapter 5

## The Conspiracy Theory in Modern Germany

Whilst it is true, as we have seen from Valentin,<sup>1</sup> that the pages of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, are stained with the blood of the thousands of victims of its particular brand of Conspiracy Theory, it is by no means the final measure of suffering that belief in the Conspiracy Theory can cause. Indeed, the thought processes that shaped the Tsarist forgery, also contributed to a Conspiracy Theory of a far more deadly nature: that which grew in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century, and culminated in the atrocities of the Nazi era. Six million Jews died in Nazi Germany, principally because Hitler and his followers subscribed to a paranoid form of antisemitism. whereby they believed that the Conspiracy Theory, in every one of its modern guises, was essentially true. In Hitler's Germany we see every aspect of the Modern Conspiracy Theory reach its most deadly culmination.

Of course there are a few steps in the history of the Conspiracy Theory which lead us from *The Protocols* to Hitler's ideology, but those steps are few and the roots of both remain fundamentally the same. However, before we examine in detail Hitler's Conspiracy Theories, we must first be aware of those last few steps.

### Volkish Ideology

Many scholars have, in the past, suggested that the route to Hitler's National Socialist party was a straightforward, linear one. Such scholars believed that, like Marxism and Communism, the National Socialist world view, commonly termed its *Weltanschauung*, derived from a consistent philosophy or theory, and that this philosophy or theory could be traced to an individual. In the past, historians have detected the root of National Socialism in the ideology of various figures, among them Herder, Wagner, and Nietzsche. But, as Karl Bracher points out, National Socialism itself was "a conglomerate of ideas and

precepts, of concepts, hopes, and emotions, welded together by a radical political movement in a time of crisis."<sup>2</sup> As such it is highly unlikely that National Socialism did derive from any consistent philosophy, but rather, as George Mosse suggests, grew out of the context of the Volkish Movement. Such growth, of course was not entirely direct, but rather National Socialism and the Volkish Movement shared a mood and an ideology which aimed at giving men and women an idea of their place in their country and society, and which helped to determine their image of themselves and of the world they lived in.<sup>3</sup> Like National Socialism, the Volkish Movement consisted of a combination of different concepts, hopes and emotions, which captured the imaginations of millions and served as a solution in a time of crisis in human thought and politics. In the case of the Volkish Movement the crisis which gave it life had its starting point in the mid 1870's. By this time the increased tempo of industrialisation had already produced its first major economic crisis. Moreover by this time the promise of National unity appeared to have gone sour. The cry for a new "German" revolution could be heard as the pace of modernity increased. All this infused the Volkish movement with life and dynamic, and even though its ideologies can be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, it is here, in the struggle for national unity and in the events of the last decades, that it was truly born. This was the first crisis; later during the second the abstract and idealistic concepts and imagery of the Volkish Movement, found a place in National Socialism, as Mosse points out: all it took "was the genius of Adolf Hitler to wed the Volkish flight from reality to political discipline and efficient political organization,"<sup>4</sup> the result of which we know all too well.

The intellectual and ideological character of the Volkish mind was a direct product of two distinct modes of thought. The first of these was Romantic Nationalism, a movement which had sprung up as a reaction to the Napoleonic invasion at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The movement remained influential throughout the century. Like romanticism, Volkish ideas showed a distinct tendency toward the irrational and emotional, and was focused primarily on man, the world and man's place in the world. Likewise,

Volkish thinkers who wanted unity, like the Nationalists, looked increasingly to the formation of a cultural cohesion among their people and they conceived this cultural unity in terms of national roots and of opposition to the foreigner. The search for national roots led to a great deal of emphasis on the past, especially in the notion that history provided an explanation and a goal for man's development. In the Volkish interpretation of history, the Volk was an historical unit that had come down to the present from a far and distant past. In giving the Volk roots in the remote past, history endowed it with an air of endurance. This in turn gave rise to the notion that the Volk had endured for centuries and could not be destroyed nor permanently subjugated.<sup>5</sup>

This nostalgia for the past, which had played a cardinal role in Romanticism, also explicitly leads us to the second strand of Volkish thought, the rejection of modernity. The modern world was increasingly seen as having denied to the Germans the unity which they had possessed long ago, and many felt that the movement for unity must draw its strength from those distant times rather than from the unpromising present. Thus they opposed all the progress and modernisation that had transformed nineteenth century Europe. Instead, as Mosse points out, the Volkish movement, "used and amplified romanticism to provide an alternative to modernity, to the developing industrial and urban civilisation which seemed to rob man of his individual, creative self."<sup>6</sup>

Before we examine Volkish thought any further, let us first define the term "Volk". Literally it means "people" but for the German thinker the term meant much more. Ever since the birth of German Romanticism, as Mosse explains:

*"Volk" signified the union of a group of people with a transcended "essence". This essence might be called "nature" or "cosmos" or "mythos" but in each instance it was fused to man's innermost nature and represented the source of his creativity, his depth of feeling, his individuality and his unity with other members of the Volk.<sup>7</sup>*

One essential element in this ideology is the linking of the human soul with its natural surroundings. According to many Volkish theorists, the nature of the soul of a Volk was determined by its native landscape. Thus, for example, Jews

being a desert people, are viewed as being shallow, arid "dry" people, devoid of profundity and totally lacking in creativity. Because of the barrenness of the desert landscape, Jews, they claimed, are also barren in a spiritual sense. They contrast greatly with the Germans who, living in the dark mist shrouded forests are deep, mysterious and profound. Because they are so constantly shrouded in darkness, they strive toward the sun, and are truly spiritually enlightened.<sup>8</sup> The notion of Volk was thus intrinsically tied up with nature, but not all of nature for only its regional manifestations gave the Volk its character, potential and unity. Nature was defined as landscape, namely those features of the environment peculiar and familiar to the members of one Volk and alien to all others.

The landscape thus became a vital part of the definition of the Volk. Through the landscape they maintained contact with the life spirit of the cosmos. This emphasis in turn gave rise to rural aspirations, reflecting quite explicitly the Volkish desire to escape from, and to negate, the validity of the century's increasingly industrial and urban values. Man was seen not as a conqueror of nature, nor as able in any way to penetrate its meaning; instead he was glorified as living in accordance with nature, at one with its mystical forces. In this way, as Mosse points out, "instead of being encouraged to confront the problems cast up by urbanisation and industrialisation man was enticed to retreat into rural nostalgia."<sup>9</sup>

The peasant thus came to typify the truly Volkish individual, glorifying not only a rural but, more importantly, a primitive civilisation. Parallel to this development of the Volkish peasant hero, the enemy too was given concrete form. Popular literature portrayed the alien Jew in growing distasteful stereotype. In the peasant novels the Jew was increasingly characterised as alien to the countryside, a city dweller whose only mission was to deprive the peasant of his wealth and land. An important illustration of this can be found in Wilhelm von Polenz's 1895 novel, *Der Büttenerbauer (The Peasant from Büttener)*,<sup>10</sup> the outline of which became a conventional plot for other tales. In the story a peasant becomes indebted to a Jew and, unable to repay his debt, loses his land. The Jew sells the property to an industrialist, who in turn builds a factory upon

it. The peasant hero unable to bear the situation hangs himself, his eyes reverently focused on his former land, soon to vanish beneath machines and factories. "The eyes which were leaving their sockets stared at the soil, the soil to which he had dedicated his life, to which he had sold his body and his soul."<sup>11</sup> In this framework the Jew was identified with modern industrial society; he was the conspirator which uprooted the peasant, deprived him of his land, caused his death and thereby destroyed the most genuine part of the Volk. A similar conception of the Jewish role can be found in the tree image, which was constantly used to symbolise the peasant strength of the Volk. The tree with its roots anchored in the past and its crown striving toward the cosmos and its spirit, became the familiar image of the peasant Volk. To this later was added the image of the Jew, a serpent gnawing away at the roots of the tree, conspiring always to stunt its spontaneous natural growth in order to destroy the Volk.

Antisemitism as we can see was central to the Volkish ideology. It identified the enemy and objectified him. If the German race had degenerated then someone was responsible, and who better than the ever conspiring Jew? It was almost inevitable that Volkish ideology would contain some seeds of antisemitism; after all, as we have seen previously, it was heir to the traditions of Romantic Nationalism, a movement which from the outset was antisemitic to the degree of being almost racialist. It is little wonder then that, in Volkish thought, the Jew should be endowed with similar characteristics as those which were attributed to him by the Romantics. Thus, he became the already familiar alien in the land of the Germanic peoples, a troublesome, malevolent, rootless being. However, the antisemitism inherent in Volkish thinking is more than just a mere repetition of Romantic ideologies. Indeed, the Volkish movement as it developed during the last decades of the nineteenth century became heir to many of the antisemitic traditions that had preceded it and to those that developed alongside it. Thus as *The Protocols* came to epitomise the Modern European Conspiracy Theory, so Volkish ideology came to embody German antisemitism of both the nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

As we have already seen antisemitism played a very central role in Volkish thought. Indeed, it is possible to say that the Volkish movement may well have been unable to survive without it. As antisemitism was so intrinsic an ingredient in this ideology, one must ask oneself what part the Conspiracy Theory played in the Volkish ideology. In its early stages Volkish thought was heir to the antisemitic trends which had already claimed general German thinking. The Jew was believed to be alien, dishonest, ruthless and consumed by the lust for power and aggrandizement.<sup>12</sup> Stereotypes of this sort converted the Jewish question, in the words of Adolf Stöcker in the Prussian diet, into an "ethical question." Not race alone, nor nationality or religion, was at stake, but a whole way of life was endangered by the Jewish menace. In true Volkish fashion Judaism was interpreted as a materialistic fossil devoid of all morality. It was thus easy to see why Hermann Gödsche's famous tale "In the Cemetery at Prague" which was destined to become the outline of *The Protocols*, acquired special relevance for Volkish thought.<sup>13</sup>

Religious preconceptions further consolidated the stereotype of the Jew, although it must be noted that the Christian religious platform did not exist for long in Volkish ideology, giving way to the more "scientific" racialist platform. Paul Lagarde, who can be considered the founder of the Volkish movement, believed that Christianity had been corrupted by Judaism, and because of this was doomed to extinction.

*Fourteen centuries have moulded the Christian religion. It is not the work of a single person, not the sole work of Jesus, but the result of many efforts by many men and many peoples. . . [Now] it is doomed to extinction because of the Jewish elements which it absorbed<sup>14</sup>*

Who had corrupted Christianity? None other, says Lagarde, than St. Paul, the Jew, "the utterly unauthorised . . . who even after his conversion remained a Pharisee from head to toe."<sup>15</sup> This Jew, who had never known Jesus and who had deliberately avoided the surviving disciples, had debased and corrupted the pure Gospel of Jesus by mixing Jewish beliefs and customs with it. Thus for Lagarde, the only true religion was a de-Semiticized one. However, for Lagarde

and his followers the idea of "true religion" consisted not only of a de-Semitic Christianity but one stripped also of the trappings of Protestantism and Catholicism, and based more on a personal relationship between the Volk and God.<sup>16</sup> Lagarde's anti-Christian stance, however, did not impede him from adopting Christian antisemitic ideals. Indeed, he willingly believed the charge of Jewish ritual murder as advocated by the Catholic scholar, August Rohling in *The Talmud Jew* (1871).<sup>17</sup> Lagarde was not alone in these beliefs either, for they appealed to the public at large. In fact, between 1867 and 1914 the Austrian empire saw no less than twelve trials for ritual murder. It mattered little that of these twelve trials only one led to a guilty verdict, and that was on a charge of murder, as opposed to Ritual Murder, the fact that trials were held was more than enough to convince the general public that there was a Jewish conspiracy against gentiles.

These aspects of religious antisemitism were supported, and eventually supplanted, by the racialist thinking of the late 1800's. Racial thought appeared at first in the form of an historical argument. Christian Lassen in his *Indische Altertumskunde (Indian Antiquities) (1877)* compared Aryan and Semitic peoples, their history and culture, on purely racial grounds. He concluded among other things that Jews were egotistical and stubborn and totally ingrained with the belief in their God-decreed, legalised superiority.<sup>18</sup> Another scholar, Eugen Dühring, in a book entitled *Die Judenfrage (The Jewish Question)* (1880), claimed that he was the first to consider the "Jewish question" in Germany from a purely racial point of view. Applying his racial theories, this respected scholar condemned the Jew as a whole, not just some of his characteristics. Dühring linked Jewish depravity in culture, morals and manners to inherent racial traits possessed by all Jews. Moreover, he was a faithful advocate of the Conspiracy theory which he linked firmly to Volkish thought. No tolerance, he said, was to be shown to Jews, because they would manipulate that tolerance for their own ends. Furthermore, they should not be allowed to convert to Christianity, for conversion too was just a sly Jewish device to further their own ends. In true Volkish fashion, Dühring claimed that only the Nordic gods could help the German people to victory, for only the Nordic



religion was able to combat the alien infiltration. But, with their inherent racial strength, Dühring believed that the Germans would triumph over the Jewish intruders. In this manner, the formulations of Volkish thought began to be increasingly used as a weapon in a widespread German antisemitism. Dühring also depicted the Jew in the standard Volkish image as the cause and bringer of modernism, a contrivance through which they sought to destroy the German will and common good. In this way antisemitism, and the stereotype of the Jew, was integrated into the dynamic of the Volkish struggle against a state that did not represent the true will of the German Volk. The struggle for the true dynamic manifestation of the Volk thus became tied up with the theory of racial struggle.

One of the first concrete applications of this theory of racial struggle was found in the antisemitic movement launched by Otto Böckel in the years following 1885. His was a "democratic movement" whose importance lay in the combination of antisemitism and greater democracy. Indeed, Böckel was elected to the Reichstag as the first antisemitic deputy who was independent of the Conservative party. Antisemitic measures formed the central theme of his platform, and he skilfully played upon the Volkish and economic fears of the peasants by constantly raising the spectre of Jewish overlordship. He claimed that a Jewish conspiracy was in control of every aspect of German life, except, typically enough, work, which Jews shied away from as if it were a plague. Indeed, Jews, he said, were the kings of the present epoch - a slogan he adopted from the French socialist antisemite, Alphonse Toussenel's 1840 antisemitic work, *The Jews, Kings of the Epoch*. Solutions to the present problems, Böckel concluded, were obvious. German peasants would again be prosperous and able to live well if the wealth siphoned off by Jews was repossessed and Jewish speculation was ended by getting rid of Jews. Once this had been done, the Volk could march unhindered down the road to its destiny.<sup>19</sup>

Böckel was, however, an agitator, not an organiser and his movement soon collapsed. But his form of "democratic" antisemitism was to remain popular. Austria fostered a similar movement called the *Antisemiten Bund* (1889), which engaged in similar agitation among the urban masses. Their

central theme was the protection of artisans from displacement by Jewish craftsmen. Combining the idea of racist conspiracy and economics, the *Antisemiten Bund* raised the fearful cry that one Jew was capable of ruining one thousand native Viennese tailors.<sup>20</sup> This form of antisemitism was geared to mass appeal, especially as it incorporated lower-class economic interests with a belief in Volkish ideology. This was the point, according to Mosse, that "the elitism of the Volkish ideology broke down or, rather, incorporated the element which was to render it popular. In fact, antisemitism became the chief vehicle for the diffusion of the Volkish movement."<sup>21</sup>

After Böckel's failure, Volkish ideology, especially among the higher echelons, reverted to an elitism which although maintaining the incompatibility of German and Jew, still attempted to discuss the question in a less volatile manner. But the potential of the popular Böckel type of violence and democracy were not lost on future movements, especially among the National Socialists. The respectable Volkish right likewise deplored what they termed "street-corner antisemitism" and by the first decade of the twentieth century, this form of violent antisemitic agitation entered a lull, which coincided with a transference of the issues to a more academic and respectable forum. The change in atmosphere in the Volkish movement can be seen in the fact that many of the antisemitic agitators tried to adapt themselves to it. Overt antisemitism gave way to "opinion". Theodor Fritsch, for example, who had once called for the outright extermination of all Jews, now maintained that he was a "cultured antisemite" and declared that he would not stoop to the level of persecuting individual Jews. Indeed, he declared, Judaism as a whole and not the individual Jew, was responsible for the damage done to the Volk.<sup>22</sup>

Although Fritsch did not maintain this point of view for long, the theoretical approach came into vogue. Works such as those of Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) were singled out as representative of this scholarly school of antisemitic thought. The antisemitic outlook thus continued to represent the Volkish influence in Germany, but now it was couched in the language of racial anthropology and cultural differentiation.

Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1900) had a deep impact on Volkish scholarly thought. Through him racism became more than just the explanation of the rise and fall of civilisation. In his subtle weaving of science and mysticism, Chamberlain transformed it into a Volkish messianic vision. According to Chamberlain the history of mankind, and especially of Germany, was one of a bitter struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Good was represented by the Germans, and evil by the Jewish race. These, Chamberlain held, were the only two pure races and between them flourished the "chaos of peoples," bastard mixtures of various races. However, the Jews had not always been so "pure"; indeed according to Chamberlain the Jewish race was a result of cross-breeding between the Bedouins of the Semite deserts, the Hittites, Syrians and Aryan Amorites. But, the Jews had realised that "their existence is sin"<sup>23</sup> and because of this had conceived of an heroic plan of breeding a pure, but artificial, race. This resolution, which they had upheld for thousands of years, was the cause of Jewish strength and greatness.

In spite of their evident inferiority in number and intelligence the Jews had used their strength of character to dominate the "Celto-Slavo-Teutons", the Germanic or Aryan race. Indeed, their great design had apparently begun to take effect at the time of the rebuilding of the Temple, under Cyrus:

*But not long after Ezekiel's death the noble Persian King Cyrus conquered the Babylonian Empire. With the simplicity of the inexperienced Indo-European he permitted the return of the Jews and gave them a subsidy for the rebuilding of the temple. Under the protection of Aryan tolerance the hearth was erected from which, for tens of centuries a curse to all that is noblest and an everlasting disgrace to Christianity, Semitic intolerance was to spread like a poison over the whole earth<sup>24</sup>*

Despite everything that could be done, including persecutions and burning, nothing had stopped the Jews from imposing their terrible will upon Europe. So great was their influence that "Olympus and Walhalla became depopulated because the Jews so wished it," and Jehovah, their God had now become the God of the Indo-Europeans.<sup>25</sup>

Who was this Jewish God? According to Chamberlain He was nothing more than a mighty idol holding out to His worshippers material enjoyments and the rule over other peoples as a recompense for submissiveness. Their barren ritualistic religion had thus made the Jewish race selfish, materialistic, intolerant and narrow-minded. In contrast the true Aryan religion is an inner experience drawn from the depths of the soul; it is independent of chronology and historical events, anti-rationalist and mystical, its forms are pure and noble. Aryan religiosity is free from the worship of idols, outward commandments, ritual formalism and a priestly caste. The essence of Aryan religiosity lies within the heart, it is the love of God, aspiration after religious liberty, and the most absolute tolerance. But, the Jewish race had corrupted all this, with their contaminated Christianity. At times it was said, they were assisted by so-called degenerate Nordics such as the Jesuits. Mostly, however, the Jews concerted carried out their mechanistic plans to attain the primacy among the nations that was guaranteed by their God, in return for obedience to His laws.<sup>26</sup>

This Jewish pollution of the true Aryan faith was, according to Chamberlain, not the end of things, for the Jews had carried their insidious contamination into everyday life. Nowhere was the Jewish plot to dominate the nations more evident than in the nineteenth century, where the influence of the Jew was visible in every field:

*The possession of money in itself is however of least account; our governments, our laws, our science, our commerce, our literature, our art . . . practically all branches of our life have become more or less willing slaves of the Jews . . . The Indo-European, moved by ideal motives, opened the gates of friendship: the Jews rushed in like an enemy, stormed all positions and planted the flag of his, to us, alien nature - I will not say on the ruins but on the breaches of our genuine individuality.<sup>27</sup>*

For Volkish thinkers the theory of race was taken very seriously. Despite the fact that Volkish ideology had, up until the end of the nineteenth century, been considered "mystical", this aspect of modern scientific thought became increasingly important for it united the currents in romantic thought, and

presented the "whole" man as an alternative to the alienated and dislocated individuals who were drifting in the wake of industrial change. The presentation was also strongly visual. The Aryan was seen as possessing certain external characteristics which supposedly reflected the inner qualities of the race. The enemy too was stereotyped for easy identification. He was betrayed by his non-Aryan origins, or because of the impurity of his inner-being which affected his appearance. He was presented visually as either an example of degeneration or the exact opposite of the ideal Nordic type. Hostile attitudes toward the already non-Germanic, alien Jew were thus bolstered further by the reaction to his increasingly grotesque caricature. However irrational these racist ideas were, they sunk so deeply into the minds of many Germans that they were accepted even in the face of opposing visual evidence. The prime example of this can be seen in the assertion by the periodical *Die Sonne*, which in 1933, in the face of all contrary photographic evidence, declared that Hitler was blue eyed and blond.<sup>28</sup>

As far as the Modern Conspiracy Theory is concerned, the introduction of racial "science" into Volkish thought amply illustrates its importance and centrality in antisemitic thought. As we have seen from Chamberlain, the stereotypical Jew sought nothing more than world domination. Indeed, according to Chamberlain, that is all that the Jewish religion consisted of, worship of a God who promises the faithful control of the world. For such antisemitic racial thinkers then, Jewish Conspiracy became a racial trait. Furthermore, if one examines both the themes of racist thought and of Volkish ideology a second important trait becomes apparent, the theme of the Devil-Jew. As I have already demonstrated in earlier chapters, the identification of the Jew with the Devil helped to make acceptance of the conspiracy charges much easier. The Jew, because of his alliance with the Devil, became capable of ritual murder, host desecration and well poisoning. One would not expect to find a similar theme in secular society, yet I believe, in Volkish ideology, that the Devil-Jew theme exists in conjunction with the conspiracy theory, albeit in a less overt sense than its Medieval precursor.

Evidence of the Jew and Devil linkage is visible in most areas of Volkish thought. Take for example the image of the tree as representative of the true peasant Volk. The Jew is depicted in this image as a serpent, conspiring to destroy the tree, by gnawing at its roots. The tree is representative of nature and the strength of the Volk; the Jewish serpent calls to mind the image of the Devil, who in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve in the Old Testament Creation story and thus caused man's downfall. Whilst the serpent image was perhaps more abstract in linking the Devil and the Jew, Hermann Gödsche, in his famous tale of the Jewish plot to dominate the world, "In the Cemetery at Prague," which was popular among Volkish thinkers, was more explicit. In the tale the representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel meet with the Devil to discuss their evil plan to take over the world.<sup>29</sup> Of course, a simple literary tale and an abstract image are not enough to prove that there was in fact a specific linkage of the Devil and Jew, but when we consider the themes of racism also, it becomes very apparent that it is more than mere coincidence.

Medieval folklore held that the Jew visibly embodied features of the Devil. He was depicted with horns, a tail and a putrid sulphuric smell representative of the smell of hell.<sup>30</sup> In racist literature the Jew was represented as soulless and ugly. His visage being a sign of his inner evil and debauchery. The Aryan on the other hand was distinguished by a physical form that typified the Germanic ideal of purity and beauty. As Mosse points out, "symbolically, only too deeply believed later on, the two represented the polarisation of God and the Devil."<sup>31</sup> This theme is expressed clearly in Chamberlain's depiction of the Aryan and Jew. Indeed, Chamberlain presented the history of mankind, especially of Germany, as the story of a bitter polarised struggle. God was, so to speak, embodied in the Germanic race, and the devil in the Jewish race.<sup>32</sup> This theme can be seen in Chamberlain's claim that the Germans had entered history as saviours at a time when the West seemed to be on the verge of disintegration. Jews on the other hand had entered the same history as aliens, possessors of a dehumanised law, whose only aim was to conquer the world. Why did Jews seek to conquer? Because, according to Chamberlain, world domination was promised them if they obeyed their God. This causes one to

wonder, just who exactly, in Chamberlain's thinking, this Jewish God was. Whilst Chamberlain is never really explicit, his description of the God who gives Jews the World in return for worship calls to mind a comparison with the tale of the Temptation of Christ, where the devil offers Jesus just the same thing.

*Again the devil took him up to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the Kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him. "All these things will I give to you, if you will fall down and worship me." (Matt. 4:8-10)*

Racism and the conspiracy theory gave an extra boost to Volkish antisemitic thought, especially during the period after the First World War. As Mosse states:

*The German Volk had been denied satisfaction on the field of honour, where, had events been permitted to run their course, victory would have been achieved. Now the hostility as well as the idealised bravery was transferred to the struggle of the races, a mortal struggle that demanded a resolution.<sup>33</sup>*

For assimilated Jews the burden was especially difficult. They were singled out as arch-fiends, as infiltrators and polluters of the blond Germanic race. Furthermore, the racial decree that all Jews bore the same marks of distinction, was translated into popular thought to mean that all Jews were ugly, bearded and wore caftans. This image had originated from contact with Eastern European Jews, who had been emigrating to Germany, since the 1880's. If other Jews diverged from this norm it was seen as a way of disguising their conspiracy to dominate Germany and the world.<sup>34</sup> Power, it was claimed, was the Jewish goal, and that could be obtained more easily by infiltration into the Aryan races and through subversion. Jewish lust for power, Volkish antisemites maintained, was coupled with their constant need for lustful gratification, both of which could be gained by corrupting the Aryan race with Jewish blood. This fear especially plagued Theodor Fritsch,<sup>35</sup> but was also shared by many antisemitic writers. Indeed, the fear of racial defilement through intermarriage, with its associations of sex, love and physical features, became an obsession with Volkish thinkers. The image of the pure, blond, Aryan virgin succumbing

to the evil wiles of a Jew, became the nightmare of the prophets of race and of every German with a wife or daughter.

Connected with the lust for Aryan women, there also came a repetition of the earlier conspiracy charge, that Jews lust after money. In 1910, Werner Sombart published his treaty *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben (Jews and Capitalism)*, a work that linked the Jewish restless character with the motive force of capitalism.<sup>36</sup> Sombart's thesis was not meant as a condemnation of Jews, but as a serious, if somewhat erroneous, historical analysis of the evolution of capitalism. Volkish writers and propagandists, however, adapted the work to suit their own purposes. It was used to support the image of the Jew as the stock-exchange jobber, the corpulent banker, the shiftless rootless conniving middleman, who hoarded wealth whilst bleeding Germany dry. The stock-exchange became the symbol of the nightmarish capitalism that had been forced upon the German nation by the Jew, and in time it came to represent the heart of their control system. Indeed, many Volkish thinkers alleged, that it was from the stock-exchange, that the Jewish attempt at world revolution would emanate. But, popular antisemitism went further than this, and fused the image of the Jew's hunger for money with his lust for Aryan women. The resulting image, which was widely used as propaganda, pictured a fat Jewish banker caressing a blond Germanic maiden on his knee. Thus, as Mosse states, such propaganda conveyed the image that, "the same agent who milked Germans of their wealth also depleted their racial strength."<sup>37</sup>

Thus as the Volkish movement progressed it developed, as a core feature of its ideology, an antisemitism based almost entirely upon the notion of the Jew as a conspirator. He became dehumanised, soulless, ever resorting to diabolical intrigues to seize power in order to dominate the gentile world. He was stereotyped as evil and this concept of Jewish inner evil was reinforced by emphasis on his outward appearance. When race became the absolute criterion, the physical properties of the Jew were contrasted unfavourably with the Aryan ideal of beauty. The Jew became a contorted figure, with short legs, fleshy because of his greedy and sensual nature, ugly because of his inner evil. In the image presented by Volkish thought he became a menace, driven by a need to



destroy all that is truly Germanic. He had already destroyed the true Volkish agricultural way of life with the introduction of industry and all that was associated with the process of modernisation. He had already destroyed the true Volkish religion with corrupted Christianity, just as he had destroyed the economy with capitalism. Now he sought to destroy the Aryan blood, to take away the racial purity by defiling the nation with his own blood. All this he does because by his very nature the Jew is a conspirator, a power-hungry destroyer and corrupter of nations, especially the German nation.

### **Conspiracy Theories in the Aftermath of the First World War**

Volkish ideology, with its emphasis on Nationalism and the idea of race struggle led, not only to an increase in antisemitism, but also to the idealisation of war and a greatly inflated sense of ability. For example, Lagarde asserted that by war a nation gained strength, vitality and dedication.<sup>38</sup> He was not alone in this view. The influential conservative theorist Arthur Möller van den Bruck, in his thesis *Die Moderne Literatur* asserted:

*Fighting is magnificent and more worthy of man than self-indulgence in smug comfort. Battle gives us, especially when it is of spirits and passions, our greatest kings and best heroes . . . Eternal peace would be insupportable - it would be boredom, a yawning that would give us merely the philistine.*<sup>39</sup>

For many Volkish thinkers war became part of the mystical experience and, as in the case of Möller, was seen as having the same liberating and invigorating effects as spiritual self-conquest. Moreover, men such as Lagarde, who held that strife and bloodshed were the essential elements of progress, could expound such a brutal doctrine because of the successes of the three wars of German unification: that of 1864 against Denmark over the Schleswig-Holstein question; the war with Austria in 1866; and the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 which culminated in the founding of the second German Empire in 1871.<sup>40</sup> The three wars had not only resulted in victory for Germany but had also been relatively sparing of human lives.<sup>41</sup> War appeared a moral necessity that a large country could easily afford.

Coupled with the idealisation of war, there was also a growing sense of imperialism inherent in the nationalistic thinking of Germany. This influenced the thinking, not only of Volkish organisations such as the influential political Pan German movement, but also proved irresistible to liberal, conservative, Catholic and progressive groups alike. Notions of the nature of German national-imperialism ranged from the concept of a strong middle European position of domination to more ambitious aspirations of world power. For a while this deflected attention away from Jews, and Germany looked instead towards the West and the United States for her enemies. The fear that Germany was encircled by her enemies was an ever growing one, and this, coupled with a number of other factors, eventually gave way to war.<sup>42</sup>

The war, however, was not of the type that Germany had been expecting. At first there was considerable jubilation and a great deal of nationalistic enthusiasm. Men, like Möller, felt that the sacrifices of war would engender a nobler spirit, which in time would lead to a new society. Others, saw it as an opportunity for Germany to express her cultural separateness from, and superiority to, the West.<sup>43</sup> German and Jewish soldiers marched off, united in the spirit of nationalism, and with the happy delusion that German superiority would lead to an early victory. The war, they asserted, would be over by Christmas. In the event this was far from the case. The First World War was not the expected brief, nineteenth century style war with a decisive battle, limited casualties and an early end to hostilities. It was not a joyous, mystical, exhilarating, experience. It was a long drawn-out affair, with high casualties and little gain. Furthermore, the German economy was not equipped to sustain a lengthy conflict, and as food conditions and living conditions worsened there was a progressive loss of moral on the home front. From 1915 onwards there were a number of food riots and a series of major strikes began in April 1917. The whole of Germany was suffering and they sought some relief in finding a scapegoat, someone had to be to blame, and who better than the Jew?

Thus, it was that the spirit of nationalistic comradeship between Germans and German Jews gave way, long before the end of the war, to suspicion, enmity and the familiar pattern of anti-Jewish hatred. To the masses

the Jews of Germany came to symbolise cowardly draft-dodgers, whilst those of the United States and the West were labelled "international Jewry."<sup>44</sup> Nationalists claimed that the war was being drawn out by Jewish profiteers, who were using it as a means of increasing their wealth.<sup>45</sup> In Germany newspaper articles were dedicated to the question of Jewish assimilation, once again seen as the ultimate threat, not only to Germany, but now to the whole of Europe. In 1917 Max Hildebert Boehm, in an article entitled "Emancipation and Will to Power in Modern Jewry" declared:

*Nowadays, they, the cosmopolitan Jews, hold the universe in the palm of their hands, and they have no intention of letting go. Dostoevski's visionary eye had already seen that their power would grow during a great European catastrophe. Like a vast, tightening net, the power of assimilated Jewry stretches over the whole world, and no matter where we set foot, we are caught in it.<sup>46</sup>*

In this way the Jewish enemy of Germany took on the familiar role of conspirator; he became an invisible secret power, both internal and supranational.

Suspensions of Jewish conspiracies were not only confined to the home front; indeed, both army leaders and ordinary soldiers alike, succumbed to the growing obsession that a Jewish internationale was dictating the course of events. Moreover, however patriotic the intentions of Jewish soldiers, their registration was increasingly viewed with suspicion. Rumours abounded that Jews were being assigned positions in the rear while patriotic Germans were dying at the front.<sup>47</sup> In October 1916 the leader of the Catholic Centre Party, Matthias Erzberger, demanded an investigation by the Reichstag of Jews employed in the offices and agencies of the war economy.<sup>48</sup> Throughout the nation the paranoia of a Jewish conspiracy flourished. In 1917, following the signing of the anti-annexation peace resolution, the mood was aptly described by a Jewish publication:

*The Reichstag votes for a peace resolution that does not suit the pan-Germanists; it is a Jewish resolution. The Reichstag as a whole does not have the honour of pleasing the anti-Semites; it is a Jewish*

*Reichstag. A compromise peace is repugnant to them; it is a Jewish peace.*<sup>49</sup>

The irrational antisemitic mood grew stronger when it became clear in 1918 that Germany had lost the war. The land of the Volk, once so sure of her strength and superiority, suffered the humiliation of having to surrender. How could Germany, have been defeated? There had to be a cause, someone to blame, and the apparatus for placing that blame were already in place. Whilst Germany was fighting the external forces of international Jewry, those within the country had betrayed her. Germany had been stabbed in the back. To many patriotic Germans, smarting under the humiliation of their country's failure in war, the stab-in-the-back theory gave the reassurance that at least the German army had preserved its honour and its claim to invincibility. For military leaders it cast aside the suggestion that they had made mistakes in strategy that had led to defeat, whilst for the soldiers it was a way for maintaining self-respect and confidence for the future. Finally for the propagandists it was the ideal weapon for maintaining the belief in the Volk as a strong fighting race and in war as a legitimate, credible and potent way of furthering national policy. For the antisemites it just confirmed what they had claimed all along; the Jew was not to be trusted, he was a conspirator and no-one was safe from his evil plans.

The stab-in-the-back accusation was not the only form of the Conspiracy Theory being pursued in post World War I Germany. That Germany had been brought to grief by the insidious power of Jewry there was no doubt, but far worse than that, in both Germany and throughout Europe, there was a sense that this long hidden power was finally being revealed to the world in the triumph of the Russian Bolshevik revolution of October 1917. Lenin's coup, taking Russia out of the war in a memorable peace which ceded vast territories, including White Russia, the Ukraine and Poland to the Central Powers, exposed her remaining Allies to the full force of German might on the Western Front. Russia, only yesterday a gallant, hard-pressed comrade-in-arms, was metamorphosed overnight into an atheistic ogre, with at least one of its leaders, Leon Trotsky, advancing a theory of permanent, universal revolution.

Trotsky's original name, Lev Davidovich Bronstein, testified to his racial forebears. In fact he was the most important Jew among many in key positions of control within the new regime. Anger in the West at Russia's defection from the alliance gathered fuel from the fear that the revolution would spread beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks made no secret of their dream to plant their doctrine round the world, and the world feared not only that, but the spectre of Jewish dominance. For it was no secret that the majority of the new regime's leaders were Jews. Grigori Zinoviev had travelled with Lenin in that famous "sealed train" from Switzerland to engineer the revolution, and was now organising the Communist International; Lev Kamenev, editor of the underground *Pravda* in Tsarist times, became the chairman of the Moscow Soviet; Lazar Kaganovitch, belonged to the inner apparatus; and Karl Radek, also enclosed with Lenin on that train journey to power, controlled foreign propaganda activities. Adolf Joffe who had opened the peace talks (which were completed by Trotsky) at Brest-Litovsk, emerged as Soviet ambassador to Berlin, while Maxim Litvinov, married to an Englishwoman, was their diplomatic agent in London. With Jacob Sverdlov as chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, and the new secret police force, the Tcheka, headed by Moisey Uritsky, to the believers in a Jewish World Conspiracy, the list of Jews in "control" seemed endless and the threat immediate.<sup>50</sup>

In the wake of 1917 the whole of Europe was gripped by the fear of Bolshevik revolution. Trotsky came to symbolise the violence and demonic power of Bolshevism and its determination to inflame the world. Moreover, Trotsky, more than anyone was responsible for the popular identification of Bolshevism with Jews. Whilst it was true, however, that Jews were prominent in the Bolshevik party, in the top echelons as well as among the rank and file, these Jews were on the whole non-Jewish Jews. Indeed, the Bolshevik Party itself was the only post-Tsarist party which was actively hostile to Jewish objectives and interests. But, this knowledge mattered little, especially in Germany where the refugees pouring into Munich spread tales of bloody Bolshevik murders. That these Bolsheviks were identified with Jews, and that

their threat was greatly feared, is amply illustrated by the following article from one of Munich's racist newspapers:

*Dreadful times in which Christian-hating, circumcised Asiatics everywhere are raising their bloodstained hands to strangle us in droves! The butcheries of Christians by the Jew Issachar Zederblum, alias Lenin, would have made even a Genghis Khan blush. In Hungary his pupil Cohn, alias Béla Kun, marched through the unhappy land with a band of Jewish terrorists schooled in murder and robbery, to set up, among brutal gallows, a mobile machine gallows and execute middle-class citizens and peasants on it. A splendidly equipped harem served him, in his stolen royal train, to rape and defile honourable Christian virgins by the dozen. His lieutenant Samuely has had sixty priests cruelly butchered in an underground room. Their bellies are ripped open, their corpses mutilated, after they have been plundered to their blood drenched skin. In the case of eight murdered priests it has been established that they were first crucified on the doors of their own churches! The very same atrocious scenes are . . . now reported from Munich.<sup>51</sup>*

The report is interesting, not only because of its revelations concerning the fears of the time and its erroneous identification of Lenin as a Jew, but also because of its depiction of the Bolshevik Jew. Here he becomes the demonic arch-conspirator, in very much the Medieval sense. His enemy is Christianity, whom he has set out to destroy by any means, and no one is safe from his machinations. Class makes no difference, not to one who stoops to murder priests. It is also interesting to note that the description of the murder of priests is closely related to the early reports of ritual murder, and the fact that eight were said to have been crucified, is reminiscent of ritual-murder in its earliest form, ritual-crucifixion.

For a while in Germany it seemed that the feared Jewish/Bolshevik revolution was in fact about to become a reality. The situation in Germany following World War I was one of violent despair. The 1918 Armistice brought little in the way of peace, and instability and revolution became the norm. In the years 1918-1920 Germany appeared to have entered into one long period of

communist uprising. The dreaded Jewish threat became real, more so since Jews were prominent in all these attempts to overthrow the existing order of Germany by force. Kurt Eisner (1867-1919) led the communist uprising in Bavaria in November 1919) and ran the republic until his murder four months later. His regime included not only Jewish politicians, but gained the support of Jewish writers and intellectuals like Gustav Landauer, Ernst Toller and Erich Mühsam.<sup>52</sup> In January 1919 Rosa Luxemburg led the revolutionary "Spartacist" group in Berlin. She was murdered just a few weeks before Eisner. In Bavaria, after Eisner's assassination, a second attempt at revolution, with the proclamation of a Soviet republic in Munich in April 1919, was brutally suppressed by Free Corps units in May, with over one thousand deaths.<sup>53</sup> The battle against the "Jewish Bolshevik" was marked by such violent retaliations. It ceased to be unusual for Jewish opponents to be simply "dealt with", and in the four years 1919-1922 there were 376 political murders in Germany, all but twenty-two of them of left-wing figures, and many of them Jews.<sup>54</sup>

In the midst of this maelstrom of confusion and conspiracy-engendered fear the *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* arrived in Europe. Here was the answer everyone sought, the blue-print of the Jewish world revolution that was surely taking place, and everything pointed to its validity. Didn't the rise of Bolshevism in Russia demonstrate beyond doubt the truth of the message in *The Protocols*? The continued unrest and Jewish inspired revolutions in Germany, as well as throughout Eastern Europe, surely pointed to the same thing? The whole of Europe was immediately ensnared in these paranoid beliefs. Britain and France, according to spokesmen of ultra-right-wing politics in both countries, had been duped by Jews during World War I, while America alone, where Jews stood supreme, had enriched itself.<sup>55</sup> Whatever the argument, the conspiracy theory embodied in *The Protocols* fitted, and its message spread quickly with translations appearing in English, French, German, Polish, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, and a host of other languages.

## The Conspiracy Theory in Nazi Germany

Edward Flannery once commented that the history of antisemitism "comprised of an ascent in horrors, each grade of which promised to be the upper limit but which unfailingly paled before what followed."<sup>56</sup> Like the history of antisemitism, the development of the Conspiracy Theory comprises of an increasing ascent of outrages, each level of which promises to be an end, yet is ultimately eclipsed by that which follows it.

In the aftermath of World War I it appeared that the Conspiracy Theory had indeed reached its climax. Volkish ideology in Germany already encapsulated the idea of a racist conspiracy, the conspiracy of the alien, and the capitalist conspiracy. Jews were depicted as parasitic-destroyers of culture, of having introduced the destructive forces of modernism and the authors of all sorts of diabolical plans. Jews were viewed as conspirators of the worst kind, the bringers of a war from which they profited greatly; the authors of Germany's downfall, a downfall which they had engineered through their stab-in-the-back plot; and the cause of unending strife with their revolutionary conspiracy to spread Bolshevism throughout the world. All this was confirmed by the appearance of *The Protocols* in Europe, the alleged blue-print of the Jewish plan to dominate the world. With the conspiracy accusations mounting up, one could be forgiven for assuming that at this period the Conspiracy Theory had reached its absolute peak, that there could be no worse to come, and yet, as Flannery has already demonstrated, this was but a prelude, and what followed could only be far worse.

With the appearance of Hitler on the political scene, antisemitism, and with it the Conspiracy Theory, acquired a whole new dimension. Although antisemitism was already flourishing in Germany, Hitler transformed it into a political vehicle, and the soundness of this move was attested to by its favourable reception by the public. Suddenly, in the midst of Volkish leaders lecturing on the incompatible spiritual qualities of Jews and Germans, and theologians of race stressing the anthropological differences, a political leader, possessing a charismatic appeal, was demanding that something be done about it. Indeed, he was claiming that only the eradication of Jews could free



Germany from the conspiracy which had stripped her of her glory, and allow her to achieve greatness in the future.

That Hitler was an antisemite by conviction and a firm believer in the Conspiracy Theory is beyond doubt. Indeed, his antisemitism was composed of all the conventional elements, from the Christian *Judensau* to the pseudo-scientific race theory. Moreover what made it more distinctive was that to Hitler his antisemitism formed a complete explanation of the world, a *Weltanschauung*, a world outlook. Other political parties in Germany dabbled in antisemitism; some even gave it prominence, but the Nazis made it the centre and the end of their programme. Furthermore, Hitler's antisemitism was firmly rooted in all aspects of the Conspiracy Theory. Indeed, Hitler, an Austrian by birth but a Pan-German by choice, linked the conspiracy anxieties of both nations. From Germany he took the huge and growing fear of "Jewish-Bolshevist Russia," and the proliferating mythology of *The Protocols*, and made them a central part of his ideology. With this he blended the antisemitism he had absorbed in Austria. This concentrated on the fear of the *Ostjuden*, a dark and inferior race whose mission was to corrupt the Germanic blood. Thus Hitler believed and taught that not only was there a direct military and political threat to Germany from Jewish Bolshevism, but a deeper biological threat from any contact with members of the Jewish race.

From a combination of these two antisemitic models and his total belief in the Theories of Race, Hitler formed his attitude towards Jews. He saw them simply and plainly as devious conspirators against Germany and the world. Hitler's view of the Jewish Conspiracy can be divided into three categories. The first is that of the Conspiracy of Race. This takes a number of forms, but ultimately involves the belief that Jews were attempting to corrupt and destroy the German race. This is achieved on the abstract level, by the corruption of society, or literally by interbreeding and corrupting the purity of race. The second form is that of the Internationalist Conspiracy. The ideas of internationalism, as demonstrated by Bolshevism with its doctrine of equality was in direct opposition to Hitler's belief in the German Master Race. After all how could all men be equal when it was known that the races were unequal and

that there could only be one victor in the struggle for supremacy? For Hitler, internationalism, with its notion of man's equality, was nothing more than a device aimed at undermining the racist struggle. Men could not be equal; racism showed that only one race could be dominant, and in Hitler's mind that race would be the Aryan race. To Hitler it was obvious who could create such a false notion, the only race who had something to gain and were themselves an international force - Jews. Finally, Hitler believed that the Zionist movement was yet another part of the Conspiracy plan. The Jewish settlement of Palestine, he maintained, was just the first step to world domination.

#### i. The Racist Conspiracy

The importance of the Jewish Question in Hitler's program can be determined by the fact that some seven years or so before his foreign policy had even developed into a unified and coherent goal, Hitler's general ideas about Jews were already fixed. More importantly these views concerned the Racist Conspiracy. In a letter, dated September 16, 1919 which was written at the request of his military superior in the Press and Propaganda Office, and which has been called the first written document of his political career, Hitler set down the views which were to remain his attitude towards Jews for the whole of his political career. In reply to one Adolf Gemlich, who asked for enlightenment on the Jewish question he wrote, "Antisemitism as a political movement cannot and should not be determined by emotional factors, but on the contrary by an understanding of the facts."<sup>57</sup> The "facts", he continued, are that, "in the first instance, Jewry is without question a race and not a religious fellowship,"<sup>58</sup> that it always remained true to itself within its host peoples, and that it was exclusively interested in the pursuit of money, material goods, the exploitation of the press and the fulfilment of its lust for power.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Hitler concluded, "the effect of Jewry will be racial tuberculosis of nations."<sup>60</sup>

As was mentioned previously, central to Hitler's notion of the Racial Conspiracy was the fear of the *Ostjuden*, Yiddish speaking Jewish immigrants from Hungary and Galicia, who were concentrated in Vienna's Leopoldstadt ghetto. They still dressed, talked and behaved like *shtetl* Jews; many of them

were Orthodox and quite impervious to the allure of German *Kultur*. It was these exotic looking *Ostjuden* that Hitler presumably first encountered in 1908, at the time of the massive influx of Galacian Jews into Vienna.<sup>61</sup> The young Hitler, as he later recorded in *Mein Kampf*, claims to have experienced a horrible fright, induced by the strange dress and appearance of these Jews.

*Once as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? was my first thought.*

*For, to be sure, they had not looked like that in Linz. I observed the man furtively and cautiously, but the longer I stared at this foreign face, scrutinising feature for feature, the more my first question assumed a new form:*

*Is this a German?*<sup>62</sup>

Lacking any insight into their distinctive culture, the young Hitler simply seized on the outward signs of difference, of the alien and un-Germanic appearance of these Jews and in their "strangeness" saw the existence of a Jewish World Conspiracy. The Jews of his hometown of Linz "had become Europeanised and had taken on a human look"<sup>63</sup> but in Vienna they had kept their true form. To Hitler these alien Jews openly criss-crossing the land, settling and multiplying, were attempting to dominate and displace genuine Germans,<sup>64</sup> just as they had for centuries, in hidden form, by posing as true Germans.

Worse than the threat of displacement, however, was the biological threat that these Jews posed. For Hitler Aryans were the supreme race, and the bearers of all human cultural development: "All human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan."<sup>65</sup> Indeed, he goes on, without the Aryan the world would come to nothing:

*Exclude him - and perhaps after a few thousand years darkness will again descend on the earth, human culture will pass, and the world will again turn to a desert.*<sup>66</sup>

The Aryans, therefore, by their nature and "blood", were chosen to rule the world. The very existence of world civilisation depended on maintaining and safeguarding the purity of the Aryan race:

*What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people, the sustenance of our children and the purity of our blood, the freedom and independence of the fatherland, so that our people may mature for the fulfilment of the mission allotted it by the creator of the universe.* <sup>67</sup>

Hitler had no doubts as to who threatened the purity of the Aryan race: none other than the Jew. As he himself pointed out, "The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew."<sup>68</sup> In Hitler's system, Aryans represented the perfection of human existence, whereas Jews were the embodiment of evil, intent on corrupting all that was good, especially the Aryan.

Hitler saw the Jewish threat to Aryan purity in a number of areas. Like the Volkish thinkers before him Hitler saw sexual congress as the main weapon of the Jew in the attempt to destroy the racial foundations of the Aryan. Drawing on the imagery of writers such as Theodor Fritsch<sup>69</sup> he invested the Jew with a lust for Aryan women and magnetic sexual powers, powers which he uses to purposely defile Aryan blood in order to destroy the strength and greatness of the Aryan people, so that he might subjugate them and eventually take over the world. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler evoked in ugly hysterical tones this image of the Jew:

*With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people.* <sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, where the Jew could not succeed in tainting the virginal purity of German womanhood he found others who would carry out his wishes.

*Just as he himself systematically ruins women and girls, he does not shrink back from pulling down the blood barriers for others, even on a large scale. It was and it is Jews who bring the Negroes into the Rhineland, always with the same secret thought and*

*clear aim of ruining the hated white race by the necessarily resulting bastardisation, throwing it down from its cultural and political height, and himself rising to be its master.*<sup>71</sup>

But, it was the Jew who really occupied Hitler's sexual/racial obsession as he proved in one of his many Munich beer-cellar orations: ". . . I would like to take you . . . only for a moment to Berlin," he told his rapt audience, "for a glance into the *Friedrichstrasse*." With mounting excitement, Hitler evoked for his audience the image of, "Jew-boy, after Jew-boy with a German girl on his arm." The image of sexual defilement rang through clearly, for "on that very night, thousands and thousands of our blood are annihilated forever in an instant and that child and grandchildren are lost to us forever."<sup>72</sup>

The twin threats of sexual defilement and inter-racial marriage were not Hitler's only concerns. In other areas he believed that Jews were conspiring to cause the degeneration of the Aryan nation. Foremost among these was his obsession with the spread of syphilis, a disease for which as yet there was no antibiotic cure, and which Hitler identified as being caused by Jews. That Hitler believed syphilis to be a huge threat is reflected in his call for a focusing of the national effort on this question "as though life and death actually depended on its solution."<sup>73</sup> In Hitler's mind

*The struggle against syphilis and prostitution which prepares the way for it is one of the most gigantic tasks of humanity, gigantic because we are facing, not the solution of a single question, but the elimination of a large number of evils which bring about this plague . . .*<sup>74</sup>

Syphilis not only represented "a . . . terrible poisoning of the health of the national body"<sup>75</sup> the consequences of which are to "be found in the insane asylums"<sup>76</sup> but also led to the birth of defective children. Without healthy children a race has no hope for the future. Moreover, Hitler equated the spread of syphilis with the "prostitution of love" which symbolised what Hitler called the "Jewification of our spiritual life and mammonisation of our mating instinct"<sup>77</sup>

There is little doubt that Hitler firmly believed that prostitution was a Jewish weapon against Aryans. He particularly associated it with the white slave trade and the *Ostjuden* of Vienna. Indeed in Vienna, Hitler commented in *Mein Kampf*,

*The relation of the Jews to prostitution and, even more, to the white slave traffic, could be studied . . . as perhaps in no other city of Western Europe, with the possible exception of the southern French ports. If you walked at night through the streets and alleys of Leopoldstadt, at every step you witnessed proceedings which remained concealed from the majority of the German people . . .*<sup>78</sup>

In Vienna, as in most large European cities at this time, prostitution was indeed rampant. However, there is little evidence, as Ralph Manheim<sup>79</sup> points out, that there was any specific Jewish involvement in the Viennese vice trade, other than the fact that some of the Russian émigré Jews who had arrived in the city destitute had been drawn, or trapped, into prostitution as a means of survival. The relation of the *Ostjuden* to the white slave trade, on the other hand, was not simply an invention of Hitler, but a very real and serious social problem. This is not to say that it was entirely a Jewish problem, as Wistrich observes, "the moral crusade against white slavery, especially in Austria-Hungary, had from the outset been strongly tainted by antisemitism."<sup>80</sup> Moreover, the Jewish slave-traders preyed mostly on young immigrant Jewesses from Galicia, rather than the young, innocent and "defenceless" Christian German girls who, in Hitler's racist imagination, were being stolen forever from their people.

This sexual-medical aspect of Hitler's antisemitic racial theory was, according to Johnson, "probably the most important, especially among his own followers,"<sup>81</sup> more so because it allowed the merely prejudiced to become fanatics, capable of any course of action no matter how irrational or diabolical. Just as medieval antisemites saw Jews as non-human, as devils and poisoners, the Nazi extremist absorbed Hitler's sub-scientific phraseology and came to regard Jews as bacilli or particularly dangerous vermin. One is struck by the peculiar references to Jews in the antisemitic passages of Hitler's writings, references that belong more in the realms of parasitology than in politics. For

example in *Mein Kampf* Hitler claims that the Jew is "like a maggot in a rotting body" ; he is like a pestilence worse than the Black Death; a germ-carrier of the worst kind; a "venomous plague" ; a poisoner of the people; the typical parasite; a noxious bacillus; a parasite in the body of other nations; the eternal bloodsucker; a vampire; the bearer of the ferment of decay.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, he did not lose this theme in his *Testament*, his final written work, referring to Jewry as vermin; an abscess; a parasite clamped to the flesh and feeding off the life-blood of others.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, Hitler's final words to the German people was on precisely this theme:

*It is obvious that the only white peoples who have any chance of survival and prosperity are those who know how to suffer and who still retain the courage to fight, even when things are hopeless, to the death. And the only people who will have the right to claim these qualities will be those who have shown themselves capable of eradicating from their systems the deadly poison of Jewry.<sup>84</sup>*

Apart from anything else Hitler's approach enabled all Jews to be grouped together irrespective of their circumstances or views. Thus a totally assimilated Jew, who spoke, read and wrote perfect German, who held a respectable job, who had served in the First World War and won an iron cross, was just as dangerous a racial polluter as a Jewish-Bolshevik revolutionary or a caftan-wearing rabbi. Indeed, the assimilated Jew was far more of a threat, since he did not stand out as Jewish and was therefore more likely to "desecrate" an Aryan woman. The extent to which Hitler indoctrinated his followers can be seen in a letter written to him by his Minister of Justice, Thierack, in April 1943:

*A full Jewess, after the birth of her child, sold her mother's milk to a woman doctor and concealed the fact that she was a Jewess. With this milk, infants of German blood were fed in a clinic. The accused is charged with fraud. The purchasers of the milk have suffered damage, because the milk of a Jewess cannot be considered food for German children. . . However, there has been no formal indictment in order to spare the parents, who do not know the*

*facts, unnecessary worry. I will discuss the race-hygienic aspects of the case with the Reich Health Chief.*<sup>85</sup>

It seems incredible that anyone could believe this nonsense, especially in such a highly educated nation as Germany, yet Hitler never failed to find backing, both on the intellectual level or on the popular level. There are many factors which contributed to this state. For example the "scandal" of Freud and his teachings was an important "proof" of the Nazi case. After all, here was an archetypal Jew, they argued, whose teaching was designed to remove the moral guilt from sexual promiscuity in order to increase it. Thus Freud encouraged Jews to gain greater, guilt-free, access to Aryan women. Indeed, Jung himself aided Hitler's campaign against Jews, by arguing that Jewish-Freudian psychiatry was only valid to Jews and could cause nothing but harm to European man.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, the generation of schoolteachers who had matured during the last decade of the nineteenth century were infected with Volkish antisemitism, which had already placed great emphasis on Jewish sexual abilities and their intent to defile Aryan women. By the 1920s these people had become senior teachers perpetuating the lie for the next generation. On the popular level newspapers such as the weekly *Der Stürmer*, run by the Nazi boss of Middle Franconia, Julius Streicher, helped to spread and intensify the sexual conspiracy theory and indeed, the whole of the racial conspiracy theory, among the masses. A good part of nearly every issue of *Der Stürmer* was devoted in some way to instructing the Aryan in how to spot the camouflaged Jew and his various conspiracies.<sup>87</sup> Streicher's favourite theme above all was the Jew as a sex offender. The typical *Der Stürmer* Jew was presented in much the same way as the typical Medieval devil, with oversized genitals, insatiable sexual appetites and an irresistible approach. This Jew was ever ready to seduce, rape, exploit teenage employees, indulge in bizarre sex crimes, violate children and finally, always willing to engage in ritual murder, an offence which in the pages of *Der Stürmer* was nearly always overlaid with sexual overtones.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, probably the best known issue of *Der Stürmer* is the notorious 1934 ritual murder issue with its front page cartoon of Jews catching the blood from the severed



jugulars of blond women and children, and its accompanying articles all written in a similar vein.

From the concept of the Jew as a parasite, vampire and bloodsucker, contaminating the Aryan race with poisons and disease, it was but a short step to the more abstract image of the Jew as a cultural polluter. As Hitler asserted in *Mein Kampf*: "Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it?"<sup>89</sup> Hitler firmly believed that Jews had no language or culture of their own, but that they sapped and drained other cultures and races so as ultimately to destroy them. Indeed, in every aspect of German cultural life Hitler saw this process already at work.

*I now began to examine carefully the names of all the creators of unclean products in public artistic life. The result was less and less favourable for my previous attitude towards the Jews. Regardless of how my sentiment might resist, my reason was forced to draw its conclusions.*

*The fact that nine tenths of all literary filth, artistic trash and theatrical idiocy can be set to the account of a people, constituting hardly one hundredth of all the country's inhabitants, could simply not be talked away; it was the plain truth.<sup>90</sup>*

Not only had artistic life become infected by the process of "Jewification" but so had the press and all aspects of economic life. Indeed according to Hitler's reckoning Jews were using the press to undermine all that was German whilst promoting their own cause.

*I now saw the liberal attitude of this press in a different light . . . the transfigured raptures of their theatrical critics were always directed at Jewish writers, and their disapproval never struck anyone but Germans. The gentle pin-pricks against Wilhelm II revealed its methods by their persistency . . . in the language I detected the accent of a foreign people; the sense of the whole thing was so obviously hostile to Germanism that this could only have been intentional.<sup>91</sup>*

Furthermore, through the press the Jew, "the inexorable mortal enemy of all light, a hater of all true culture,"<sup>92</sup> was depicting himself as part of "a harmless little people" with a "thoroughly honest and benevolent soul", all in an effort "to make him seem almost more 'insignificant' than *dangerous*."<sup>93</sup> But, Hitler did not doubt the danger that the Jew posed. Indeed, in the economic sphere he had become a figurative bloodsucker sapping the financial lifeblood from the German nation. During the First World War when the true Aryan was fighting for his nation, Hitler comments, the Jewish "spider was slowly beginning to suck the blood out of the people's pores. Through the war corporations, they had found an instrument with which, little by little, to finish off the national free economy."<sup>94</sup>

Thus Hitler maintained, that through racial pollution and the undermining of German culture, press and economy the Jews would achieve dominion over the world. They aimed for nothing less than the "collapse of human civilisation and the consequent devastation of the world."<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Hitler envisaged a sorry end to the whole of humanity should Jews be victorious:

*If with the help of his Marxist creed, the Jew is victorious over the other peoples of the world, his crown will be the funeral wreath of humanity and this planet will, as it did thousands of years ago, move through the ether devoid of men.*<sup>96</sup>

## ii. The Internationalist Conspiracy

The second strand of the Conspiracy Theory that dominated the Nazi antisemitic *Weltanschauung* was that of Internationalism. The anxiety surrounding the threat of Internationalism was fuelled mainly by the huge and growing fear of "Jewish-Bolshevik" Russia and the mythology surrounding *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. For Hitler Internationalism represented an opposing force to all the sacred precepts of his *Weltanschauung*. Hitler's *Weltanschauung* was built around three important factors, the value of the people, the personality value, and the drive for self-preservation - or to put them more simply, nationalism, the Führer principle, and heroism or militarism. In direct opposition to these stood the three vices that made up the Internationalist

Conspiracy - internationalism, democracy and pacifism. The threat of these three vices was made clear by Hitler in a speech given at Nuremberg on July 21, 1927.

*Then things will come to that state which great parties proclaim in their programs, namely to a people which is internationally oriented, which is ruled according to the program of democracy, and which rejects struggle and preaches pacifism. A people has lost its inner value as soon as it has incorporated into itself these three vices of mankind, as it has eliminated its racial value, preached internationalism, given up its self-direction and has put in its place majority rule, i.e. incompetence, and has begun to indulge in the brotherhood of mankind.<sup>97</sup>*

Internationalism, be it the Marxist phenomena, democracy or any ideology that preached the notion of man's equality, thus posed a threat to the racial foundations of a nation, to the nationalism that bound a nation and to the strength of that nation to struggle in the battle for racial supremacy. Hitler was in no doubt as to who was behind this conspiracy to weaken the German nation, and indeed all the nations of the world - Jews. They were an international group, and from such a position could, as *The Protocols* showed, manipulate and eventually dominate the world.

Hitler demonstrated his suspicions concerning the Internationalist Conspiracy in a two hour speech given in Munich on August 13, 1920, the subject of which was, "Why we are against the Jews".<sup>98</sup> Amongst the assortment of antisemitic accusations, varying from racialism to materialism, mammonism and the white slave traffic, Hitler introduced a concept that in previous speeches had remained unmentioned, the concept of Jewish Internationalism. He claimed that like capitalism, Jews were an international force. Preaching the equality of all peoples and international solidarity, their aim, he stated, was nothing more than to denationalise the races.<sup>99</sup> This short utterance was, along with the Racist Conspiracy, soon to become the central accusation of Hitler's antisemitism.

The speech contained almost all the themes which, in the next three years until the Munich *Putsch*, were to be repeated and varied untiringly. Furthermore, alongside the usual charges, Jews became more and more frequently associated with the adjective "international." Indeed, "Jewish" and "international" became virtually identical so much so that Hitler, from the beginning of the twenties to his death, rarely used one of these terms without the other. This appellation had far reaching implications for him. It was for this reason that Jews became the instigators of all international programs, such as Marxism, Socialism, universal peace, the League of Nations, Freemasonry, and so on. Thus when he spoke of Marxism as being Jewish, he referred not only to the Jewish origins of Karl Marx but also, beyond that, to the international character of Marxism. In a similar sense, The German Social Democratic Party for Hitler was also Jewish because, regardless of whether its leaders were Jews or not, the Social Democrats propounded the idea of the international solidarity of the worker.<sup>100</sup>

At the forefront of Hitler's battle against the Jewish Internationalist Conspiracy was the conflict with what the Nazi's termed *Gesamtmarxismus*. This embraced all Marxist phenomena, from, for example, a communist cell in a Berlin suburb to the Soviet Union itself. The conflict with *Gesamtmarxismus* became the battle royal for the National Socialists, and, as Zeman points out, "their leaders often said that the movement had grown up in this struggle, in which they expected to grow stronger and finally to triumph."<sup>101</sup> .

Anti-Communism was probably the initial dominating theme of the fight against *Gesamtmarxismus*. For Hitler the Jewish Conspiracy had achieved its greatest breakthrough with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia towards the end of the First World War. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler portrayed Russian Bolshevism as Jewry's twentieth-century effort to achieve world dominion. Jews, he claimed, had succeeded through the revolution in uprooting the "Germanic nucleus" which had been responsible for the organisation of the Russian state-structure and the development of the Tsarist empire. Bolshevism, therefore, in wiping out the German element in Russia, had robbed the Russian people of its intelligentsia and the constructive, state-building element, replacing this with the

rule of a race whose abilities lay solely in destruction. But, Hitler asserted, the Jewish rulers would not be able to maintain their domination for long, since by their very nature they were destroyers, not builders or keepers of states.

*Impossible as it is for the Russian by himself to shake off the yoke of the Jew by his own resources, it is equally impossible for the Jew to maintain the mighty Empire forever. He himself is no element of organisation, but a ferment of decomposition. The Giant Empire in the East is ripe for collapse. And the end of Jewish rule in Russia will also be the end of Russia as a state. We have been chosen by Fate as witness of a catastrophe which will be the mightiest confirmation of the soundness of the folkist theory.<sup>102</sup>*

Hitler's opinions were no doubt buttressed by the influence of men like Alfred Rosenberg, a German refugee from the Baltic provinces, and Russians such as Gertrude von Seidlitz. Post-war Germany swarmed with such Russian refugees of German origin, German Balts, and former members of old Tsarist antisemitic groups such as the Black Hundreds, the Yellow Shirts and the Union of the Russian People. All of them stressed the Jewish-Bolshevik connection. Some even rose to prominent places within the Nazi party. For example, Rosenberg became the Nazi's leading expert on Russia, whilst Gertrude von Seidlitz enabled Hitler to acquire the *Völkischer Beobachter*, in 1920, and turn it into an antisemitic daily.<sup>103</sup> By 1921 anti-Communism was firmly established as one of the major themes of Nazi propaganda. In the summer of that year posters appeared in Munich inviting its citizens to a public meeting at which the speaker, Adolf Hitler, would declare his views on the "Dying Soviet Russia." The poster declared,

*We German National Socialists demand that the Russian people be given help, not by supporting its present government, but by the elimination of its present corrupters. Those who today give for Russia do not give for the Russian worker but for his exploiter, the Jewish commissar.<sup>104</sup>*

There is little evidence to suggest that from the beginning to end of the often bloody conflict with communism that the Nazis ever concerned themselves too

much with the theories behind it. Indeed, there is no reason to believe that either Hitler, or his "expert" Rosenberg, ever read a single book or article by Marx or Engels.<sup>105</sup>

At home German Social Democracy at first occupied a leading position amongst the phenomena of *Gesamtmarxismus*. Indeed, Hitler considered Social Democracy a Jewish weapon which had helped in bringing about the defeat and ignominy of the German nation.<sup>106</sup> However, this opinion was gradually replaced by a preoccupation with Jewish-Bolshevism, which was quite clearly becoming the threat of the future. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler wrote, "In . . . Bolshevism we must see the attempt undertaken by the Jews in the twentieth century to achieve world domination."<sup>107</sup> Russia had already succumbed to this menace and Hitler was in no doubt that the next target of "Jewish bolshevism" would be Germany, which was now, so the Nazi's claimed, the central battle-ground of the global struggle between the Aryan world and Jewry.

The ultimate objective of Germany's Jewish enemy was the internationalisation of the economy and the enslavement of labour power to Jewish finance. The method of conquest, Hitler warned, would follow much the same pattern as in Soviet Russia: "Russia can give us countless examples, and with us it will be the same story."<sup>108</sup> This conquest would involve the ruthless extermination of the national intelligentsia and the reduction of the masses to a state of slavery. It was the mission of National Socialism to halt the "bolshevization" of Germany, which was now almost certainly imminent as part of the Jewish strategy of world conquest. The mighty struggle in Germany would be, so Hitler claimed in *Mein Kampf*, the fateful turning point in world history.

*If our people and our state, become the victims of these bloodthirsty and avaricious Jewish tyrants of nations, the whole earth will sink into the snares of this octopus; if Germany frees herself from this embrace, this greatest of dangers to the nations may be regarded as broken for the whole world.*<sup>109</sup>

Hitler's obsession with fighting Bolshevism in Germany increased throughout his career, to the extent that by 1932 it had culminated in an

anti-Communist psychosis throughout the land. The *Reichspropagandaleitung* started running "anti-Marxist courses" aimed at the "achievement of a militant and systematic agitation and propaganda against the SPD and KPD."<sup>110</sup> The fight against the Bolshevization of Germany was indeed, profitable for Hitler. Before January 1933 it served to divert attention away from his real aim - the achievement of political power - as well as helped him achieve it. After January 1933 it facilitated Hitler's claim for absolute power. It was in all a highly rewarding campaign. Indeed, in 1933 some sections of the German body politic, namely, the *Deutschnational* party, the industrialists and the military, handed powers over to Hitler because they believed that he would save the country from Communism.<sup>111</sup>

Of course the gravity of the Communist threat was greatly exaggerated to facilitate Nazi agitation against it. Indeed, the Nazi propagandists succeeded in creating a pseudo-situation, in which a Communist revolution in Germany was imminent. In reality, however, the situation was vastly different, as Zeman notes, "at no elections between 1930 and 1932 did the KDP - the Communist Party of Germany - gain more than 17.6 per cent of the total poll; the party was incapable of waging a conclusive fight with the National Socialists, or indeed with anyone else."<sup>112</sup> Even the threat from Communist Russia was highly exaggerated. Stalin, at the time was preoccupied more with internal Russian problems than he was with Germany. But, even if he had looked to conquering Germany, it is probable, as Zeman suggests, that he would have disliked the idea of a united left-wing front in the land, preferring instead a nationalist government which would concentrate on breaking the peace treaties.<sup>113</sup> The extent of the pseudo-situation created around the threat of Communism, is illustrated by the fact that a few months after the destruction of the German Communist party in the Spring of 1933, the Nazis still felt it necessary to set up the *Antikomintern* - the Union of German anti-Communist Societies. Its function was to "combat the Communist International and its allies,"<sup>114</sup> that is, Jews, and as an afterthought, the Freemasons. The society, under the patronage of Goebbels was extremely well endowed.

There did exist some legitimate grounds for the animosity between the Nazis and Communists. They had fought each other in the streets of Germany for many years, especially during times of economic crisis when the National Socialists had found themselves in direct competition with the Communists for the favours of the industrial workers. By grossly exaggerating the Communist threat the Nazi propagandists forged an extremely effective political weapon. Hitler was depicted as a saviour, who would protect Germany from Communism; moreover, what he had done for Germany he could easily do for the rest of Europe.

Hitler was in no doubt that much of Europe had already succumbed to the powers of International Jewry. Indeed, in Chapter XIII of *Mein Kampf* Hitler stated that one of the reasons that Germany was not considered a prospective ally by many countries, was due to the influence of Jews, especially those of England and Italy. Indeed, in both these countries Hitler considered their power to be so strong that their governments could no longer serve the countries' true national interests:

*In England as well as Italy the cleavage between the views of the better indigenous statesmanship and the will of the world stock exchange Jews is clear: sometimes it is crassly obvious.*<sup>115</sup>

The Jewish attempt to control Europe, was for Hitler, the first step in their attempt at racial domination of the whole world. In this they did not differ from any other race but, unlike other races, Jews did not use fair or natural means to achieve their ends. They fought instead by subversive means. Internationalism was one of these, as was the control of international finance through which they took control of a nation's work force and ultimately the nation. "The Jewish influence on economic affairs grows with terrifying speed through the stock exchange. He becomes the owner, or at least the controller, of the national labour force."<sup>116</sup> Once the labour force is conquered the Jew promises the workers that under his leadership he will improve their situation, whilst in truth he plans "the enslavement and with it the destruction of all non-Jewish people."<sup>117</sup> He also spreads democracy and the rule of parliamentarianism, thus further undermining the nations, because, as Hitler



observed it, "It is most compatible with his requirements; for it excludes the personality - and puts in its place the majority characterised by stupidity, incompetence, and last but not least, cowardice."<sup>118</sup> From democracy the Jew begins his quest for dictatorship of the masses. Thus, once in control politically, the Jew's only remaining task was to undermine the racial instinct of the world.

Egalitarianism was the foremost Jewish machination in the racial conquest of the nations. For Hitler egalitarianism repudiated the very principles of the theory of racism, but for the Jew it was a means of undermining racial foundations. "He talks more and more of the equality of all men without regard to race and colour. The fools begin to believe him."<sup>119</sup> In so doing they let down their racial guard and the Jew steps in to bastardise the race. Also the Jew preaches pacifism, for only they are interested in "the general pacifistic paralysis of the national instinct of self-preservation."<sup>120</sup>

The world outside Germany was thus, according to Hitler, slowly being controlled by Jewish machinations. Their intention was, or so Hitler believed, the denationalisation of the whole world.

*His ultimate goal is the denationalisation, the promiscuous bastardisation of other peoples, the lowering of the racial level of the highest peoples as well as the domination of this racial mishmash through the extirpation of the folkish intelligentsia and its replacement by members of its own people.<sup>121</sup>*

Germany could not, therefore, achieve its own mission and bring about the new millennium of Aryan culture without first breaking up this old order dominated by Jewish interests. As he told Hermann Rauschning, shortly after the Nazi seizure of power:

*The struggle for world domination will be fought entirely between us, between Germans and Jews. All else is façade and illusion. Behind England stands Israel, and behind France, and behind the United States. Even when we have driven the Jew out of Germany, he remains our world enemy.<sup>122</sup>*

### iii The Zionist Conspiracy

The final thread in Hitler's conception of the Jewish Conspiracy theory was that of the threat of Zionism. Hitler believed that the Zionist movement and the call for a Jewish homeland was all part of the Jewish attempt at world conquest. As such this theme did not reach the same prominence in Hitler's *Weltanschauung* that the Racist and the Internationalist Conspiracies attained, but Hitler and his followers did make frequent reference to this imagined danger.

In many ways Hitler and the founder of the Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl, had a great deal in common. Both recognised Jews as a single people and both rejected the viability of liberal emancipation as a "solution" to the Jewish problem. Zionism had much in common with antisemitism in that respect, and several antisemites, especially in France, Hungary and the German-speaking countries, had initially welcomed Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* as a valid solution to the Jewish problem. They were attracted by the proposal for an orderly exodus of Jews from Europe to a state of their own.<sup>123</sup> Of course whilst both groups felt that assimilation of Jews was undesirable, and recognised that over concentration of Jews in any one society would inevitably lead to a hostile backlash, both had different reasons for wanting Jews out of Europe. Antisemites such as Dühring in Germany, von Schoenerer in Austria and Drumont in France wished simply enough to rid themselves of "alien intruders" whilst Herzl wished, on the other hand, to save Jews. But, both camps agreed that Jews should leave Europe if the elements of friction with Gentile society were not to lead to catastrophic consequences. Herzl was convinced that it was both possible and desirable to do "business", as it were, with the antisemites on the basis of national self-interest. Jew-hatred could be "used" to solve the Jewish question in a manner satisfactory to both the haters and the hated. Herzl, however, did not foresee the one major flaw in his plan - that radical antisemites, such as Hitler, would ultimately deny the very right of Jews to exist.

Hitler, along with many of the more radical antisemites, although they wanted all Jews out of Europe, came to perceive Zionism as an integral part of the never-ending Jewish Conspiracy. Hitler, as we have seen, believed that Jews

had a parasitic nature which doomed them to live in exile at the expense of their host nations. Likewise, he thought that Jews were destroyers of nations and by nature unable to create a state of their own. Thus, he genuinely accepted that the only purpose of Zionism was as a mask for the secret Jewish aim of overthrowing the other nations to obtain world-power. It was an idea created very much in the atmosphere engendered by *The Protocols* in Europe, especially as it was claimed that *The Protocols* were written at the first Zionist conference. It was exactly in this spirit that Rosenberg, Hitler's chief theorist, had interpreted the Jewish national movement. In a lengthy pamphlet first published in 1922 entitled, *Der Staatsfeindliche Zionismus*, Rosenberg expounded at length on the domestic and foreign danger represented by Zionism. Zionism was, he asserted, an international movement, not a national one, whose aim was to unite world Jewry on a political basis. It had aligned itself with the enemies of Germany during the First World War, a war which he claimed in his commentary on *The Protocols*, published the following year, had been brought about by Jewish influence.<sup>124</sup> Behind Zionism, Rosenberg claimed stood the combined forces of the big Jewish bankers and the Jewish Marxist revolutionaries. Both had worked together with Jewish-controlled Britain to overthrow Germany. Now as well as supporting Bolshevism and controlling Britain, the Zionists had combined forces with the United States as a further part of its global conquest. Its final aim was unite all Jews, be they liberal, orthodox, or left-wing, into one huge pan-Jewish movement which was invariably hostile to German national interests.<sup>125</sup>

Hitler, like Rosenberg, interpreted the Zionist movement in this *Protocols* spirit. In his speech of August 1920, in which Hitler first introduced the notion of the Internationalist Conspiracy, he also commented that the Zionist state was intended to serve Jews only "as the ultimate complete academy of their international shabby tricks."<sup>126</sup> Writing in *Mein Kampf* he stated,

*The Jew's domination in the state seems so assured that now not only can he call himself a Jew again, but he ruthlessly admits his ultimate national and political designs. A section of his race openly owns itself to be a foreign people, yet even here they lie.*

*For while the Zionists try to make the rest of the world believe that the national consciousness of the Jew finds its satisfaction in the creation of the Palestinian state, the Jews again slyly dupe the dumb Goyim. It doesn't even enter their heads to build up a Jewish state in Palestine for the purpose of living there; all they want is a central organisation for their international world swindle, endowed with its own sovereign rights and removed from the intervention of other states: a haven for convicted scoundrels and a university for budding crooks.*

*It is a sign of their rising confidence and sense of security that at a time when one section is still playing the German, Frenchman, or Englishman, the other with open effrontery comes out as the Jewish race.<sup>127</sup>*

For Hitler, the Zionist movement proved some of his theories. Foremost, that Jews were intrinsically one people. There were no German, French, or English Jews, they were a single race. That they, a parasitic people, unable to build and create anything of their own could only desire a homeland as part of their great conspiracy to overthrow the Aryan people and ultimately destroy the world. Whilst Hitler, like Herzl, believed that liberal emancipation was not the answer to the Jewish problem, he did not believe that a Zionist state was either. Ultimately there could be only one solution and that involved the settlement of the racist struggle where there could be only one victorious nation. For Hitler and the Jews that settlement would be the Final Solution.

# Chapter 6

## The Conspiracy Theory in the Contemporary World

### The Final Solution

If antisemitism in modern Germany pointed to one thing; it was that the racist struggle, no matter how illusory or imagined, would one day become a reality. Volkish ideology pointed to this ultimate conflict, whilst the basic aim of Hitler was always the struggle of the races: "There cannot be two Chosen People", Hitler told Hermann Rauschning, "We are God's People."<sup>1</sup> This attitude, inevitably, would culminate in a struggle against the Jewish people, in whom the theorists of race saw the ultimate embodiment of evil. Indeed, Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, the "vileness" of the Jew is so gigantic "that no-one need be surprised if among our people the personification of the devil as the symbol of all evil assumes the living shape of the Jew."<sup>2</sup> Hitler's ultimate vision was of an apocalyptic struggle between Aryan and Jew, it was a battle of good and evil, between God and the Devil, Christ and the anti-Christ. In his mind, Hitler was the Messiah who would deliver the Aryan nation from the ultimate evil - the Jewish-Devil. Hence, he could say, "Today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: *by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.*"<sup>3</sup>

The Jew, thus, in Nazi ideology, became the incarnation of the Devil, the implacable enemy of the Aryan race. He was a dangerous parasite, set on corrupting his host, in order that he, one day, would control the world. The Nazis did not see the Jew as in any way human, neither did they see him as an abstract evil. Every Jew, from the smallest child through to the oldest person was part of this all too real, corrupting, evil force. Every Jew desired the end of the Aryan nation, was part of the parasitic whole, was part of the vermin that desired to rule the world. Every Jew was a Nazi enemy and would, as such, have to be destroyed.

Nazi ideology, based firmly in the belief of a Jewish Conspiracy, served to bring forth a horror of such tremendous magnitude that even today an ordinary person's mind is incapable of absorbing the enormity of it. There is much to be said about the Holocaust, but I will confine myself here to basic facts, and leave the task of expansion to those historians, and survivors, who have already done the job far more adequately.<sup>4</sup>

Nazi ideology succeeded in stripping Jews of their humanity and eventually it denied them the very right to exist. A lucky few were able to flee the horror of what came, setting up home in the USA. and in other countries which the Nazis never reached. Millions, however, did not escape. In 1939 two-thirds of the world's Jews lived in Europe, and half of world Jewry was concentrated in Eastern Europe. Hitler planned to kill every last European Jew, a fact which he never made secret. In 1922 he told the journalist Josef Hell,

*Once I am really in power, my first and foremost task will be the annihilation of the Jews. As soon as I have the power to do so, I will have gallows built in rows - at the Marienplatz in Munich, for example - as many as traffic allows. Then the Jews will be hanged indiscriminately, and they will remain hanging until they stink; they will hang there as long as the principles of hygiene permit. As soon as they have been untied, the next batch will be strung up, and so on down the line, until the last Jew in Munich has been exterminated. Other cities will follow suit, precisely in this fashion, until all Germany has been completely cleansed of Jews.<sup>5</sup>*

This was but one of many such pronouncements and not all of them made privately. Indeed, on January 30, 1939 Hitler publicly repeated his "death threat" in an address to the Reichstag :

*Today I will be a prophet again: If international finance Jewry within Europe and abroad should succeed once more in plunging the peoples into a world war, then the consequence will not be the Bolshevization of the world and thereby a victory of Jewry, but on the contrary, the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe.<sup>6</sup>*

Hitler was to repeat this theme again and again as the war progressed, leaving us little doubt that he knew of, and indeed, ordered the Final Solution.

But, those Jews, already thoroughly assimilated into German culture found it hard to believe that such a horror would befall them. There were those patriotic Germans who had fought in the First World War; there were those who spoke German and were totally integrated into the German academic world; there were many who did not practice Judaism and many who had become Christian. They were all convinced that nothing terrible would happen to them. But none of this mattered to Hitler. They all had Jewish blood and this made them non-Aryans, and as such an enemy of Aryan racial purity. Patriotism, academic success, popularity, even the non-practise of religion did not matter. All that it took was to be born of three Jewish grandparents to make a person the Jewish enemy, although just one Jewish grandparent was enough to mark a person as a non-Aryan.

Hitler, wanted these corrupting non-Aryans out of Germany and ultimately out of Europe. Initially he pursued a policy of forced emigration, driving over half of the 800,000 Jews of "Greater Germany" out of the country before the outbreak of war.<sup>7</sup> The opening of the war, however, meant that emigration plans had to be halted and a new solution had to be found, especially since the war also brought Hitler control of half of Poland, and with it, over two million Polish Jews.<sup>8</sup> Hitler's solution was to confine these Jews to ghettos in the interior of Poland. The ghettos were the first step in Hitler's planned annihilation of the Jewish race. They were congested, the air fetid and the streets filthy. They lacked basic necessities such as lighting and adequate sewage and sanitation facilities. The lack of fuel meant that many Jews froze in the long harsh winters. The lack of soap, sanitation and excessive overcrowding of rooms, led to outbreaks of typhus and countless other diseases. Jews had little chance of survival, if the cold and disease didn't kill them the German policy of starvation did. The streets were often littered with the corpses of children and adults who had died begging for food. In Warsaw, from September to December 1939 four Jews died of hunger; in 1940, ninety-one died; and in 1941, nearly 11,000.<sup>9</sup> The circle was a vicious one, for hunger didn't always

kill, often it just weakened its victims enough to make them fall prey to one of the countless diseases that plagued the ghetto.

Alongside the ghetto the Nazi concentration camp provided another step towards the annihilation of Jews. At the outbreak of war six major camps existed in Germany; by 1944 the number of camps, including the "daughter camps" which were grouped around the larger ones, rose to more than 300. They housed some 1,200,000 living inmates, and the rotting corpses and ash of perhaps ten times as many dead.<sup>10</sup> In the months following the beginning of the war the function of the concentration camps changed, from places of custody to slave labour camps. It is here that a dualism of purpose emerged. The Nazis wanted mass production at these centres, but at the same time they also introduced a policy of mass murder by working to death, thus providing a second step towards the Final Solution. In September 1942 Goebbels laid down a formula for the concentration camp which was adhered to until the end of the war:

*With regard to the destruction of asocial life, the following groups should be exterminated: Jews and gypsies unconditionally, Poles who have been sentenced to 3-4 years of penal servitude, and Czechs and Germans who have been sentenced to death, life imprisonment or life "security custody." The idea of exterminating them by labour is the best.<sup>11</sup>*

There is no documentary evidence that anyone objected to the murder of Jews in the camps or in the ghettos. Why should anyone object when the propaganda industry told them that the Jew was evil and the only good Jew was a dead Jew? In the twenty-one months before the invasion of Russia in June 1941, as many as thirty thousand Jews had perished. Of these, ten thousand had been murdered as a result of individual killings, such as street massacres and outbreaks of savagery in the ghettos and labour camps. A further twenty thousand had starved to death in the ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz. But no Eastern Jewish community had lost more than two or three per cent of its members during these actions, and in Western Europe Jews remained largely



unmolested.<sup>12</sup> As far as Hitler was concerned these Jewish deaths were not happening quickly enough or on a scale he had envisaged.

The pace of Jewish deaths, however, was stepped up in 1941 with the implementation of the Final Solution in Russia. Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union was launched on June 22, 1941. The invading army was accompanied by a special contingent of the SS, the *Einsatzgruppen*, whose task it was to round up and murder Jews. The *Einsatzgruppen*, worked efficiently and by 1943 the task of annihilating the Jews of Russia was almost complete. Some 1.3 million Soviet Jews had perished as a result of mass shootings and gassings in mobile gas trucks.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst the plan to wipe out Russia's Jews was taking shape a similar plan was being formed which would encompass all Europe's Jews. Six death camps were erected in the Polish territories and in 1942 the process of bringing the Jews from all over Europe to the killing centres began. Victims arrived at the camps unsuspecting of the fate that lay before them and the Nazis sustained the deceit until the end. At each camp Jews were unloaded from the trains and underwent a process of selection. The fit were selected for slow death by labour and sent to the camp barracks. The elderly and infirm, along with babies and children were loaded into trucks and taken to a pit to be shot, except at Auschwitz where they were usually gassed. Of the rest a few were chosen by camp doctors for agonising and lethal medical experiments, and those left were told that they had been chosen for "special treatment" and were taken away and gassed.

The six big death camps brought about the deaths of millions of Jews. At his trial Hoess stated:

*I commanded Auschwitz until 1st December 1943, and estimate that at least 2,500,000 victims were executed there by gassing and burning, and at least another 500,000 succumbed to starvation and disease, making a total of 3,000,000. This represents about 70-80 per cent of all persons sent to Auschwitz.<sup>14</sup>*

A further 1,380,000 died at Majdanek, 800,000 at Treblinka, 600,000 at Belzec, 340,000 at Chelmno and 250,000 at Sobibor. Nobody can say exactly how many Jews died during the Holocaust, but historians studying various documents and population reports estimate a figure of around six million. This was also the figure given by Eichmann at his trial.

### **The Keegstra Affair**

If there was one thing that was obvious in the wake of the Holocaust, it was that the Jewish Conspiracy Theory was nothing but an illusion. If Jews had had the power to control governments, the financial power to own and control entire nations, even just a hint of the demonic power that history had endowed them with, it is inconceivable that the Holocaust would ever have happened. Instead, what really happened was that a minority people, powerless and totally ordinary, had, through the blindness of antisemitism, been murdered for nothing more than a fantasy.

That anyone could, or would, still adhere to the fantasy of the Jewish Conspiracy Theory is perhaps unimaginable. Unimaginable, but not impossible. In 1985 James Keegstra, a former mayor and high school teacher in the small farming and oil town of Eckville in Alberta Canada, was convicted, under section 281.2 of the Federal Criminal Code, of promoting hatred against an identifiable group. For fourteen years, as part of his social studies classes, Keegstra had taught that the Jewish Conspiracy Theory was an actual historical reality. Indeed, as a teacher for grades nine to twelve in the Eckville high school, Keegstra had been responsible for poisoning the minds of countless numbers of children with tales of a Jewish Conspiracy, which he claimed had begun with the Illuminati in 1776, and had been the cause of many of the major world events since, including the French Revolution, the American Civil war, World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution and so on. Furthermore, he taught that the Illuminati, Judaism, Socialism and Communism were all ideologically one and the same thing; their only aim being to cause anarchy in order to lead one day to "one world rule".<sup>15</sup>

The story of James Keegstra illustrates the lack of understanding and apathy with which many non-Jews view the events of the Holocaust and the history of antisemitism. Indeed, the Keegstra affair illustrates just how far an antisemite can corrupt others if allowed to operate in the right conditions. Keegstra, as I have said, managed to corrupt Eckville's youth for some fourteen years, despite numerous complaints and petitions regarding his teaching material. In fact these complaints, which dated back to 1976, had little effect for it took the authorities until 1981 to investigate them and resulted in Keegstra being warned to stick more rigidly to the curriculum, although not to abandon his antisemitic lessons. "If these theories are taught," the investigating superintendent told him, "they shouldn't dominate."<sup>16</sup> Keegstra, was allowed to carry on pending another hearing in February, 1982, at which the teacher made no secret of his views, even going as far as to try and convert the board members to his way of thinking. In fact he seems to have partially succeeded as the superintendent noted:

*He told us we had been subjected to "censored history," and that what we may have learned in school, or in university courses had been controlled, as part of the conspiracy that he was attempting to expose. He also confirmed that he taught that the Holocaust was a hoax, perpetrated by Zionists to gain sympathy for their cause. His presentation was most convincing.*<sup>17</sup>

As a result the board decided not to do anything about Keegstra, or about his lessons in hatred, he was allowed to carry on as before.

It is evident that Keegstra did just that. Complaints followed, one of which, reached the Alberta Minister of Education, and finally prompted some action. In December, 1982, just ten months after the board's hearing, Keegstra was suspended from his job. However, one would be mistaken in thinking that this was at least a small triumph for the Jewish cause. Keegstra was sacked because the complainant, Margaret Andrew, a staunch Roman Catholic, objected to what she saw as a slur upon the IRA. She made no mention of Jews or the Jewish Conspiracy. It is true that Keegstra did make anti-Catholic and

anti-black statements, although mostly they were used to bolster his anti-Jewish theories.

The reaction to the Keegstra affair was far from what one would have expected. Indeed, after years of complaining Eckville's citizens on the whole seemed to have remained totally indifferent to the whole affair. It is true that an attempt was made to fire Keegstra from his role as Eckville's mayor, but this proved unsuccessful. In any event, two years later, in October, 1984, he lost his bid for re-election, by 123 votes to 278, to Harold Leech, a former mayor.<sup>18</sup> It is unlikely, however, that Keegstra's views were in any way a contributing factor to his defeat, for they were never made an issue of in the campaign against him. Indeed, Leech himself commented during the campaign, "I am neutral on whether I agree with Keegstra's teaching or not. I have my own thinking on that." After the election the new mayor went on to say, "I have nothing against Keegstra, he's a deeply religious man."<sup>19</sup> Even Margaret Andrew, the parent who got him sacked from his job seemed to support Keegstra. A member of the town council, Andrew stated during the campaign that should Keegstra win she would be happy to work with him, "as long as we worked together . . . trying to make Eckville a decent place to live."<sup>20</sup> All in all it seems that Keegstra lost his re-election bid, not because people objected to his antisemitic and racist views, but merely because he had attracted unfavourable attention to Eckville, as one citizen summed it up after the campaign, "It's over now. The media can go back where they came from, and leave us alone."<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps the only truly negative reaction to Keegstra's views and teaching came from one of the most unlikely sources imaginable. Keegstra was a member of the Social Credit Party, which had governed Alberta from 1935 until 1972, and had once boasted thirty members in the Federal Parliament. The party was based on the economic ideas of the Englishman and antisemite, Major C. H. Douglas. Douglas had based the theories of his party on the notion that the ills of the Depression era were caused by Jewish international bankers, who were manipulating capitalism for private gain at the expense of the ordinary man. Although the party's devotion to these theories had declined over the years, in Alberta they still remained a potent force. It is, therefore, somewhat

surprising that after Keegstra lost his job, the Alberta party leader obviously not agreeing with Keegstra's sentiments, at once suspended him from his post as third vice-president. Unfortunately, only the leader took such a dim view of antisemitism, for almost immediately the other party members rallied in support of Keegstra, issuing statements that any conspiracy theorist would be proud of. Indeed, the second-vice president stated in regards to the Jewish Conspiracy Theory:

*If there's any reasonable, thinking man that wants to look around, there's no guesswork in that. It's absolutely a reality. It's a dark reality, a stark one, but I'm sorry it's a reality we have to face. It manifests itself in the monetary system, it manifests itself in the educational system, it manifests itself in Hollywood, the films they put out.*<sup>22</sup>

The leader who had suspended Keegstra was in turn forced to resign after a severe repudiation by the party executive council. Describing the meeting, the leader said, "All they talked about during the entire five hours was a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world. It reminded me of the early days of Adolph Hitler."<sup>23</sup> The new leader of the Social Credit party, as a conclusion to the party's role in the affair declared Keegstra to be "a fine Christian gentleman."<sup>24</sup>

The Alberta government did two things about the affair. By the late summer, following Keegstra's sacking, it had appointed a Committee on Tolerance and Understanding whose task was to promote greater respect for minority groups. This included a review of the entire school curriculum for Alberta, aimed at ensuring that no aspect of it encouraged intolerance or misunderstanding. A worthy, if somewhat misled gesture; after all, with the full knowledge of many members of the Alberta education system, Keegstra worked outside the school curriculum to promote his particular brand of hatred. It was not the curriculum that was at fault, it was the system that ignored an antisemite and racist for fourteen years that needed reviewing.

The Alberta government also took the step of charging Keegstra with the wilful promotion of hatred against an identifiable group between September 1978 and December 1982. The case came to trial in April 1985, some two and a half years after Keegstra's suspension, and lasted over three months. The

crown called nearly two dozen former students to testify as to what was taught in Keegstra's classroom. They not only confirmed what was reported - that Keegstra was obsessed with the notion of a Jewish Conspiracy - but they also illustrated the degree to which Keegstra had managed to indoctrinate Eckville's youth for fourteen years, for nearly all of those who testified seemed to believe the incredible nonsense.

Keegstra made it abundantly clear to the court that he truly believed that there was a Jewish Conspiracy to take over the world. For him it was as straightforward as identifying black and white; he was certain that Christian civilisation was under threat from the powers of darkness, and was convinced that the source of this evil was Judaism. Judaism, he claimed, was an evil religion based on the hatred of Christ, for one is either for Christ or against him, and as the Jews were obviously against him, they must be for the devil. It followed that to be for the devil must mean that Jews desired the destruction of Christianity and all its institutions. Keegstra had no doubt that the adherents of such an evil religion must themselves be thoroughly evil too. Indeed, he saw the source of evil as the *Talmud* which, he claimed, instilled feelings of hatred for Christ and Christianity into the hearts of all Jews, teaching them not only to cheat and lie, but, he declared, perhaps to even murder Christians.

Under cross examination it was revealed that Keegstra had never studied Jewish history, and knew nothing about rabbinic literature, except what he had read in antisemitic books.<sup>25</sup> But, none of this mattered to Keegstra, for as he pointed out, good "Christian" friends, later revealed to be members of a far right organisation called *The Canadian Intelligence Service*, had supplied him with reliable books which revealed the real truth about the *Talmud*. Since, Keegstra trusted these "Christian" friends, it followed that he trusted their books. Jewish books on the other hand, he declared, were not to be trusted, for everyone knows that Jews are liars being, as the Bible states, children of the devil, the "father of lies" (*John 8:44*).

Jews were to Keegstra the devil's most important agents for they had earthly power over all those corrupted by evil, and there were of course many so corrupted. Foremost among these were university professors, especially

historians, who, fearful of losing their positions, had lied for centuries over historical truths, writing and publishing material dictated to them by Jewish masters. Keegstra felt it was his Christian duty to expose the deceitful professors and their mainstream publishers, as well as all the other liars through the ages. He was in no doubt that, as a university graduate himself (in industrial arts), he was in a position to evaluate academics and their works, and thus ensure that his pupils had a well rounded education, free from the lies of Jewish-intimidated historians.

Keegstra also felt that socialism, communism, capitalism and so forth were all really extensions of Talmudic Judaism, and the means through which the powers of darkness were plotting to take over the world. For all, he claimed, were organisations which promised a false utopia, a Jewish utopia, constructed upon the ashes of Christendom. War and revolution, especially the latter, were the means Jews would use to achieve this new world order; indeed, they had been trying to do so throughout history. This, he had discovered, was the real reason why historians would not publish the true facts behind the wars and revolutions of the last two hundred years. They were aiding the Jewish world take-over bid.<sup>26</sup>

So far Keegstra can be dismissed as nothing more than a crank, a mad man with medieval delusions about good and evil, God and the Devil. If he had written books they would have been read by the fanatical few; if he had been a street preacher or a public speaker, it would have been easy to pass him by. But, Keegstra was none of these; he was a teacher and as such he had the power to corrupt the minds of the young and the depths to which he did this is abundantly clear. In an assignment written upon the subject of the French Revolution, one of Keegstra's pupils revealed just how much hatred Keegstra managed to instil into the minds of his young charges:

*. . . The best place to start will be with a ruthless cutthroat known to the world as Adam Weishaupt. He . . . was a jesuit but disliked the church so he broke away from it when he was 25-30 years old. In 1771 Adam Weishaupt disappeared mysteriously until May 1st 1776. (Incidentally this date is said to be Satan's birthday). During these five years Adam*

*Weishaupt had been writing a plan in which he was going to take over the world with. In order to get his plan he had sold his soul to Satan. This plan was based on despection and was made up of five points . .*

*. (a) destruction of all Monarchy & legal government*

*(b) destroy all religions - especially Christianity*

*(c) abolish marriage (children raised by the state)*

*(d) abolish private property (land) and all inheritances*

*(e) abolish all loyalty and allegiance*

*. . . Adam Weishaupt, after announcing his plan organized a secret society. This organisation was called the "Illuminaty" (sic) which means enlightenment. . . . It was the Illuminaty which was behind the French Revolution.*

*In 1789 was the first revolution started by the Jews to set up this new world order under a one world government. . . . The entire revolution was conducted by a pack of Jewish leckies who went under the name of Jacobins. . . . The Jacobins would ride around in packs and bash in childrens heads, rape the women and then drown them. They would also cut open the stomachs of men and let them bleed to death. . . .*

*This essay shows how the Jews are conspiring to take over the world. And when they do they will set up a New World order under a One world gov't. I have shown in this essay since 1776, with Adam Weishaupt's five point plan, the Jews have been causing anarchy & chaos throughout the world. I have also shown that where ever communist rule it was set up by Jews. In my opinion this must come to a dead halt. We must get rid of every Jew in existence so we may live in peace & freedom.<sup>27</sup>*

The author of this particular essay was one of many who reiterated the same extraordinary tale. Indeed, at the trial itself many of Keegstra's ex-students stated that not to explain the French Revolution in terms of the Faustian Adam Weishaupt, the sinister Illuminati, and the evil Jews, was to fall into the trap of simply regurgitating the misinformation fed to the world by mainstream historians, who were nothing more than puppets controlled by Jews.



Keegstra did confess at his trial that perhaps not all Jews were conspirators. In fact he generously conceded that at around 8% were not active in the conspiracy.<sup>28</sup> But, he thought it a wise precaution to suspect every Jew nonetheless. The worst Jews, he believed, were the Talmudic Jews, but "atheistical" Jews, such as Leon Trotsky, he claimed, also in some way possess that Talmudic mentality, which made them equally as dangerous. The Talmudic mentality in all Jews made them liars, for the *Talmud* was a book that taught Jews to lie. Keegstra was thus aware that there were many Jewish lies. Not only was the published history of wars and revolutions a Jewish lie, but Zionism was a fraud, as was the Holocaust. Indeed, Keegstra even believed that the term "antisemitism" was yet another Jewish fraud. It was, he told the court, nothing more than a smear word invented by the Jews to cover up their conspiratorial activities.<sup>29</sup>

Keegstra did not take kindly to the charge of antisemitism. It was, after all in his opinion, not antisemitic to tell the truth, and Keegstra had no doubts that he was doing just that. He never saw how misled he was, or that his "truth" was just part of a gigantic lie. As Davies points out, "The holy man in the stand, his voice ringing with sincerity, seemed to be surrounded by his own cloud of witnesses; all the Jew-haters of the Christian ages were gathered in the shadows of the Red-Deer courtroom."<sup>30</sup> Here was a man through whom the fourth century Fathers once more whispered their tales of the Devil inspired Jews; through whom the voices of countless Medieval antisemites told of the Christian-hating Jews, whose mission it was to destroy Christianity and Christians everywhere. Here was a descendent of men such as August Barruel, Alphonse de Toussenel, Henri Gougenot des Mousseaux and E. N. Chabauty, all of whom saw the French Revolution and the process of modernisation as somehow part of a sinister Jewish plot. Here was a man reiterating the lies of the forged *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, firmly believing every word of it. Here was a man who stood, a direct descendent of the perpetrators of what is surely the most horrifying event of history, the Holocaust.

It is impossible to say what motivated Keegstra. All through his trial he said nothing of political ambition. He wanted nothing more than to be seen as a

peaceful citizen, who abhorred violence and wished no harm to anyone. He was not insane - at least not in any clinical sense - he was merely a man who was haunted by delusions of evil. A man, who despite all his education, all his abilities was, perhaps, in search of some absolute reassurance. Tragically he found it in an extremist ideology full of demon Jews and conspiracies.

One could almost feel sorry for Keegstra; "tormented", "misled", "blind" are all adjectives easy to apply to the man. But, one can never feel totally comfortable making apologies for him. No matter how blind or misled, he poisoned the minds of children. Children, who instead of learning about tolerance and understanding, and all that the Holocaust teaches us, drew from his lessons only one logical conclusion: "We must get rid of every Jew in existence so that we may live in peace and freedom."<sup>31</sup>

It took the jury four days to reach a guilty verdict. Keegstra was given the maximum fine of \$5,000 but no jail term. Justice was seen to be done, but it was a hollow victory. The nature of the trial had been to focus attention exclusively on Keegstra, stifling any awkward questions about the affair, about all those people of Eckville and beyond, who knew what Keegstra was teaching and did nothing. A minister new to Eckville summed up the point. "The real issue is that almost nobody has taken a stand on it for 14 years. People have just been sweeping it under the rug."<sup>32</sup> Even when the whole issue was finally out in the open one wonders if anyone learned its lessons. Certainly not the foreman of the jury who, obviously convinced of the truth of Keegstra's statements, announced after the trial that he would contribute to Keegstra's defence fund "as a gift for the furthering of God's work."<sup>33</sup> Nor the school principal, who knowing that Keegstra had poisoned the minds of his students for fourteen years declared Keegstra a "good teacher," and said he would be "happy to see him reinstated."<sup>34</sup> What about Andrews, whose complaint had got Keegstra sacked, but who could envisage happily working with him to make Eckville a decent place to live; or the superintendent who had found Keegstra "most convincing" at the hearing which had reinstated Keegstra for another year? Did none of these people see where Keegstra's teachings could ultimately lead? Maybe in their apathy and their ignorance they didn't really care, a point

perhaps underlined by the fact that in 1988 Keegstra's conviction was overturned on the grounds that section 281.2 of the Federal Code was "unconstitutional." In the end, as in countless other cases, in countless other centuries, nobody really cared.

## **The Conspiracy Theory and the Far Right**

It would be comforting to think that the Keegstra affair was nothing but an isolated incident, which took place on another continent. A comment on the ignorance of a small town in Canada, or perhaps on the apathy of Canada as a whole, but ultimately nothing to do with us. It would be comforting, but totally unrealistic. Keegstra's belief in the Jewish Conspiracy Theory is part of a worrying trend that is equally as evident in Western Europe as it is in Canada. Indeed, adherence to the Conspiracy Theory has been a feature of extreme right-wing politics in Europe since the early 1970s.

For the past two and a half decades many right-wing parties, whilst overtly campaigning on an anti-immigration platform, appealing to racist sentiments to oppose the entry of "foreigners" into their lands, have at the same time preserved a less overt antisemitism, based on the notion of a Jewish Conspiracy. For example, in Britain during the 1970s whilst attempting to become a mass party, the National Front publicly campaigned against Asian and West Indians, but this did not deflect the party leaders from the ideology that their "real" enemies were Jews. A similar pattern was repeated in Holland in the early 1980s, by the Centrum party. Again whilst their principal message was one of anti-immigration aimed at racist working-class males, within the party they retained an antisemitic ideology.

The case of Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, provides even more dramatic evidence of this strange trend. In the latter half of the 1980s his party, the Front National, achieved electoral success unparalleled by any other fascist group in post-war Europe.<sup>35</sup> Le Pen campaigned on a platform which unfavourably contrasted the present-day situation in France, with its large population of North African immigrants, with a former, well-ordered, although somewhat mythical, France, devoid of these intruders. Le Pen's meteoric climb was briefly halted in

1987, when in a radio interview he revealed his party's ideological traditions. Asked about the trend in France towards Holocaust Denial he replied that he favoured, "freedom of mind," and added:

*I do not say that the gas chambers did not exist. I could not see them. . . . But I think this is a minute detail of Second World War history.*

When challenged by the interviewer that the death of six million was not quite so trivial, Le Pen responded:

*Yes it is a minute detail of the war. Are you telling me that this is the revealed truth everyone has to believe? I say that there are historians debating those issues.<sup>36</sup>*

Le Pen's outbursts illustrate just how much of the old antisemitic traditions still remain in right-wing politics, even though the parties have nothing to gain from such antisemitism.

The form which the antisemitic ideology has taken within Europe's fascist parties, is the Conspiracy Theory. Jews, or Zionists, are seen as a powerful force plotting to take over the world, by destroying nations and manipulating the minds of the public. For example, during the 1970s the British National Front denied that it was in any way a fascist party and its leader, John Tyndall, made numerous public statements in which he claimed to have broken away from all forms of antisemitic and Nazi politics. Yet, whilst party publications designed for mass appeal concentrated on the issue of foreign immigration, the more esoteric magazines and recommended books promoted the notion of a Jewish Conspiracy to take over the world.<sup>37</sup>

What we are witnessing on the far right is not, as we would expect in the post-Holocaust decades, the last stages of antisemitism, but, its continuation in a climate where there are no real Jewish issues, at least not the sort of issues that lead to the support the extreme right seeks. Likewise this is not the end of the long and horrifying history of the Conspiracy Theory, but its transmission into the future. This situation is perfectly illustrated by events that took place in the National Front during the late 1980s. During this time the party discarded many of those leaders with overt Nazi political pasts, who had controlled it in the

1970s, and instead passed into the hands of a young, often well educated, post-war generation, who would be expected to abandon the antisemitic preoccupations of its former leaders, in favour of concentrating upon issues which would be of a more electoral advantage. However, during this time the party also divided into two, both sides of which claimed to be the "real" National Front, and both seemingly took radically different stances. One faction seemed to have totally abandoned the usual crude racist platform, and instead concentrated fully on antisemitism, the other took the opposite position, concentrating on racism and abandoning antisemitism.

The matter came to a head in 1988 when each party decided to issue its policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The group who publish *Nationalism Today* and its more tabloid partner, *National Front News*, opted for the Palestinian cause, whilst those who publish *Vanguard*, seemed, at first sight, to be rejecting the whole tradition of fascist ideology by taking up a pro-Zionist position.

The pro-Palestinian stance of *Nationalism Today* was clearly expressed in an article published in early 1988. "The eradication of Zionism, by the liberation of Palestine, remains the *only* hope for true peace in the Middle East."<sup>38</sup> Such a stance is hardly surprising, it is exactly what one would expect from a fascist organisation such as the National Front. After all, in such groups Zionism is not seen so much as a Jewish nationalist movement aimed at regaining Israel as a land of their own, but more as an evil conspiratorial force, whose ambitions are global. The pro-Palestinian faction of the National Front made this point clear when it asserted that Zionism was an empire "which menaces the whole world"<sup>39</sup>; and again, when it claimed that Zionism was

*An iceberg of hidden power of which the bandit state Israel is only the cruel tip . . . The tentacles of Zionist power grip the mass media, economies and political life of the Western World.*<sup>40</sup>

Terms such as "tips of icebergs" and "tentacles" are common expressions among contemporary conspiracy theorists, who assert that Jewish power, often termed as the more acceptable "Zionism", is the true force which lies behind organisations such as Communism and capitalism. In issue number 39 of

*Nationalism Today*, a similar notion was given expression in a more graphic form. Saint George is depicted slaying a twin-headed dragon. On one of the heads is a dollar sign, on the other a hammer and sickle, and both heads emerge from a body bearing the Star of David. The multi-headed dragon was a common illustration used on the cover of *The Protocols of The Elders of Zion*<sup>41</sup> and its use in modern day displays a continuation of the antisemitic traditions behind the Conspiracy Theory.

Whilst *Nationalism Today* was advocating the common fascist, antisemitic stance, *Vanguard*, published by the rival faction was essaying a radically different stance. In its January 1988 issue, addressing what it termed "The Jewish Question," the party proposed its own answer. The answer, it declared, was to send all Jews "to a nation of their own - Israel."<sup>42</sup> It further recommended that all National Front members recognise "Israel's right to exist."<sup>43</sup> Such an attitude seemingly rejects the whole Conspiracy Theory and indeed, the authors of the article in question, Steve Brady and Tom Acton (also the magazine's editors) went on to specifically criticise those who believe "Protocols-style that the Jews are the cause of every problem."<sup>44</sup> Such terminology suggests that the authors were rejecting the validity of the Conspiracy Theory and distancing themselves from those who adhered to it. Indeed, they went on to assert that "conspiracy theories which range from the unprovable to the incredible do nothing to cast light on the Jewish Question or credibility of the Nationalist movement."<sup>45</sup> This was not an isolated incident either, for the previous December *Vanguard* had printed an article which used similar rhetoric. The article by Joe Pearce was a review of the book *Intercourse* by the feminist author, Andrea Dworkin. Pearce soundly condemned the book by comparing its theories to irrational antisemitism: "Taken to its logical conclusion of course, *Intercourse* makes the antisemitic rantings of Julius Streicher or *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* appear positively tame by comparison."<sup>46</sup> Again the rhetoric suggests that the author is rejecting the Conspiracy Theory and distancing himself from those who advocate such a stance. Indeed, one could say that he is using the terminology often employed by anti-fascists against the fascists. However, continuing the argument Pearce

introduces a theme which is all too familiar: "After all" he points out, "at least antisemites restrict their hatred to one group of people representing a small, if powerful, minority of the world's population" whilst Dworkin "spits hatred at half the entire human race."<sup>47</sup> In other words whilst appearing to criticise the antisemitism of Streicher and *The Protocols*, the author does not in fact distance himself from either. Not only are antisemites, in his opinion preferable to feminists, they are, more crucially, doing battle with a powerful force. Thus, the image of Jewish power is retained even when it appears that the Conspiracy Theory is being criticised.

It therefore appears likely that the pro-Zionism of the *Vanguard* faction of the National Front is not part of an ideological renunciation of the Conspiracy Theory after all. Indeed, one suspects that the opposite is true. The Jew is still seen as all powerful, a master manipulator and somehow in control of many aspects of British life. This suspicion is borne out by a number of articles that appeared in *Vanguard* prior to the pro-Zionist announcement. Indeed, in the issue that preceded the pro-Zionist publication,<sup>48</sup> the editorial announced that the magazine would be writing directly on "our policies concerning Judaism, Zionism and the Jewish people."<sup>49</sup> This declaration followed an article in which the City of London and the Guinness scandal was examined. Drawing attention to the Guinness scandal the author remarked, "It can hardly be a coincidence that those in the dock are all Jews."<sup>50</sup> With this, and a series of other innuendoes, the impression was created that London was controlled by Jews. In fact, this is a favourite theme in *Vanguard*. In February 1987, in an article entitled "Where Greed is God" the writer called for Britain to be freed from foreign control, and complained that the city of London "is essentially blind", contains few Christians, and "can't see beyond the end of its (*hooked*) nose."<sup>51</sup> The innuendo is that a foreign religion, namely Judaism, has taken hold of the financial life of the country. Neither is finance the only sphere of Jewish control. The October 1987 *Vanguard* complained of "a corrupt and Zionist dominated media" thus, repeating an often quoted aspect of the Conspiracy Theory, namely that Jews are able to control public opinion. In the same article Jews are also depicted as a powerful threat to the nation: "The

presence of a large and powerful Jewish community in any country, such as we have in Britain today, is, and inherently must always be, a threat to the aspirations and best national interests of the host population."<sup>52</sup>

This then leaves us with one question; how can the *Vanguard* faction of the National Front claim to be pro-Zionist and advocate a Jewish state, whilst at the same time believing that Jews are conspiring to take-over the world? Perhaps the answer can be found in an examination of a similar position taken by Hitler, the mentor of many of today's fascist groups. As we saw in the last chapter, Hitler feared that Jewish plans to return to Israel were part of the overall Conspiracy Theory. He believed that once settled in a land of their own, Jews would use it as a base from which they would attempt to take over the whole world. Yet, prior to the war Hitler had advocated a plan in which all of the Jews in his sphere of power would be shipped to the island of Madagascar. On the surface it appears that whilst Hitler feared allowing Jews their own homeland, he did in fact consider allowing them one, albeit, not in Israel. But that is only a surface impression. Hitler did advocate the Madagascar Plan, but not in the sense of a Jewish homeland but more as a giant reservation, an out-of-the-way concentration camp. This is made all the more significant when we realise that Philip Bouhler, who was chosen to be the governor of the Madagascar reservation was the same Bouhler who headed Hitler's "Euthanasia Programme", the first experiments in mass murder by gassing. This, as Dawidowicz points out, was an "experience that doubtless qualified him to run a reservation for Jews that would become truly their final destination."<sup>53</sup> The Madagascar Plan was thus a plan within a plan, on the surface appearing benevolent, but underneath something far more sinister. In much the same way the National Front's pro-Zionist stance is nothing more than a benevolent plan covering a more sinister one. The support for a Jewish homeland is not due to any positive feelings towards Jews, but part of a plan to rid the country of what is seen as a dangerously powerful and dominating, alien group. Moreover, once the National Front has managed to convince the world that Zionism is an international force, it can be combated all the more easily once Jews are



concentrated in Israel, and the nations have had the time to strengthen themselves by being Jew-free.

Thus, neither faction of the National Front is any different from the other, for neither has abandoned the Conspiracy Theory. However, the publishers of *Vanguard* are probably the more dangerous of the two, for whilst the opposite faction are openly antisemitic, and thus easily avoidable, the *Vanguard* group are less overt, and can easily trap the unwary with talk of benevolence and pro-Jewish sentiments.

### The Revisionist Movement

Both Keegstra and the far-right organisations we have examined have, for the most part, continued to adhere to the old familiar Conspiracy Theories, despite the fact that these theories cannot possibly be true. Adhering to something that cannot be possible has been a mark of all those who have believed the conspiracies we have examined throughout this study. It is, in fact, remarkable that in the face of overwhelming evidence people are still able to think that Jews are somehow powerful, manipulative conspirators, plotting to destroy Christianity and to one day control the earth. Perhaps all we can console ourselves with is the knowledge that Keegstra, and those like him, and fascist organisations, are, in reality, in the minority. A handful of crackpots holding on to the past, trying to somehow transfer it into the future. Whether they succeed remains to be seen.

However, in both the groups we studied above, one aspect of their beliefs was not part of the old traditional Conspiracy Theory. Keegstra, as we saw questioned the validity of the Holocaust and, likewise, Jean-Marie Le Pen indicated that he believed the Holocaust a questionable event. Holocaust Denial, or "Historical Revisionism" as it is often termed, is the disturbing form that the Conspiracy Theory takes in the contemporary world. Revisionism is basically a pseudo-academic movement, which comes in two distinct forms. One of them is neo-Nazi gutter history, the other is a well-respected, seemingly serious attempt, to question accepted versions of Nazi history. The latter, which will not concern us too much in this work, is often referred to as Soft Revisionism. Such

studies, acknowledge the veracity of the Holocaust, and facts relating to the subject are left more or less intact, but theories are advanced that attempt to minimise responsibility for the Holocaust, or to remove the notion of guilt from the perpetrators.

In recent years this soft form of Revisionism has been favoured among a number of German historians.<sup>54</sup> These historians, who include Ernst Nolte of the Free University of Berlin and Hellmut Diwald of Erlangen University, argue that the Holocaust is part of the much larger whole of European History, which is studded with similar atrocities committed by other nations, and as such, it has been unfair to single out Germany's act of genocide as a unique historical event.<sup>55</sup> Nolte, in an article written in 1986, entitled "The Past Will Not Fade Away," argued that the Holocaust was a response to and a copy of the genocidal policies of the Soviet Union and that it was Hitler's fear of Bolshevism overtaking Germany, which caused him to convert a justified war against Communism into a war of racial genocide.<sup>56</sup> Nolte also rationalised Hitler's racial motive for exterminating Jews by explaining that it was to an extent justified since Jews, by their own admission, were set to side with Hitler's enemies, and thus formed a "hostile group" against Germany.<sup>57</sup>

Another form of Soft Revisionism, provides not so much excuses for the German nation, but a Hitler apologetic, an attempt, as David Irving put it in the introduction to *Hitler's War*, to "de-demonize" the Nazi leader.<sup>58</sup> In this book, written in 1977, David Irving depicted Hitler as a man of enormous sensitivity and charm, a man of courage and principle, a man who made antisemitic speeches - but apparently didn't really mean them. Moreover, the main "finding" of Irving's study was that Hitler neither ordered, nor even knew of, the Final Solution, but, that his aides, especially Himmler, carried out the killings behind his back. Likewise, Arno J Mayer, in his book, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?*<sup>59</sup>, argued that the murder of Europe's Jews was not premeditated, for Hitler, a peaceful man, only wanted to evacuate them out of the Reich. But, following the failure of the fight against Communist Russia, Hitler in fear and bewilderment turned upon Jews, in whom he saw the true force behind world Bolshevism and Communism. Indeed, says Mayer, Hitler's

antisemitism was nothing more than a product of his loathing for Communism, a somewhat flawed argument, that ignores the wealth of documentation which tells us that Jews were murdered because of the Nazis' racially motivated antisemitism.

Whilst this form of Revisionism is, disturbing it very rarely forms a direct attack upon Jews. It is more a series of excuses. The same, however, cannot be said of the more hardline variety of revisionism, preferred by neo-Nazi organisations. Here there are no excuses or misled theories, just an outright denial of the Holocaust. Since the late 1940s Holocaust Revisionism has been steadily growing and flourishing worldwide. Initially it was an enterprise engaged in by a small group of political extremists, whose arguments appeared in poorly printed pamphlets and right-wing newspapers such as the Ku Klux Klan's, *Crusader*. However, in recent years their productivity has increased, their style has changed and consequently their impact has been enhanced. They disguise their intentions and political agendas behind innocuous statements about their intentions. The primary example of this is their claim that they are merely searching for the truth in history, in order to bring peace to the world and an end to all wars. One revisionist handbook defines revisionism simply as that which "revises the historical record toward truth."<sup>60</sup> On the surface there is nothing necessarily sinister about this; after all, history is constantly being re-evaluated and rewritten as our understanding of the past, and our ability to find out more through archaeology and scientific means, increases. Revisionists, however, are not seeking to re-evaluate or understand history but to expunge it, and as a result they pose a great danger. Their publications, which include the *Journal of Historical Review* - the leading American denial journal - and a large number of books and pamphlets, mimic legitimate scholarly works, generating confusion among those who do not immediately recognise the authors' intentions. They have worked hard to insinuate themselves into the arena of historical debate, appearing regularly on television and radio. They also regularly promote debates upon the existence of the Holocaust amongst college students, and it is here that they often find their most fertile soil, as is evident from the success they have had in placing

advertisements that deny the Holocaust in college newspapers across America.<sup>61</sup> They have, also, in recent years begun to make active use of computer bulletin boards, flooding large numbers of networks, especially those aimed at young people, with their material. Their object among the young is a simple one. They intend to plant the seed of doubt now, so that will bear fruit in the coming years when there are no eyewitnesses and no more survivors left alive to bear testimony to the truth. Then they will be able to rewrite history just as they please.

There is an obvious danger in believing that Holocaust Denial is so outlandish it can safely be ignored. We might question seriously who would listen to crackpots who, in the face of overwhelming evidence, claim that the mass extermination of Jews in Nazi Germany never took place, that the gas-chambers never existed but were simply part of a propaganda hoax,<sup>62</sup> that Anne Frank's diary was forged,<sup>63</sup> that Jewish war-time population figures,<sup>64</sup> as well as photographs and other evidence of death camp atrocities, have been altered and falsified.<sup>65</sup> Why should we take notice of people who claim that the Holocaust is nothing more than a gigantic hoax, the "myth of the twentieth century?"<sup>66</sup> It is important to remember that these people are receiving recognition, they are making controversial statements that provoke reactions, they are appearing on television and in arenas where interviewers are unable to challenge them. They are presenting a worldview similar to that of *The Protocols* where Jews are seen as liars and tricksters, ever searching for world domination and manipulating Europe's post-war guilt in order to gain a homeland and the money to support it. This is nothing more than a contemporary version of the Conspiracy Theory as it has appeared century after century. The implication is that nothing has changed; that Jews are all they were said to be throughout history. They are still conspirators, liars, parasites, dishonest, greedy and extraordinarily, almost demonically powerful. Thus, the revisionists are recreating the type of antisemitic situation prevalent before the Holocaust, and, in denying that this kind of antisemitism led to genocide, are paving the way for a second Holocaust. Moreover, they are preaching this

message to the young, to a generation where there is a great deal of ignorance and apathy shown towards the Holocaust.

Surprisingly enough Holocaust Denial began within three years of the end of the Second World War. Whilst the world was still reeling from shock at what had occurred in Germany, the leading French fascist theoretician and literary critic, Maurice Bardèche was busily engaged in the defence of the Nazis. In his book, *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise (Nuremberg or the Promised Land)*,<sup>67</sup> Bardèche stated, "For three years we have been duped by history"<sup>83</sup> and argued that history had been "created" at Nuremberg and that claims about the Holocaust were based on flimsy evidence which was often exaggerated and sometimes even falsified. He contended that at least a portion of the evidence concerning the concentration camps had been falsified, and that the deaths that had occurred there were primarily the result of war-related privations, including starvation and illness. Documentary and pictorial evidence which showed the murder process at the camps, had been, he claimed, falsified. Likewise, evidence referring to the gas chambers was also false; they were, he stated, used for disinfecting purposes, not for any process of annihilation. There was no annihilation plan, he asserted; Nazi documents which spoke of the "final solution of the Jewish problem" were really referring to the proposed transfer of Jews to ghettos in the East.<sup>68</sup>

His basic argument was, not only that the Nazis had not been guilty of the atrocities attributed to them, but that the true culprits were the Jews themselves. Jews, both those who had died, and those who survived, deserved no sympathy, he contended, for they had helped to cause the war by supporting the Treaty of Versailles. Moreover, he claimed that the trials at Nuremberg were both morally and legally wrong, for the Nazis had only done what was needed to defeat Stalin and thus ensure that Communism did not destroy them. The Allies, he contended, were just as guilty as the Nazis of atrocious war crimes, especially their bombing raids.<sup>69</sup>

Due to Bardèche's dubious credential's - he remained a committed fascist all his life - his views were all but ignored by his contemporaries. Yet it is interesting to note that almost fifty years later the same set of arguments as

those put forward by Bardèche, are still on offer, virtually unaltered. Indeed, Bardèche laid out his objective in *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise*, and today it still remains, almost verbatim, the credo of contemporary deniers: "I am not defending Germany. I am defending the truth. . . . I know a lie has been put about, I know a systematic distortion of facts exists. . . . We have been living with a falsification: it captures the imagination."<sup>70</sup> Today deniers claim exactly the same thing. They say that they are neither supporters of Germany, or against Jews, nor are they defenders of Germany or out to castigate the Allies. They are interested only in truth. However, an examination of their works reveals the exact opposite, from Bardèche to the present day truth has been the only thing lacking from their enterprise.

Within two years, Paul Rassinier, a leading socialist and former resistance fighter, reiterated Bardèche's views with far greater success. In 1950, Rassinier, who had spent time in both Buchenwald and Dora, began writing about his experiences and views on the Holocaust and the war. He wrote a large number of books between 1950 and his death in 1967, and given his different political pedigree, his views found a far more ready reception than Bardèche's, even though the two were virtually identical. Rassinier's writings, which were a mixture of blatant falsehoods, half-truths, quotations out of context, and which contained extremely antisemitic attacks on what he termed the "Zionist establishment," went on to become important references in English speaking fascist circles, being cited often in the writings of the 1970s, especially those of Richard Harwood in Britain and Arthur Butz in America.

In his first two works, *The Crossing of the Line* and *The Lie of Ulysses*, Rassinier focused on the concentration camps and the behaviour of both inmates and the Nazi administrators. He set out two propositions: Survivors greatly exaggerated what happened to them, and it was not the SS who were responsible for the terrors of the camps, but the inmates to whom they entrusted the running of the camps. He dismissed as gossip the testimony of survivors who claimed they had witnessed atrocities and questioned the credibility of the number of Jews claimed to have been killed.

*. . . The concentration camps were a world of horrors. And if anything ought to be added, it would be this: in spite of this, just about all those who have spoken of them have overdone it and particularly their explanations have little in common with the truth. . . . Concerning figures, the "witnesses" have said and written the most improbable things. Concerning the implementation of the means of killing, also. Concentration camp literature on the whole has the appearance of a collection of contradictory pieces of ill-natured gossip.<sup>71</sup>*

Rassinier, initially limited his argument regarding the killing process to denying that there was a policy of annihilation, and did not question the existence of the gas chambers. People may have been killed, he said, but those who conducted such "exterminations" were acting on their own and not as part of some "State order in the name of a political doctrine."<sup>72</sup> Indeed, he goes on, the question of whether there were orders for the extermination of the Jews has definitely been settled "in the negative."<sup>73</sup> By claiming that there was no official policy of extermination Rassinier attempted to absolve the Nationalist Socialist Leadership from responsibility for the gas chambers. Although Rassinier would eventually deny the existence of the gas chambers altogether, in his early works he stopped short of doing so and posited instead that whilst the gas chambers existed and there had probably been exterminations by gas, they were not on the scale that had been claimed.

The question of the number of Jewish deaths in Nazi Germany became a central theme in the early denial industry. In 1963 Rassinier, issued a report on the number of Jewish deaths during the Holocaust. He claimed that the figure six million was wrong, and that most of the estimates given by historians were also incorrect. Furthermore, he asserted that conclusions reached by historians failed, because of a lack of agreement and uniformity in their answers. He implied that each was motivated by his own ideas and thus, the documentation "although the same for all the statisticians, speak to them in so different a language that the only point of agreement is the total number of Jewish losses between 5 and 6 million human lives."<sup>74</sup>

Prompted by this lack of agreement Rassinier undertook his own study based, he claimed, upon Jewish documents concerning their population figures during the period 1933 and 1946.<sup>75</sup> He came to far different conclusions. He claimed that a census taken in 1931 showed that there were 8,297,500 Jews in Europe and Russia. In 1945 a similar census showed that 2,288,100 Jews were living in the same lands. This gives a total loss of 6,009,400 Jews during the war years. However, of these, Rassinier claimed, 4,419,908 Jews emigrated out of Europe early enough to escape arrest and deportation to the camps. This left a figure of 1,589,492 Jews unaccounted for, but, said Rassinier, "not every person who is included within this figure can be said to have died at the hands of the Germans. The mere fact that a person is not accounted for does not necessarily mean that he is deceased."<sup>76</sup>

The earliest deniers of the holocaust in the United States were extremely receptive to Rassinier's arguments. Like him, they tried to demonstrate that it was statistically impossible for millions of Jews to have died, although their arguments were often unsophisticated and crude, and usually lacked any attempt to prove their point. In 1952 W. D. Herrstrom, an American antisemite, declared in *Bible News Flashes* that there were five million illegal aliens in America, most of whom were Jews. These, he claimed, were the Jews who were supposed to have died in the Holocaust. "No use looking in Shickelgruber's [Hitler's] ovens for them. Walk down the streets of any American city. There they are."<sup>77</sup> Benjamin H. Freedman, who provided the financial backing for the antisemitic publication *Common Sense*, argued in 1959 that there were many more millions of Jews in the United States than the Jewish community was willing to admit. These were the six million "allegedly put to death in furnaces and in gas chambers between 1939 and 1945."<sup>78</sup> In an argument that would be echoed by later deniers, Freedman alleged that Jews were opposed to the question of religious affiliation on census reports because it would reveal that those Jews who had allegedly died in Nazi Germany, were actually in the United States.<sup>79</sup> The American Nazi leader, George Lincoln Rockwell, who termed the Holocaust "a monstrous and profitable fraud,"



echoed Freedman's notions, and contended that the six million, "later died happily and richly in the Bronx, New York."<sup>80</sup>

These blatant attempts to confuse the readers were typical of deniers' behaviour in the first two decades after the war. Ultimately most of these people were easily dismissed as extremists and right-wingers, but, nonetheless, their arguments, no matter how ridiculous, worked their way into the mainstream of Holocaust denial. In subsequent years their statistical claims would become a little more sophisticated, and certainly, as we have seen with Rassinier, more complicated. Flagrant falsehoods would be entwined in complex arguments, aimed at confusing those who did not know the facts.

The works of many of these early deniers were marked not so much by a denial of the Nazi atrocities, but more by a defence of them. Bardèche, Rassinier and the American's, Harry Elmer Barnes and Austin J. App, all sought to vindicate the Nazis by justifying their antisemitism. They argued that whilst most atrocities were blatantly exaggerated and often falsified, whatever was done to the Jews was deserved, because Jews were Germany's enemy. They blamed Jews for Germany's financial and political plight, and made wildly exaggerated claims that Jews had been the chief beneficiaries in the chaos of the Weimar Republic. Furthermore, they claimed that Jews were disloyal citizens within Germany, likely to be subversives and spies.

It was during the 1970s that deniers, finally recognising the futility of trying to justify Nazi antisemitism, changed their methods and became more sophisticated in the subtleties of spreading their arguments. They recognised that Nazism in general, and the Holocaust in particular had given fascism a bad name, and attempted to disassociate themselves from the former, whilst denying the latter. A favourite method was to "concede" that the Nazis were antisemitic, and to claim to deplore such antisemitism, whilst at the same time engaging in it themselves through the process of Holocaust denial. Their reasoning was simple; in the aftermath of the Holocaust it was impossible to rehabilitate National Socialism by depicting it as a viable political system, or by depicting its leader as a hero, so instead they attacked the veracity of the Holocaust. If the

public could be convinced that the Holocaust was a hoax, then the revival of National Socialism became once more a feasible option.

This method of denial was one which was favoured among neo-fascist organisations and political parties in Western Europe, especially those in England. The cause was greatly enhanced by the publication in 1974 of a twenty-eight page booklet entitled, *Did Six Million Really Die?: The Truth at Last*, by Richard Harwood.<sup>81</sup> Sent to all members of Parliament, a broad spectrum of journalists and academics, leading members of the Jewish community and a wide array of public figures *Did Six Million Really Die?* remained the pre-eminent British work on Holocaust denial for close to ten years. Within less than a decade more than a million copies had also been distributed in more than forty countries and even today deniers world-wide continue to cite it as an authoritative source.

*Did Six Million Really Die?* was not an original creation; it was in fact largely based upon a small American book, *The Myth of the Six Million*, published in 1969 by Noontide Press, a subsidiary of the antisemitic Liberty Lobby, which also publishes Ku Klux Klan literature. The Americans in turn had done their own borrowing from other deniers, a practice which is still used today to increase the authority of such works, and which has been described as an "incestuous merry-go-round [of] cross-fertilising and compounding [of] falsehood."<sup>82</sup> Indeed, both publications rely heavily on the works of Paul Rassinier, and in many cases are virtual plagiarisms, with the occasional quotation added here and there from British or American sources.

Harwood's publication is a vivid example of the relationship between Holocaust denial, racist nationalism and antisemitism. Harwood complained that the "big lie" of the Holocaust affected the growth of nationalism, in both Britain and Europe, for anyone attempting to preserve his "national integrity" was immediately branded as neo-Nazi. The Holocaust myth, he maintained, threatened the "survival of the Race itself." Linking Holocaust denial to the defence of the "race", Harwood argued that unless something was done about the immigration and assimilation of non-Caucasians, Anglo-Saxons were certain to experience, not only "biological alteration", but the "destruction" of

their European culture and racial heritage.<sup>83</sup> This argument, a standard element in National Front ideology, blamed Jews for engineering the racial and national degeneration of England as well as Europe as a whole.

Harwood's main contribution to the arena of Holocaust denial was the depiction of Hitler as a supporter of the Jewish emigration plan. An argument aimed at showing that the Final Solution was nothing more than a benign plan of population transfer, and nothing to do with a murder plan. Harwood asserted that Hitler was committed to "the emigration plan" to such an extent that he sent delegates to the Evian conference held in 1938, the principal object of which was to discuss resettlement plans for Jews arriving from Germany and Austria. The Evian conference had been called by President Roosevelt, but Harwood, ever ready to distort the truth to rehabilitate Hitler's reputation, stated that the conference was convened at the initiative of Hitler. He states quite clearly that "numerous attempts had been made to secure Jewish emigration to other European nations, and these efforts culminated in the Evian conference."<sup>84</sup> The outcome of the conference, however, was far from satisfactory. But, says Harwood, Hitler was tireless in his pursuit of a place for Jews to settle. He states that in 1938 Hitler sent a delegate to London to outline the Sacht Plan, which involved freezing the assets of Germany's Jews as security for an international loan to finance Jewish emigration to Palestine. The plan failed, according to Harwood, "due to British refusal to accept the financial terms."<sup>85</sup>

Out of all these failed attempts to resettle Jews, a new project was born - the Madagascar plan. The existence of the Madagascar plan is undisputed by historians, a fact which makes it all the more important to the revisionists. Having said that, however, it is Harwood alone who deals in any detail with the Madagascar plan, and what little the other revisionists say on the matter is generally attributed to him, or to someone who has used him as their source of information.

Harwood saw the Madagascar plan as an important indication that the Nazis were trying to do their best for Jews and indeed for the world at large. He states that the search for a Jewish homeland had been "a main plank of the National Socialist party platform before 1933,"<sup>86</sup> and that Madagascar was

considered at that time because the Nazis believed that the revival of Israel as a Jewish state would cause unrest in the Arab world, and thus lead to war. He even goes as far as to suggest that in fact the Madagascar plan was "formulated along the lines of modern Zionism,"<sup>87</sup> since Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, had also considered such a plan during the nineteenth century. This shows that the Nazis were being benevolent towards the Jews, by giving them what they already wanted, and likewise also proved that "the Nazi view of emigration was not limited to a negative policy of simple expulsion."<sup>88</sup> However, until the fall of France in 1940 the Madagascar plan was nothing more than an impossible dream. But, as Harwood points out, the German Government still worked tirelessly "to secure the departure of Jews from the Reich."<sup>89</sup> Such was their effort that by 1939 "400,000 German Jews from a total population of about 600,000, and an additional 480,000 emigrants from Austria and Czechoslovakia" had emigrated successfully "with the bulk of their wealth."<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, according to Harwood, Eichmann, as head of the Offices of Jewish Emigration, established a training centre in Austria, where young Jews could learn farming in anticipation of being smuggled illegally into Palestine. All of which serves to prove that the Nazis were not so much driving Jews out from Germany, but were in fact generously trying to secure a homeland for them, to the extent where they were willing to smuggle some of them back to Palestine.

Since Madagascar was a French colony, the defeat of France in 1940, brought the Madagascar plan, according to Harwood, within the realms of possibility. Germany opened serious negotiations with France almost immediately, outlining the plan to transfer all European Jews there. Negotiations took place, stated Harwood, from July to December 1940, at which time the French abruptly terminated the talks effectively destroying the plan. Again, another German plan to help Jews is destroyed by one of the Allied nations.

Meanwhile, continuing hostilities opened up the prospect of evacuation to the East. This in turn, according to Harwood, gave rise to the Wannsee Conference, held on January 20, 1942. At this conference details of Jewish

numbers were discussed and the proposal that Jews should form labour gangs was put forward and implemented. This was the "true Final Solution", as Harwood asserts,

*It is perfectly clear . . . that the term 'Final Solution' was applied both to Madagascar and to the Eastern territories, and that therefore it meant only the deportation of the Jews.<sup>91</sup>*

As further support of his thesis, Harwood quotes the attempt made by the Germans, in 1944, to negotiate with the Allies the release of 1 million Jews in return for 10,000 trucks to be used on the Russian front. The plan failed, he claimed, because the British imprisoned the man conducting the negotiations. Yet, as Harwood points out, "although the plan was fruitless, it well illustrates that no one allegedly carrying out 'thorough' extermination would permit the emigration of a million Jews."<sup>92</sup> However, Harwood doesn't say what happened to the million Jews after the failed negotiations.

There are, of course a number of flaws in Harwood's arguments, which demonstrate just how far revisionists are prepared to distort history in order to prove their point. Harwood's basic argument is, that Hitler and his government worked hard to secure peaceful and easy emigration conditions for Jews. Moreover, it is also questionable whether a man intent on murder would work so inexorably to secure the emigration, and indeed the fulfilment of a dream of a Jewish homeland, for his intended victims. On the surface, this argument is quite plausible. After all, prior to the outbreak of war the Nazis pursued a policy of pressurising Jews to emigrate. However, that is where the similarity between what Harwood would have us believe, and what really happened, ends. Hitler, as I demonstrated earlier, never made secret his plans to exterminate Europe's Jews, and his declarations were hardly the words of a man who was about to show great kindness to Jews. The image of the peaceful emigration of Jews from Germany is also at odds with what we know to be true. There is no mention in Harwood's account of the violence used to force Jews to flee Germany, of the forced deportations, or of the taxes and the appropriation of goods, that meant that Jews who left had very little to take with them. As for the Madagascar plan, everything we know about Nazi ideology points to the fact

that this would have been nothing more than a giant concentration camp, an out of the way Auschwitz. Knowing also the outcome of the deportations to the East Harwood's statement that the term "Final Solution" was a benign term applied equally to Madagascar and to deportation to the East, and meant nothing more than emigration is highly dubious. Finally on the question of the 1 million Jews that Hitler offered "for sale"; these were in fact Hungarian Jews, who says Gilbert, were being gassed at the very moment that the bargain was being proposed.<sup>93</sup>

For Harwood if the term "Final Solution" was one that meant "emigration" it followed that there could be no six million Jews killed by the Nazis. Indeed, he used grossly exaggerated emigration figures to disprove what he saw as the "six million myth" as he stated, "what reliable statistics there are, especially those relating to emigration, are sufficient to show that not a fraction of six million Jews could have been exterminated."<sup>94</sup> However, after a lengthy and involved, Rassinier style, analysis of the emigration figures Harwood remains unclear on just how many Jews are unaccounted for. All he really says is that a figure of one and a half million is not acceptable, and a figure of several thousand is nearer the mark, but, he does not tell us how he reached this conclusion.<sup>95</sup> He does, however, make the startling claim that many of the six million missing Jews, upon emigration, changed their names, and thus only seem to have disappeared, all the while living in other countries under assumed names.<sup>96</sup> He further contends that the extermination camps did not exist but were an Allied propaganda invention,<sup>97</sup> that Auschwitz was nothing more than a giant factory<sup>98</sup> and that the diary of Anne Frank was a complete forgery.<sup>99</sup>

Harwood's statements demonstrate just how much revisionists are willing to distort history in order to prove their own theories. A little omission here and there, a slight distortion of facts, a small white lie and history is significantly rewritten. In the last decade and a half, the crude racist literature of the 1970s has given way to a more sober academic style of material. However, the sentiments, and the methodology of reaching conclusions, remain the same.

The biggest present day organisation aimed at the distribution of Holocaust denial material, is the California based, Institute for Historical Review

(or IHR). Since its foundation in 1978, this organisation has grown to encompass most of the world's hardline revisionist. For example, books available from the Institute's catalogue, include *The Rumour of Auschwitz*<sup>100</sup> by the Frenchman, Robert Faurisson; *Anne Frank's Diary a Hoax*<sup>101</sup> by Ditlieb Felderer of Sweden; *Auschwitz: A Judge Looks at the Evidence*<sup>102</sup> by the retired West German judge, Wilhelm Staeglich; and the American revisionist mainstay, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*<sup>103</sup> by Arthur Butz, a professor of engineering and computer science at Northwestern University, in Illinois. All these authors are also members of the IHR editorial board. The IHR, as well as publishing and distributing a variety of revisionist materials also circulates its own publications, *The Journal of Historical Review*, which purports to be a serious academic journal and the *IHR. Newsletter*. Since 1979 the organisation has also held an annual "academic" conference which draws a diverse number of speakers from all over the world, including the Middle East. Indeed, as well as the usual revisionists, guest "historians" at IHR conventions have included Otto Ernst Remer (1987) who was an officer under Hitler, and is a known neo-Nazi activist; Florence Rost van Tonningen (1989), widow of Dr. M Rost van Tonningen the Dutch Nazi collaborator sentenced to death by the Allies at the end World War II; also at the ninth annual conference in 1989 was James Keegstra, the Canadian conspiracy theorists; and two Palestinians, Mr Sami Hadawi, described as "a Palestinian with a long and illustrious diplomatic career,"<sup>104</sup> and Mr Issah Nakhleh, who described himself as "Legal Adviser to the World Muslim Conference"<sup>105</sup> (1982 and 1981). The presence of these two men suggest that the IHR were sympathetic to, and had been able to establish contacts with, Palestinian organisations.

It was following the first annual conference, held in 1979, that the IHR first came to public attention. Until that time it had received little publicity and had largely been dismissed by those who knew of its existence as a conglomeration of Holocaust deniers, neo-Nazis, antisemites, racists and right-wing extremists. However, in 1979, the director of the institute, a man known to those gathered as Lewis Brandon, (but later revealed to be David McCalden, a former British National Front officer and founder member of the

British National Party) announced that the IHR was offering a \$50,000 prize to anyone who "could prove that the Nazis operated gas-chambers to exterminate Jews during World War II."<sup>106</sup> This was one of three such offers of so called "rewards." The subsequent two were \$25,000 for proof that *The Diary of Anne Frank* was authentic and the sickening offer of \$25,000 for a bar of soap made from Jewish fat. McCalden subsequently admitted in an Institute newsletter that the offer had been nothing more than a gimmick to obtain publicity.

For the first year, despite McCalden's boast that his offer generated newspaper clippings that could be measured in "vertical inches", the campaign did in fact draw very little media, or any other, attention. In order to rectify this, McCalden sent out letters to a number of well known Holocaust survivors, challenging them to prove that Jews had been gassed at Auschwitz. One of the challenges was sent to Mel Mermelstein, a survivor of Auschwitz whose mother and sisters had been gassed there and whose father and brother were killed at Jaworzno, an Auschwitz subcamp. The letter to Mermelstein accused him of "peddling the extermination hoax" and demanded a speedy response to its challenge, warning that should none be forthcoming the IHR would draw its "own conclusions" and publicise his refusal to respond in the media.<sup>107</sup> The implication was clear, refusal to participate would be interpreted as an inability to substantiate the Holocaust as fact.

Mermelstein was one of many to receive such challenges; most, although not all, wisely ignored them. But, despite advice to the contrary, Mermelstein was provoked into replying. Nor was he alone, Simon Wiesenthal also filed a claim, which he later withdrew, but not before McCalden having acknowledged that the contest was a trap into which they hoped to draw some "naive zealot", was able to crow that in Wiesenthal they had attracted the "most eminently suitable mouse."<sup>108</sup> Mermelstein, however, was undeterred, and not only did he file his claim, but successfully sued the IHR after their refusal to recognise it. Mermelstein received an out-of-court settlement of \$90,000. The IHR, however, despite the financial difficulties that these actions had caused, remained unbowed and not only summed up the case as a great success, but declared:



*In order to foil an attempt at the bankrupting of this organisation via a harassing lawsuit before a potentially Zionist dominated jury and courtroom, we reached a settlement with Mermelstein. Contrary to the grossly misinformed reports in the media, this settlement in no way constituted payment of any reward for "proof" of homicidal gassings at Auschwitz. . . . The "gassings at Auschwitz" theory remains the hoax of the twentieth century.<sup>109</sup>*

Over the last decade the question of the gas chambers, especially those at Auschwitz, has occupied much of the attention of Holocaust denial merchants. In 1984 the Canadian government charged Ernst Zundel, a forty-six year old German citizen, who had immigration status in Canada, with stimulating antisemitism through the publication, from his Samisdat Publishing House, of material he knew to be false. The materials in question were the essay "The War, West and Islam," which argued that there existed a Zionist-Communist-Freemason sponsored conspiracy to control the world, and Richard Harwood's *Did Six Million Really Die*. The case against Zundel, who was the country's most prolific distributor of Holocaust denial and neo-Nazi material, resulted in two trials, (one of which largely overshadowed the trial of James Keegstra), numerous appeals and extensive media coverage.

Ernst Zundel was a prolific disseminator of extremist propaganda. In 1981 he was named as the supplier of banned Nazi propaganda that had been seized in raids on the homes of neo-Nazis in West Germany. In November of that year the Canadian postal authorities also suspended Samisdat's mailing privileges for mailing anti-Jewish material. Zundel, however, continued mailing from a post office box address in New York, until the ban was lifted two years later. In addition Zundel also wrote and distributed fliers and pamphlets praising Nazism, advocating fascism and denying the Holocaust. Under the name of Christof Friedrich he also wrote or co-authored such books as *Secret Nazi Polar Expeditions*, *UFO's: Nazi Secret Weapons?* and *The Hitler We Loved and Why*, which he likewise distributed all over Canada and abroad.

Zundel was very much a showman and was extremely adept at winning media attention. At his trial in 1985 he turned up at the court each day wearing a bullet-proof vest and a hard-hat bearing the words "freedom of speech." On

the day of his sentencing he arrived at the courthouse with his face blackened to demonstrate that "whites could not receive justice in Canada" and carried an eleven foot cross labelled "Freedom of Speech" up the courthouse steps.<sup>110</sup> The demonstration helped Zundel very little; he was convicted for spreading false statements about the Holocaust and for the publication of "false news" and was sentenced to fifteen months in prison followed by three years of probation, during which time he would not be allowed to publish or distribute any material. Zundel appealed against his sentence and in 1987 the conviction was overturned due to errors in the law during the first trial. A new trial was granted and took place in 1988.

The second trial was to become a revisionist showcase as many of the world's so called "experts" turned out to defend Zundel. David Irving of Britain, Ditleb Felderer of Sweden, and Bradley Smith of the IHR were among those who testified for the defence. Moreover as part of his defence Zundel financed a \$37,000 "fact-finding mission" to the death camps by one Fred Leuchter Jr. The results of this mission were published in a book length publication called, *The Leuchter Report: End of a Myth*, by Zundel's Canadian publishers. Leuchter was described as a consultant engineer specialising in "execution technology," although later evidence proved that he had nothing more than a history degree, and subsequently he was convicted by a Boston court for practising engineering without a licence. As a result of his findings, Leuchter testified that, "The gas chambers at Auschwitz and other death camps were too leaky and poorly equipped for death purposes."<sup>111</sup> His testimony, however, like that of the other revisionists, did Zundel little good and in May 1988, he was once again convicted and jailed for nine months.

*The Leuchter Report* took the revisionist world by storm. In 1989 a glossy and expanded reprint of *The Leuchter Report*, now grotesquely subtitled, *Auschwitz: The End of the Line*, was launched in Britain by David Irving's company, Focal Point. Irving distributed the report extensively, even going as far as to send a pre-launch copy to British MPs with a cover note asking their opinion of the work. Irving, however, did more than merely launch *The Leuchter Report*; he also wrote a foreword to it, in which, like a true hardline

revisionist, he states that the gas chambers never existed and that belief in their existence stemmed from a wartime propaganda effort. The reason, according to Irving, why this so called myth continued to survive after the war was that "since 1949, the state of Israel has received over 90 billion Deutschmarks in voluntary reparations from West Germany, essentially in atonement for the 'gas chambers of Auschwitz'."<sup>112</sup>

This was the document the revisionists had been waiting for. Suddenly all their claims about gassings, or the lack thereof, were seemingly confirmed by Fred Leuchter's "scientific" study of the Auschwitz gas chambers. For many years all revisionists had maintained that gassings at Auschwitz were never carried out, and each repeated the Nazi claim that Zyklon B, the deadly pesticide, was nothing more than a means of trying to control various infestations and epidemics. Leuchter's study, which revisionists claim is the first and only forensic study of the gas chambers, involved visits to Auschwitz, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek to collect forensic evidence, and an examination of the Auschwitz documentation, including blueprints of the sites. From these he concluded that gassings at Auschwitz and Majdanek could not have taken place for a number of reasons. These included poor design, which would have allowed gas to escape the chamber, and in the case of Auschwitz Krema I would have allowed gas into the camp hospital; the lack of a ventilation system which would mean that anyone entering the chamber within at least twenty-four hours of a gassing would die also: the rooms were too small to contain the number of occupants claimed, and if they were to contain the numbers claimed, then it would be impossible for the gas to disperse and death would take hours: and because of the nature of Zyklon B those throwing the pellets into the roof vents would die also. He further contended that the crematories could not have coped with the number of alleged victims, the burning pits at Majdanek were in a swamp and could not have burned anything and the diesel generated carbon monoxide gas used at the other camps would not have brought about death, just sickness. Thus he concluded:

*It is the best engineering opinion of this author that the alleged gas chambers at the inspected sites could*

*not have been, or now, be utilised or seriously considered to function as execution gas chambers.*<sup>113</sup>

Furthermore, he alleged, that of thirty-one samples taken from the sites and scientifically tested, only one showed traces of cyanide, and that was a control sample taken from a delousing chamber.<sup>114</sup> From this he concluded that Zyklon B was not used at the camps, except for the purpose of hygiene.

*The Leuchter Report*, with its twenty pages of explanations and a further forty-seven of maps and scientific documents, is indeed impressive, and it is not difficult to see why the revisionists accorded Leuchter star status among their ranks. However, Leuchter's report is as dubious as his honesty, for he is neither a scientist or an engineer, and as he himself admits, he actually broke into various areas of the camps to collect evidence.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, he was paid \$37,000 by revisionist Ernst Zundel to produce the report, an amount that surely would have induced him to ensure that his findings were favourable. Scientists the world over have also dismissed his findings. A professor of chemistry at London university stated that "a fourth-year chemistry student could easily drive a coach and horses through Leuchter's alleged evidence,"<sup>116</sup> while Jean Claude Pressac, a leading scientist argued that the report is:

*Based on misinformation, which leads to false reasoning and misinterpretation of data. It was researched illegally, ignoring the most straightforward historical data and founders in gross errors of measurement and calculation. Leuchter's ultimate errors land *The Leuchter Report* in the cesspool of pretentious human folly.*<sup>117</sup>

Leuchter's main problem, like that of many revisionists, seems to be his complete ignorance of eyewitness accounts and valid documents, and his total reliance on the works of revisionist "experts". If for example, he had consulted the account of Auschwitz doctor, Miklos Nyiszli<sup>118</sup> he would have gathered basic information, such as the SS Officer administering the Zyklon B to the gas chamber wore a gas mask and that the chambers did have electric ventilators to remove the gas.<sup>119</sup> Upon such basic information a case such as Leuchter's stands or falls. In Leuchter's case it falls mightily.

The purpose of Holocaust denial, as with any Conspiracy Theory, remains largely a mystery to those of us who do not indulge in such depravity. It does, however, seem to have three main goals. The first is to develop new post-Holocaust avenues for the expression of the Conspiracy Theory. In saying that there is no Holocaust, deniers can once more accuse Jews of manipulating the media and academic institutions to spread the Holocaust lie. Thus they are once more controlling public opinion, in duping us all into believing that six million Jews were killed. Moreover, through the manipulation of war guilt, Jews with their invented Holocaust have found a way of influencing governments and gaining money for themselves; in effect they are once more in control of world political matters and finances. The second is to attack and undermine the legitimacy of the State of Israel. This is done by asserting that Jews invented the idea of Nazi genocide in order to win enough sympathy to regain the State of Israel. David McCalden, the former leader of the IHR, summed this up in the statement, "If we can show that it didn't happen as they said it did, Israelis won't have an excuse for depriving the Palestinians of their civil rights."<sup>120</sup> The final goal is to rehabilitate the reputation of the Third Reich and its leaders. This goal is important to today's neo-Nazis, who find that the Holocaust is the biggest obstacle in the way of their attempts to promote Nazi racist ideals to a wider audience. For this reason the Holocaust must be explained away or denied altogether. Among the many arguments presented by the revisionists there is one prevalent theme, namely that they present the "other side" of a subject previously stifled by agents of the Jewish Conspiracy. Thus they see themselves as a force of good locked in an ongoing battle with an evil enemy they call the "exterminationists" (i.e. those who represent the point of view that there was a Nazi policy of genocide). As the good force they seek the real Holocaust story and to bring to an end those devilish Jewish powers which prevent the real truth about the Holocaust from emerging. For when the truth does emerge, they maintain, Jews will no longer be able to use Germany as a cash cow, they will no longer be able to control governments and financial institutions; public opinion will turn against them, and their attempt to control

the world will come to nothing. The reign of the Jewish devil on earth will finally come to an end and that of the conspiracy theorist will begin.

## Conclusion

The contemporary religious philosopher and interpreter of present-day Judaism, Abraham Joshua Heschel, in his work, *Man's Quest for God*, relates the tale of a group of hapless mountain climbers. Without guides, the band of inexperienced climbers struck out blindly into the wilderness. Suddenly, beneath their feet, a rocky ledge gave way and they plunged headlong into a dark, dismal pit. In the pit they recovered from their shock only to find themselves surrounded by angry snakes. For each snake the desperate men killed, ten more seemed to take its place. While the men fought off the snakes, one of their companions stood aside from the fight, not participating in any way. Indignantly his companions called out to him to help with the battle, to which he replied: "If we remain here, we shall be dead before the snakes. I am searching for a way of escape from the pit for us all."<sup>1</sup>

Today when we look upon the Conspiracy Theory we find in many ways it is like that pit of snakes. Indeed, after the initial fall, we have spent century after century sinking deeper and deeper into the pit, allowing the snakes to multiply around us. Greed, envy, hatred and the reckless disregard for our fellow man, are all traits which have allowed the Conspiracy Theory serpents to proliferate. Like those climbers, we began with just one snake, but soon it multiplied to many, and now we fight a losing battle, one which threatens not only the Jewish victims of the Conspiracy Theory, but morally, threatens us too. Can we go on calling ourselves human beings, can we claim part of the brotherhood of man, while persecuting, or allowing the persecution of, our Jewish brethren? Isn't it time we too tried to find a way out of the pit?

The history of the Conspiracy Theory has been one of gradual multiplication; from one snake has come forth many. The myth of a Jewish Conspiracy began life under the pen of Thomas of Monmouth, who, along with an unknown Jewish convert, created around the death of twelve year old William of Norwich, in 1144, "a myth that would affect Western mentality from the twelfth to the twentieth century and caused, directly or indirectly, far more deaths than William's murderer could ever have dreamt of committing."<sup>2</sup> Thomas was motivated by the need to prove the sanctity of young William and

there is no doubt that, in promoting his "little Saint", in turning a murder of a small boy by an unknown person into a miraculous event, and in reinforcing his own religious security, that Thomas ever realised the damage he was doing, or the horrors he was bringing to generations of Jews. Indeed, evidence suggests that Thomas did not have any real animus against Jews, as compared with other Christians of his day. In his account, *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich*, he reflects the ideas of the time, that Jews were blasphemers, cruel and greedy, Christ-killers and so forth, but he betrays no personal hatred or dislike. There is no irrelevant outbursts against Jews in his work and no abuse, outside that of the characters in the tale. He did not hate Jews as the Sturts, who first accused them of William's murder did, or as Theobald, who introduced the notion of conspiracy into the tale; all he did was blindly chase his own dream of a Saint, and report the animosity of others to that end. Yet, by so doing Thomas created a fable that caused untold hatred, for it was he who first accused Jews of crucifying children as a substitute Christ, and gave life to the first conspiracy charge.

As Thomas created the charge of ritual murder, so Theobald, the Jewish convert, created the secondary accusation of Jewish Conspiracy. This allegation would serve to support not only the ritual murder charge and, indeed, practically every other charge levelled at Jews throughout history, but would, in time, take on a life of its own, becoming part and parcel of the Jewish makeup and prompting their every action. We know little about Theobald, other than that he was a monk, and a recent convert from Judaism when he told his tale to Thomas. What prompted him to claim that Jews conspired to bring about an annual sacrifice as a symbol of their hatred of Christ, and that the sacrifice was sanctioned by a meeting of a Jewish senate, will never be wholly clear. Possibly he was a little in awe of Thomas, and in his eagerness to please and prove his new found faith, he repeated a suitably adapted version of a tale once told in antiquity of a Jewish annual sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> Possibly he was just led by Thomas's questioning into furnishing a suitable story, or perhaps he had grown to hate his own people enough to lie. We will never know. However, we do



know that Theobald provided a tale that would keep alive, and regularly inflame, the popular hatred and suspicion of Jews.

Theobald's conspiracy accusation, however unreasonable, provided the necessary support for the charge of ritual crucifixion, and for every charge thereafter. When ritual crucifixion died out and the blood accusation took its place, it did not die. Instead the tale was adapted so that the Jewish council not only plotted the death of an innocent child, but organised the distribution of the victim's blood, just as with the host desecration charge they were said to organise the distribution of the wafer. When the well-poisoning libel sprung up the shadowy Jewish senate were said to be behind the organisation, creation and distribution of the poison aimed at wiping out Christians everywhere. Likewise, in the *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, it is the same organisation, secret, shadowy, and always Jewish, which plots to take over the world. Moreover, in secular society the shadowy Jewish body, which plots against the Christian world, has become part of the makeup of every Jew. Thus, apart from in *The Protocols*, there is now rarely a Jewish senate or similar organisation plotting and conspiring; instead, every Jew is part of the conspiring whole, and the need to conspire is part of every Jew. For example, the transformation of the blood libel into the money libel was marked by the identification of every Jew as part of a capitalist conspiracy. Marx in *On the Jewish Question* depicted Jews as conspirators, not so much by their actions, but by their very being. He used the term "spirit" to ensure that his readers viewed all Jews both as capitalists and as capitalism personified, rendering every Jew, from banker to beggar, a capitalist because he possessed the Jewish "spirit". Wagner used the term in much the same way, seeing in this Jewish "spirit" an attempt to take control of all spheres of life, especially that of the world of art. Hitler, likewise, saw every Jew as a conspirator against Aryan purity and saw in every Jewish man, woman and child alike, the desire, and the ability, to take over the world. Even in the present day, the image persists. For the revisionists every Jew conspires to lie about the Holocaust, from those who survived, to the six million they claim did not die. All are part of a huge organic conspiracy network, which began life as a Jewish

senate plotting an annual Christian sacrifice and now encompasses every Jew, everywhere.

The tale of William of Norwich could easily have started and ended the myth of ritual murder, for without the charge of a Jewish Conspiracy it had no vehicle of reason to promote it. Theobald's allegation provided that vehicle and a means of acceptance. The Medieval populace could look upon any Jew and see a potential conspirator plotting, conspiring and planning to vent his hatred on Christ and on Christians everywhere. The Jewish Conspiracy Theory began life as a means of support for a cruel and unreasonable accusation, it ends as a myth, with a life of its own. The survival of the Conspiracy Theory depends on the belief that Jews are conspirators by nature, so that when time and reason ends one charge, there is a means for another to take its place. Thus, when ritual crucifixion gave way to the blood libel accusation, it was because the masses were certain that Jews were conspirators and capable of such a crime, that the new charge survived. The Conspiracy Theory has proved consistently strong enough and adaptable enough to survive. It was able to create enough suspicion, to adapt to any charge, even when those charges, such as Hitler's accusation that Jews were both Communists and Capitalists, were directly opposed to one another. As time went by, the accusation that Jews were conspirators by nature came to form the backbone of antisemitism. Without it antisemitism would be a series of unrelated and unconnected charges and ideas. With it, every charge boils down to that quirk of Jewish nature, the need to plot, manipulate and control, to destroy and ultimately to dominate the world, be it Christian or secular.

The individual Conspiracy Theory charges have come a long way since Thomas of Monmouth first set out to prove that William of Norwich was ritually crucified. Charges such as ritual murder have spawned others, such as the money libel, while still existing themselves. Others, such as the well-poisoning libel have adapted to fit the age, becoming instead the Jew's ability to poison society through media control or financial means. Some have fallen by the wayside, such as host and image desecration which were destroyed when the Reformation ended the hold of the Roman Catholic Church and its

superstitions over the masses. But for every charge that has been destroyed a host of others have been created to take its place. This century alone has seen the creation of the charges that Jews have created Communism as a means to take over the world; that they consistently stab their host nations in the back; that they have set out to weaken the racial basis of other nations whilst maintaining the purity of their own; that Zionism is a means whereby Jews intend to take over the world; that the Holocaust is a Jewish invention aimed at gaining money and power. All of these are supposedly part of the process by which Jews intend to undermine the nations and ultimately dominate the world.

The Conspiracy Theory and its associated charges have proved to be the most powerful instruments of hate propaganda that have ever been invented. The accusations, however unreasonable, have needed very little evidence to support them. Whether the charge was that Jews murdered little Christian children or whether they were trying to poison the whole Christian world, whether they were supposedly in control of governments, financial institutions or public opinion, trying to undermine racial purity, or bringing out new and subversive movements, the charges were nearly always untrue, or at least, where there was the slightest grain of truth, were exaggerated well out of proportion. The lie has mattered not, for as Hitler once stated, and so ably demonstrated, a lie can be moulded to match the will to believe, and that will to believe the worst of Jews and the need to hate them has always been a tangible force.

For centuries we have believed the worst of the Jews, rather than face the worse in ourselves, or to face our own problems. As Heschel points out, "Man about to hang himself, discovers it is easier to hang others."<sup>4</sup> The history of the Conspiracy Theory has proved this point over and over. The Medieval Church, unsure of herself in the face of the threat of her enemies and various heresies, chose the Jew as her ultimate scapegoat, rather than admit to her own failings. Charges of ritual murder were exploited not only for financial means, but also used to prove the Christian message and to show people that Christ's sacrifice is eternal. Host desecration was used to gain the acceptance of the doctrine of transubstantiation. The well-poisoning libel, especially during the

Black Death, was used as a comfort factor, for it was easier to believe that Jewish evil was the cause of such misfortune, than it was to accept the alternative notion that God had forsaken, or was punishing, Christian Europe. Likewise the same charge was used as an outlet for the guilt of the people following various massacres. A poisoning charge meant that they could justify a previous attempt at killing potential avengers. When Europe entered the modern era, it was easier to blame Jews for the uncertain and often frightening changes, than it was to accept them. Just as it was easier for Hitler to believe that Germany had been undermined by Jewish evil during the First World War, and indeed during the Second, than it was for him to accept that Germany had been, and could be, defeated. Even today many find it easier to accept that Jews invented the Holocaust rather than face the fact that fascism failed, or that there is an evil part in human nature that could allow such a thing as the murder of six million people to occur. Ultimately the Jewish Conspiracy Theory has rested on the premise that as long as there are Jews we don't need to blame ourselves for anything.

But, why always the Jews? Why are they the scapegoats and our chosen conspirators? The Jew as we know him through the Conspiracy Theory is a dehumanised being, the incarnation of evil, the demonised Other. In the Middle Ages he was a perfect choice as the negative being to the Christian positive. As we have seen in the first chapter, the Middle Ages were dominated by the imagery of the Devil. He was the arch-opponent of Christ and all that he stood for. He was the force of evil that trapped the unwary into sinning, that raised up enemies against Christianity, that led Christians to follow heretical movements. The Christian world was dominated by his presence. However, the Devil, despite the numerous depictions of his monstrous countenance, remained very much an invisible being. He could not be seen, or felt or touched. He existed in the spiritual realms, no matter how much his presence dominated society. The Medieval masses needed something tangible, a real force of evil, visible and touchable, someone real to blame and fight against. After all, Christ had visible representations on earth. There were the host and the wine, the images and

paintings and the innocent children who died in his stead. The Devil needed equal representation, and that representation was found in the Jew.

During the Medieval period the process of linking the Devil and the Jew, which had been started in the New Testament and manipulated throughout the centuries by the Church Fathers, especially those of the fourth century, resulted in all the evil of the universe becoming embodied in the Jew. Accusations, such as that of John's Gospel, 8:44, 47,

*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. . . . He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God,*

inspired the Church Fathers to make such claims as Chrysostom's assertion that Jews are forsaken by God, and "when God forsakes a people, what hope of Salvation is left? When God forsakes a place, that place becomes the dwelling of demons."(I:3,1);<sup>5</sup> or Gregory of Nyssa's vitriolic tirade in which he says of Jews:-

*They are confederates of the devil, offspring of vipers, scandal-mongers, slanderers, darkened in mind, leaven of the Pharisees, Sanhedrin of demons, accursed, utterly vile, quick to abuse, enemies of all that is good.<sup>6</sup>*

Such accusations built up over the centuries, so that by the time of the first ritual murder charge the Jew was already seen as a figure of utter evil, ultimately indistinguishable from his master the Devil. To the Medieval masses they became one and the same thing, alike in looks, in actions and desires. As the Devil desired to kill Christ and destroy Christianity, so too the Jew desired the same thing. Thus, he destroyed anything that represented Christ, he killed innocent Christian children, desecrated the host and destroyed images. In the same manner he set out, with the help of Satanic magic, to destroy Christianity by poisoning wells and causing plagues. The Jew as the Devil incarnate, desired nothing more than to destroy the Medieval Christian world in order that he might construct a new, evil, Jewish world.

Of course, in the modern secular world, the notion of the Devil as a fount of evil and a dominating force in society has lost much of its power. Modern society is not oppressed by his omnipresence, tempted by his evil, or frightened by his monstrous appearance. The Protestant Reformation did much to destroy the stranglehold that such superstitions had upon society and indeed helped destroy a little of the negative imagery surrounding Jews. The Protestant reformers ridiculed Marian devotion and the veneration of saintly images and shrines. In turn this lessened the instances of ritual murder accusations and destroyed the charge of image desecration. Rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation led to a lessening and the gradual death of the host desecration charge. A knowledge of Hebrew and an interest in learning about Judaism among scholars also led to a greater understanding of the Jewish religion and dispelled many of the myths surrounding Jewish magical abilities, which in turn led to a lessening of poisoning charges. With the ghetto period much of the evil image of the Jew was finally dispelled. He became a pathetic figure, ridiculed and even pitied, where he was once feared. But, whilst this meant that on the eve of the Modern period the image of the Devil-Jew was seemingly losing its viability, the opposite was, indeed, true.

Jean-Paul Satre once commented that, "the antisemite localises in the Jew all the evil of the universe"<sup>7</sup> and during the Modern period this was certainly true. Since the dawn of the Modern era we have seen an increasing demonisation of the Jew, that, unlike the adaptation of the Conspiracy Theory, is far from secular in any respect. During this period the notion of the Jew as the Devil, or the Devil's agent has developed along two lines. The first, and perhaps dominating notion, is that Jews are about to, or indeed, have, inaugurated the Kingdom of Satan on Earth. It was firmly believed during the Medieval period that the aim of the Devil was to destroy the reign of Christ on Earth, and establish in its stead the reign of the Kingdom of Evil. In the Modern period this theme never lost its potency, although in the place of the Devil, we have that of the Jew. The Modern era was seen by many as the advent of the Kingdom of Evil. It was full of bewildering changes, the slow idyllic agricultural way of life was replaced by a more dynamic, urban existence, in which money

played a great part. Protestantism and the process of secularisation emerged around the same time, and in a matter of a century or so, the Medieval world with its dominating Catholic influence was gone. The changes coincided with the emergence of Jews from the ghetto. As such, Jews had nothing to lose in joining in with the changes in society, and many did with a great deal of enthusiasm. However, in doing so they set themselves up as the perfect scapegoat for those who could not accept these changes, and needed someone to blame for them. Thus, in many quarters the changing world became a "Jewish" world. The new capitalistic emphasis on money became a Jewish trait. The loss of the agricultural way of life was blamed on Jews who, already by nature city dwellers, were seen as the corrupting force which led others to the new urban way of life. The Catholic Church, rapidly losing power in the new society blamed Jews for Protestantism and for bringing about the new era. The fact that Jews had very little to do with the new changing world, that it was set in motion before they even left the ghetto, mattered little. Jewish evil and machinations had for many resulted in the establishment of the Kingdom of Evil in the world in which the Jewish-Devil reigned supreme.

The notion of the Jewish inspired Kingdom of Evil continued to gain in potency throughout the modern period. Every Jewish action was seen as somehow geared towards the establishment of this Kingdom and this thought process culminated in the supposed blueprint of the Jewish plans for world domination, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. *The Protocols* was aimed at showing in detail how this Kingdom would be set up and run. Whilst it could be possible to dismiss *The Protocols* as just another case of antisemitic accusations without any specific Devil link, it is always important to remember that *The Protocols* first appeared in 1903 as an appendix to a work entitled, *The Great in the Little. Near is the Coming of Antichrist and the Kingdom of the Devil on Earth*. The work leaves us in little doubt as to who is about to establish the "Kingdom of the Devil on Earth." Volkish thinkers, especially Houston Stewart Chamberlain, emphasised that the stereotypical Jew sought nothing less than world domination. Indeed, according to Chamberlain that is all that the Jewish religion consisted of, worship of a god who promises the faithful control

of the world. Hitler, likewise was obsessed with the notion that Jews were trying to establish an evil Jewish Kingdom. His attacks on Zionism were rooted in the belief that Jews, once given a homeland, would use it as a base from which to takeover the world. In much the same way contemporary antisemites, especially Holocaust deniers, are perpetuating the myth that Jews already dominate the world, controlling our thinking by convincing us there was a Holocaust, taking our money to finance the establishment of Israel, no doubt the first step in taking over the world, not only territorially but financially as well. In essence the modern period has seen the Conspiracy Theory develop into a plan for the establishment of the Jewish Kingdom of Evil, a plan which culminated in the publication of *The Protocols* and which continues to be perpetuated in the literature of contemporary antisemites.

As well as developing the notion of a Jewish-Devil Kingdom, the Conspiracy Theory has also kept alive the literal links of the Devil and Jew. We may not quite believe that Jews today have horns and tails, but a great deal of the imagery which linked the Devil and Jew in the Middle Ages is still prevalent, even today. In Volkish thought the Jew was often represented as a serpent gnawing at the roots of the Volkish tree of strength, an image which calls to mind the image of the Devil, who in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve in the Creation story and thus caused man's downfall. Hermann Gödsche, in his famous tale of the Jewish plot to dominate the world "In the Cemetery at Prague," which was popular among Volkish thinkers and which formed the basis of *The Protocols*, depicts Jews as one with the Devil, especially as the representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel meet with the Devil to discuss their plan to take over the world.<sup>8</sup> Whilst the Medieval imagery of the Jew and the Devil talked of horns, a tail, an ugly visage and a putrid, sulphuric smell, racist literature represented the Jew as soulless and ugly. The weekly Nazi antisemitic newspaper, *Der Stürmer* depicted the typical Jew as having oversized genitals, an insatiable sexual appetite and an irresistible allure, all of which were characteristics that had been associated with the Devil in the Middle Ages. Indeed, Hitler firmly believed in this image, as is evident from his repeated claims that Jews were using their sexual powers to poison Aryan blood.<sup>9</sup> Hitler,



in fact went as far as to claim that Jews and the Devil were one and the same thing when he stated, in *Mein Kampf*, that the "vileness" of the Jew is so gigantic, "that no-one need be surprised if among our people the personification of the devil as the symbol of all evil assumes the living shape of the Jew."<sup>10</sup>

On a more abstract level the link of the Devil and Jew has in this century taken on the form of the battle of good and evil, God and the Devil, where good is represented by the various conspiracy theorists, and evil by the Jews. This theme was popular in the racist literature of Modern Germany. Chamberlain presented the history of mankind, especially of Germany, in terms of this struggle. He saw God as being embodied in the Germanic race, and the Devil in the Jewish race.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Hitler's ultimate vision was of an apocalyptic struggle between Aryan and Jew; it was a battle of good and evil, between God and the Devil, Christ and the anti-Christ. In his mind, Hitler was the Messiah, who would deliver the Aryan nation from the ultimate evil - the Jewish-Devil. In much the same way, James Keegstra saw himself as a Messianic figure, fighting the forces of Jewish evil in order to bring the true history of the world to Eckville's youth, and in the same vein, revisionists depict themselves as Messiah's of truth, battling against those devilish Jewish powers which prevent the real truth about the Holocaust from emerging.

Ultimately, then, the Conspiracy Theory is part of a continuous pattern which stretches from the Bible to the present day. A pattern which sees the Jew and the Devil inexorably bound together. It represents the polarised struggle between God and the Devil, good and evil, in which antisemites and conspiracy theorists are the force of good, and Jews are always the force of evil. It is ironic that the true evil lies in those who believe themselves to be the good force. Hitler, Keegstra, the revisionists and the host of conspiracy theorists who have come before them, are all united in using the Conspiracy Theory as a means of projecting their own evil onto an innocent people. The Baal Shem teaches that if a man has beheld evil, he may know that it was shown to him in order that he learn from his own guilt and repent; for what is shown to him is also within him.<sup>12</sup> The history of the Conspiracy Theory has repeatedly shown that man, when faced with his own evil, ultimately blames someone else for it, and Jews

are, and continue to be, the ideal scapegoat. The more enlightened among us can go on fighting the Conspiracy Theories, although history has shown that after more than eight centuries, we have yet to prevail. For every serpent we kill, there are ten more waiting to take its place. Perhaps with greater education, less apathy and ignorance about the Jewish plight we might be able to one day find a way out of the Conspiracy Theory pit. Then, and only then, will we be able to leave the serpents, and those who feed them, to destroy themselves and not the Jewish people.

# NOTES

## Introduction

1. See for example David Yallop, *In God's Name* (Corgi: Britain 1985) for one of the conspiracy theories surrounding the death of Pope John Paul I.
2. Hermann Strack, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice* (Cope and Fenwick: London 1909).
3. R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder* (Yale University Press: New Haven 1988).
4. Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, (University of California Press: USA 1990) p. 301.
5. Cecil Roth, "The Feast of Purim and the Origins of the Blood Accusation," *Speculum* VIII (1933).
6. Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, reprinted 1983).
7. Malcolm Barber, "Lepers, Jews, and Moslems: The Plot to Overthrow Christendom in 1321." *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, Vol. 66 (1981).
8. Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, (Eyre and Spottiswood: London 1967).
9. Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1727-1939*, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge Mass. 1970).
10. Paul Lawrence Rose, *German Question/Jewish Question: Revolutionary Antisemitism from Kant to Wagner* (Princeton University Press : New Jersey, 1990).
11. D. E. Showalter, *Little Man, What Now?: Der Stürmer in the Weimar Republic* (Archon Books: Connecticut 1982).
12. Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung* (Wesleyan University Press: Connecticut 1972).
13. Robert Wistrich, *Hitler's Apocalypse* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London 1985).
14. Gill Seidel, *The Holocaust Denial* (Beyond the Pale Collective: Leeds 1986).
15. Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust* (Penguin Books: London 1993).
16. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory* (Columbia University Press: New York 1992).
17. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York, 1971).
18. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1940).
19. Leon Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism*, 4 Vols. (Britain 1965-1985).
20. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 301.
21. Cf. Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews*, (Paulist Press: New York 1985) p. 59 - 62, for details of attacks on Synagogues.
22. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 303.
23. Marc Saperstein, *Moments of Crisis in Jewish-Christian Relations*, (S.C.M. Press: London 1989) p. 16.
24. For further details cf. Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade*, (University of California Press: USA 1987) p. 51 f.

25. Leon Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism: From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews*, Vol. I (Elek Books: London 1965) p. 41-42.
26. Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 92.
27. Figures taken from Robert Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*, (Thames Methuen: London 1991) p. 23.
28. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 304.
29. Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London 1987) p. 208.
30. Barnet Litvinoff, *The Burning Bush*, (Fontana/Collins: London 1988) p. 54.

### **Chapter 1. Conspiracy Against Christ**

1. Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *Why the Jews?*, (Simon and Schuster: New York 1983) p. 98.
2. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 240.
3. The first blood accusation made at Fulda, Germany in 1235 was made on Christmas Day and had no connection with Easter, unlike the ritual crucifixion libel. Cf. below pp. 29ff.
4. For details of the case of Simon of Trent see below pp. 105 - 107.
5. Cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* pp 209-281. I have rejected this latter term as a definition due to the fact that in the early cases of the blood accusation there is no evidence to suggest that Jews were believed to require blood or organs for consumption; the idea of the blood being mixed with the Passover bread did not appear until the fourteenth century and was not widely accepted until the fifteenth. Early cases remain vague as to the reason why blood was needed. I believe that Langmuir in using the term "ritual cannibalism" is placing too much emphasis on a later idea.
6. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, (New York 1940) Vol. 2 pp. 407-408.
7. Johnson, *op. cit.* pp. 209-210.
8. Solomon Grayzel, *A History of the Jews*, (New York 1968) p. 314.
9. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York 1971) Vol. 4, pp. 1121-1123.
10. Strack, *op. cit.* pp. 178, 277.
11. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* pp. 130-132.
12. Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews*, (New York 1963) p. 184.
13. Langmuir, *op. cit.* pp.,209-281. Also pages 401-402 for a list of articles by the same author.
14. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 131.
15. Cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 220.
16. Godwin's wife claimed to have had a dream in which she was attacked by Jews who tore off her leg and ran away with it. Her husband's interpretation of the dream was that she would lose someone dear to her because of the Jews. Cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p.220 for a full account of the dream and interpretation.
17. Cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 221 and Joseph Jacobs, "St William of Norwich," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, July 1897, pp. 748 - 755. Jacobs believes that it was in the best interests of the Sheriff to convict the Jews of the murder, for not only would it effectively wipe out his Jewish debts, but the fines incurred by the Jewish community would also have brought a great deal of revenue for the county. As the Sheriff defended the Jews and persisted in declaring their

innocence, it can only prove, in Jacob's mind, that they were totally innocent, and believed to be so by the Sheriff.

18. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 221.

19. Cf. Jacobs, *op. cit.* p. 751. William's brother Robert entered the monastery on the strength of his connection with the martyr. His mother was eventually given the honour of being buried in the monks' cemetery, and the uncle, Godwin Sturt, traded for years on the possession of a gag which he alleged had used to gag William.

20. The original Latin account of the life of William of Norwich was translated and edited by A. Jessop and M.R. James, *The Life and Miracles of Saint William of Norwich* (Cambridge 1896).

21. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 219.

22. *Ibid.* p. 224.

23. *Ibid.* p. 222, and Jacobs, *op. cit.* p. 752.

24. *Ibid.* p. 221.

25. Jacobs, *op. cit.* p. 752.

26. For further details cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* pp. 224, 230-231.

27. *Ibid.* p. 231.

28. *Ibid.* p. 210.

29. *Ibid.* p. 225.

30. Marc Saperstein, *Moments of Crisis in Jewish - Christian Relations*, (S.C.M. Press: London 1989) p. 20.

31. Cf. Jacobs, *op. cit.* p. 752.

32. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 41.

33. For an early account of the murder of Harold cf. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 130.

34. Langmuir dates the establishment of the shrine of Richard of Pontoise as sometime before 1171 with the possibility of it being as early as 1163. However, some scholars suggest a later date; for example Trachtenberg dates it at around 1182. Cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 240, and Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 130.

35. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 242, for the version by the chronicler Matthew Paris.

36. For further details and accounts of similar crimes see *ibid.* p. 241.

37. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 241.

38. Malcolm Hay, *The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism*, (Freedom Library Press: New York 1981) p. 124. Quotation is originally taken from A. Jessop and M.R. James *op. cit.* p. xiv.

39. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 125.

40. Prager and Telushkin, *op. cit.* p. 99.

41. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 125.

42. Prager and Telushkin, *op. cit.* p. 99.

43. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 137.

44. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 126.

45. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 137.

46. Opinions vary as to when exactly Damocritus lived. Langmuir gives a possible date during the first century C.E. but others remain more cautious. Cf. Langmuir *op. cit.* p. 212, and J.N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Antisemitism in the Ancient World*, (E.J Brill: Leiden, Netherlands 1975).

47. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 126.
48. Langmuir *op. cit.* p. 212.
49. Sevenster, *op. cit.* p. 141.
50. Origen charged the Jews with spreading reports of ritual murder against Christians. But, as Parkes observes, although individual Jews may have been responsible, it is unlikely that this was part of Jewish anti-Christian propaganda. For despite the fact that many other second century apologists mentioned the accusations, none ascribed them to Jews. Cf. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 127.
51. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York, 1971) vol.4, p. 1121.
52. For further details and references cf. Langmuir *op. cit.* p. 213.
53. *Ibid.* p. 213.
54. *Ibid.* p. 213.
55. Quotations taken from Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 17.
56. James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, (Soncino Press: London 1938) p. 234. In further references this work will be termed Parkes I. See also, M. Simon, *Verus Israel*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford 1986) p. 160.
57. Cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 214, and Cecil Roth, "The Feast of Purim and the Origins of the Blood Accusation," *Speculum* VIII, (1933). p. 522.
58. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 214.
59. Roth, *op. cit.* pp. 522 ff.
60. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 128.
61. Langmuir, *op. cit.* pp. 214 - 216.
62. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 123.
63. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 264.
64. *Ibid.* p. 264.
65. Cf. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 121, and Poliakov, *op. cit.* pp. 60 and 314 n.73.
66. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 264.
67. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol.4, p. 1123.
68. Poliakov, *op. cit.* p. 60.
69. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 265.
70. Poliakov, *op. cit.* p. 61.
71. Robert Chazan, *Church State and Jew in the Middle Ages*, (Behrman House Inc.: New York 1980) p.125.
72. *Ibid.* pp. 125-126.
73. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 117.
74. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 134.
75. Cf. *ibid.* p. 134, and Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 265.
76. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 121.
77. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 135.
78. All cases taken from *ibid.* p. 137, but figures of Jewish deaths taken from Hay, *op. cit.* p. 127.
79. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 134.
80. *Ibid.* p. 135.
81. *Ibid.* p. 134.
82. *Ibid.* p. 247 n.28.
83. *Ibid.* pp. 137-138 and Hay *op. cit.* pp 132-133.
84. Litvinoff, *op. cit.* p. 61.

85. Hay, *op. cit.* pp. 128-129, and Litvinoff, *op. cit.* p. 61.
86. Cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 268.
87. See above pp. 30ff.
88. Cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 214.
89. For full details of the effects of the crusades upon Jews cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* pp. 41-56.
90. Cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 276.
91. *Ibid.* p. 274, 278.
92. For further information on the activities of Conrad of Marburg cf. Langmuir, *op. cit.* pp. 271-276, 277.
93. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 148.
94. *Ibid.* p. 149.
95. *Ibid.* p. 149 and *Encyclopaedia Judaica* vol.4, p. 1123.
96. *Ibid.* p. 154.
97. Prager and Telushkin, *op. cit.* p. 103.
98. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 111.
99. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia VOL. 6, p. 471.*
100. *Micrococcus prodigosus*, is often referred to as the miracle working bacillus. Cf. *ibid.* p. 472 and *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 8, p. 1043.
101. *Corpus Christi Day* was instituted by Pope Urban IV to commemorate a "miracle" reported by a doubting priest, who saw "drops of blood" fall from the communion bread and was finally convinced that Christ was present in the wafer. Cf. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 117.
102. *Ibid.* p. 114.
103. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 8, p. 1043.
104. In successive panels the painting shows a Jewish loan banker purchasing the wafer from a needy woman, his attempt to burn the wafer, the miraculous manifestation that followed, and the terrible punishment that he suffered as he and his entire family are burned. Cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 3 pp. 103-106.
105. Cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 3 p. 1043.
106. Poliakov, *op. cit.* pp. 100, 316 n. 131.
107. *Ibid.* p. 100.
108. Cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 8, pp. 1041-1042.
109. Among those Jews murdered was Don Meir Algeadez, the personal physician of King Henry III of Castile. Cf. *ibid.* p. 1043 and *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia Vol. 6, p. 471, where there is a slight difference over the date of the incident at Segovia. The former places the events in 1415 and the latter in 1408.*
110. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 117.
111. *Ibid.* p. 117.
112. Zefira Entin Rokeah, "The Jewish Church-Robbers and Host Desecrators of Norwich," *Revue des Etudes juives*, no. 141, 1982, pp. 331-362.
113. *Ibid.* pp. 350-351. Cf. also p. 348 for the full text of the charge.
114. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 118.
115. Parkes I, *op. cit.* p. 292.
116. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 118.
117. *Ibid.* p. 120.

118. *Ibid.* p. 118.  
 119. *Ibid.* p. 118.  
 120. *Ibid.* p. 121. The poem written by Gonzalo de Berceo and dated around 1250, is said to be one of the earliest poems written in the Spanish language.  
 121. *Ibid.* p. 122, also n. 31 p. 242, where Trachtenberg notes that the law suggested that the waxen images were said to be made as a substitute for a child, presumably for ritual murder.  
 122. *Ibid.* p. 119.  
 123. Cf. H. Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*, (Peter Halban: London 1992) pp.107-108.  
 124. *Ibid.* p. 108.  
 125. *Ibid.* p.108.  
 126. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p.13.  
 127. *Ibid.* p.13.  
 128. *Ibid.* p.13.  
 129. *Ibid.* p.19.  
 130. Cf. *ibid.* pp.19-20.  
 131. *Ibid.* pp. 26, 27.  
 132. *Ibid.* frontispiece.  
 133. *Ibid.* p. 48.  
 134. *Ibid.* pp. 46-47  
 135. Further details can be found in Trachtenberg *op. cit.* p. 22.  
 136. *Ibid.* p. 23.  
 137. Prager and Telushkin, *op. cit.* p. 98.  
 138. See for example John 8:44, 47, Where Jesus is reported as saying to the Jewish people:

*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. . . . He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.*

The Book of Revelation links the Devil with Jewish worship. Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 refer to the Jewish house of worship as the "synagogue of Satan."

139. These themes gained immense popularity in the fourth-century. See for example the Syrian Father Ephrem's, *Rhythm Against the Jews* where he claims that Israel of Old had despised God and instead had "behaved herself madly, and loved vain gods and devils." Quotation taken from Rosemary Ruther, *Faith and Fratricide* (The Seabury Press: New York 1974.) p. 127. Likewise John Chrysostom represented Jews as all that was demonic. Cf. *St. John Chrysostom, Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, translated by Paul W. Harkins. (The Catholic University of America Press: USA 1979) nos. I:3,1; I:6,3; II:3. For further details see also Simon, M. *Verus Israel* (Oxford University Press: Oxford 1986).

## Chapter 2. Conspiracy Against Christians

1. Kenneth R. Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Harvard University Press: Massachusetts 1992) p. 235.



2. The "badge of shame" was intended to keep Jews and Christians from social relations. Cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, pp. 65-66 for details of the various forms of the badge.
3. For details of the Jewish involvement in usury cf. Flannery, *op. cit.* pp. 96-98.
4. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 103.
5. The true number of communities decimated by the *Pastoureaux* cannot be correctly ascertained since Medieval chroniclers are not totally reliable. However one Jewish source puts the figure at 140 Jewish communities destroyed. Cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 104. A figure of 120 is given by Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 108.
6. Cf. Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. XI (Columbia University Press: New York 1967) p. 160.
7. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 105, and Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 101.
8. Cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 105, and Trachtenberg *op. cit.*, p. 101.
9. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 106.
10. *Ibid.* p. 106.
11. Figures taken from *ibid.* p. 106.
12. Figure for overall death toll taken from Flannery *op. cit.* p. 108.
13. Baron, *op. cit.* p. 158.
14. *Ibid.* p. 158.
15. *Ibid.* p. 158.
16. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 98.
17. *Ibid.* p. 98.
18. *Ibid.* p. 99.
19. *Ibid.* p. 68.
20. Baron, *op. cit.* p. 159.
21. In fact, in both the Greek and the Latin languages the same word was used for a magic potion, a drug and a poison. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 98.
22. James Parkes, *The Jew in the Medieval Community*, (Soncino Press: London 1938) p. 50. In further references this work will be termed Parkes II.
23. Baron, *op. cit.* p. 159.
24. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 100.
25. *Ibid.* p. 100.
26. Baron, *op. cit.* p. 159.
27. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 101.
28. Figures taken from Mordechai Breuer, "The Black Death and Antisemitism," in Almog, *op. cit.* p. 139.
29. The plague seems to have appeared in the East as early as 1333. The reports that reached Europe at the time told of a plague that struck quickly and proved so deadly that whole cities were depopulated and the dead were left unburied in the streets. Later when Pope Clement VI sought the causes and origins of the plague that was then raging in the papal city of Avignon in France, he was told that it had spread so rapidly in the East and had proved so fatal that the dead were numbered in millions. Indeed, from the information he gathered, Pope Clement estimated that in the East some twenty-four million had died. Cf. George Deaux, *The Black Death*, (Hamish Hamilton Ltd.: London 1969) p. 2.

30. One contemporary report says that the first outbreak of the plague in France occurred as early as November 1347, but it is generally agreed by scholars that the plague was not established in Marseilles until January 1348. Cf. Deaux, *op. cit.* p. 95.

31. Figures taken from *ibid.* p. 111. Such was the devastation in the papal city of Avignon that Pope Clement VI purchased a large field and had it consecrated as a cemetery to hold the huge volume of bodies. But, so virile was the plague the field became full and the Pope was obliged to sanctify the waters of the Rhone River, so that the victims could have a Christian burial in the waters. Cf. Breuer, *op. cit.* p. 139.

32. Deaux, *op. cit.* p. 111.

33. Figures taken from Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*, (Collins: London 1969) p. 84.

34. For example the city of Oxford lost almost its entire population in the year that the epidemic raged there. The precise number of deaths at Oxford university itself is difficult to ascertain due to considerable controversy among modern scholars and inaccuracies in the records of 14th century writers, as to the number of students at the University in the mid 14th century. Breuer, *op. cit.* p. 139, states that two-thirds of the student population succumbed to the Black Death; whilst Deaux, *op. cit.* p. 133, puts the figure at between a third and half of the students.

35. In Holland at the Monastery of Fleurchamps there were eighty deaths, while in the Abbey at Foswert, a monastery for both men and women, two hundred and seven monks, nuns, lay brothers and sisters died. In England, in the diocese of Norwich, the Friars of Our Lady were all reported to have died, while at Heveringland the prior and every canon, and only one survived at Hickling. Cf. Deaux, *op. cit.* pp. 111, 135.

36. According to the historian Hecker some 30,000 Minorites died in Italy; at Montpellier only seven out of one hundred and forty Dominicans survived; at Avignon over 350 Dominicans died; in Marseilles, the Bishop with the entire chapter of the cathedral and nearly all the friars, preachers and Minorites perished. Hecker also estimates that nearly 125,000 Franciscans died in Germany. Cf. Deaux, *op. cit.* p. 185.

37. Deaux, *op. cit.* p. 143.

38. Some of course did turn their backs on their sacred responsibilities. In Italy the clergy were seized by such a terror of death that everywhere thousands perished without the comfort of the Holy Sacraments. Pompejo Pellini, in his history of Perugia recorded that no friar or priest was to be found who was willing to hear confession and converse with the sick, and no one among the clergy was willing to accompany the dead to the grave. Cf. Johannes Nohl, *The Black Death: A Chronicle of the Plague*, (George Allen Unwin Ltd.: London 1926) p. 120.

39. The figures for the mortality rate among German higher clergy is taken from a study of German sources by Conrad Eubel. Cf. Ziegler, *op. cit.* p. 85, for further details.

40. Cf. Gavin Langmuir, *History, Religion and Antisemitism*, (University of California Press: California 1990) p. 301

41. Cf. the account of the reaction to the Black Death in Messina, Sicily in Deaux, *op. cit.* p. 50.
42. Cf. Langmuir, *History, Religion and Antisemitism*, *op. cit.* p. 301 for a discussion of this point.
43. Cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* p.110.
44. Deaux, *op. cit.* p. 167.
45. Cf. *ibid.* p. 70; Nohl, *op. cit.* pp. 167-168, 178-179; Ziegler, *op. cit.* pp. 97, 98.
46. Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 110.
47. Breuer, *op. cit.* p. 150.
48. Ziegler, *op. cit.* p 102, and Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 103.
49. Baron, *op. cit.* p. 162.
50. Ziegler, *op. cit.* p. 102.
51. Poliakov is of the opinion that the name Jacob Pascal was probably intended to call to mind a link with the ritual murder legend, whilst the reference to Toledo as Jacob's home may have been a confused attempt to link the *Toldoth Yeshu*, a sacrilegious biography of Jesus written during the first millennium of the Christian era. Cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 110.
52. *Ibid.* p. 110.
53. Baron, *op. cit.* p. 162.
54. *Ibid.* p. 162.
55. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 110.
56. Zeigler, *op. cit.* p. 103.
57. Indeed at Speyer the bodies of the murdered Jews were piled in huge wine-casks and sent floating down the Rhine. *Ibid.* p. 103.
58. Cf. Breuer, *op. cit.* p. 141 and Johnson *op. cit.* p. 217.
59. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2 (New York 1940) p. 387.
60. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, *op. cit.* p. 387.
61. Cf. Zeigler, *op. cit.* p. 103.
62. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 105.
63. Zeigler, *op. cit.* p. 103.
64. Breuer, *op. cit.* p. 142.
65. Breuer, *op. cit.* p. 143. Cf. also Zeigler, *op. cit.* p. 92.
66. *Ibid.* p. 143.
67. Zeigler, *op. cit.* p. 94.
68. *Ibid.* p. 96.
69. Cf. Breuer, *op. cit.* p. 148 and also *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, *op. cit.* p. 387.
70. Zeigler, *op. cit.* p. 107 and also Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 110.
71. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol.4, *op. cit.* p. 1067.
72. Baron, *op. cit.* p. 163 and Zeigler, *op. cit.* p. 107.
73. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol.4, *op. cit.* p. 1065.
74. Cf. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, *op. cit.* p. 387 and Zeigler, *op. cit.* p. 107. Zeigler believes that Casimir's protection of Jews was influenced by his Jewish mistress, Esther.
75. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 111.
76. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol.4, *op. cit.* p. 1067.
77. Breuer, *op. cit.* p. 142.

78. *Ibid.* p. 142.
79. Ziegler, *op. cit.* p 108. Cf. also *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, *op. cit.* p. 387, where it is claimed that in Germany alone some 300 Jewish communities were wiped out, a figure that is at odds with Ziegler's estimate.
80. Zeigler, *op. cit.* p. 109.
81. Further details of the death of William of Norwich and the explanation given by Theobald can be found in Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131; Hay, *op. cit.* p.122; Joseph Jacobs, "St William of Norwich," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, July 1897, pp. 748 - 755; Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, pp. 208ff for a detailed examination of all aspects of ritual murder.
82. Cf. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* pp. 140-155.
83. *Ibid.* p. 131.
84. For details of host and image desecration cf. *ibid.* pp. 109-123.
85. Cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 105.
86. Flannery, *op. cit.* p 128.
87. Poliakov *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 110 note. 6.
88. The ninth century bishop, Agobard of Lyons, mentions the work, which is believed to have been written in the East during the first millennium of the Christian Era.
89. Flannery, *op. cit.* pp. 130-131.
90. Malcolm Barber, "The Pastoureaux of 1320." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 32, No. 2, (April 1981) p. 157.
91. *Ibid.* p. 158.
92. *Ibid.* p. 158.
93. *Ibid.* p. 158.
94. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 112.
95. Cf. *Ibid.* p. 111.
96. Breuer, *op. cit.* p. 144.
97. *Ibid.* p. 144.
98. *Ibid.* p. 144.
99. *Ibid.* pp. 145-146.
100. In Strasbourg members of the city council were ousted and replaced following accusations that they were Jew-lovers and had received bribes from Jews. The day after the council were ousted Strasbourg's Jews were rounded up and put to death. Cf. *ibid.* p. 146.
101. *Ibid.* p. 145.
102. Stow, *op. cit.* p. 239.
103. *Ibid.* p. 239.
104. *Ibid.* p. 239.
105. Cf. Malcolm Barber, "Lepers, Jews, and Moslems: The Plot to Overthrow Christendom in 1321." *op. cit.* pp. 1-17.
106. *Ibid.* p. 11.
107. The Templars admitted to holding a number secret ceremonies during which they had denied Christ, worshipped monstrous idols, defiled the crucifix by spitting, trampling or urinating upon it, had abused the sacraments by

omitting the words of consecration during the mass, and had encouraged unnatural sexual acts.

108. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 100.

109. *Ibid.* p. 107.

110. *Ibid.* p. 104.

111. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 4, *op. cit.* p. 1064.

112. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 107.

### Chapter 3. Religious Conspiracy After the Black Death

1. The codex *Meissener Rechtsbuch*, published during this period, contains stipulations for the protection of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues, and states that in the event of attack Christians must aid Jews. Cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 113.

2. Cf. Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 111.

3. The Jews of France were permitted to own land and houses, they were allowed to charge interest at the exorbitant rate of 87 percent and, moreover, a special "guardian of the Jews" was appointed to safeguard their interests. Cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 115.

4. *Ibid.* p. 115.

5. *Ibid.* p. 116. Many Jews were murdered and their homes and property pillaged as the anger of the populace spilled over in the various upheavals that marked the ascension of Charles VI.

6. *Ibid.* p. 117. The edict to expel Jews from France was promulgated on the Jewish day of Atonement. This was the first manifestation of contempt for the Jewish religious calendar that would be repeated down the centuries.

7. Cf. *ibid.* p. 118 and Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 112.

8. For example, in 1426 Cologne expelled its Jews "in honour of God and the Holy Virgin." Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 119.

9. Rumours of well poisoning were still given currency during the pontificate of Pope Martin V, to the extent that the pope issued a bull on February 20, 1422 in which he instructed "all clerical and lay preachers of whatever rank, degree, order, religion or circumstance," to cease preaching an accusation as unjustified as the poisoned-well conspiracy libel. Cf. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* pp. 106-107.

10. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 107.

11. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 120. It is interesting to note that Regensburg had once been a strong defender of Jews, not only during the Black Death but also during the excesses of the *Rindfleisch* massacres of 1298. The city's determination to expel Jews was finally rewarded in 1519, some forty-three years after the initial attempt. During the intervening years Jews were subjected to a gradual exclusion from the cultural and social life of the city. It was a complete turn around for the city that had once defended Jews in the face of extreme opposition.

12. The confession of Eberlin was the first to contain this statement, although he had difficulty finding the answer that satisfied his inquisitors, for the transcript of his confession says that having been asked what Jews did with Christian blood "he answered badly, that the Jews need Christian blood for their circumcision." Mercklin, likewise had difficulty pleasing those who tortured him. Indeed he worked his way through the various Christian blood

superstitions (claiming that Christian blood had magical healing properties, was a cure for epilepsy, cured the Jewish stink, etc.) before finding the answer his captors expected, naming it being needed for circumcision. See Hsia, *op. cit.* pp. 20-21.

13. For full details of the Emdingen case, and the various records, cf. Hsia, *op. cit.* pp. 14-41.

14. The fact that there was no body of "the Holy Child of La Guardia" made no difference to the popularity of this martyr. Instead, it served to stimulate the imagination of the faithful. The parish priest of La Guardia, writing in 1785, said that "it was universally believed that God had completed the parallel between Christ and the Niño, and on the third day, had carried the body up to heaven." Cf. Hay, *op. cit.* pp. 128-129, and Litvinoff, *op. cit.* p. 61.

15 Cf. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia* Vol. 6, pp. 471-472.

16. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 8 p. 1043.

17. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 3.

18. Cf. the table provided by Hsia of the distribution of ritual murders across Europe, *Ibid.* p. 3.

19. For an account of the impact of printing upon early modern Europe, cf. Elizabeth L. Einstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1979).

20. A translation of part of the original trial records can be found in Strack, *op. cit.* pp. 193-201.

21. Cf. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 133.

22. Strack, *op. cit.* p. 199.

23. For further details cf. Hsia, *op. cit.* pp. 44-45.

24. Cf. *ibid.* p. 45.

25. The illustration is reproduced in *ibid.* p. 49. This woodcut picture of Simon of Trent was one of what would become hundreds. For further examples see, L. G. Sander and S. T. Katz, *Antisemitism in Times of Crisis*, (New York University Press: New York 1991) pp. 68f, figs. 23, 24, 29, 31.

26. Strack, *op. cit.* p. 200.

27. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 134.

28. Cf. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 52 for a reproduction of the woodcut.

29. *Ibid.* p. 51. The Nuremberg reproduction was printed around 1497 whilst the Augsburg edition was believed to have been produced in 1500.

30. *Ibid.* p. 38.

31. Cf. Hay, *op. cit.* pp. 162-164 for an account of the tolerant attitude taken toward Jews in Papal states during the Renaissance.

32. For a summary of Zasius's views see Steven Rowan, "Ulrich Zasius and the Baptism of Jewish Children," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 6 (1975) p. 3-25.

33. Hsia, *op. cit.* pp 112 n.2 and 118.

34. *Ibid.* p. 116.

35. *Ibid.* p. 116.

36. Cf. *Ibid.* p. 113 for the possible links between the Freiburg case and Ulrich Zasius.

37. For details of this tract cf. Baron, *op. cit.* Vol. XIII p. 184 and Hsia, *op. cit.* pp 119-120.

38. Cf. Poliakov *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 212.
39. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 124.
40. For details of the "Reuchlin Affair" Cf. Baron. *op. cit.* Vol. XIII pp. 184-191; James Overfield, *Humanism and Scholasticism in Late Medieval Germany* (Princeton University Press: New Jersey 1984) pp. 247-297; Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of Antisemitism: In the Age of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia 1984) pp. 24-37; Poliakov, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp 214-216; Flannery, *op. cit.* pp. 153-154.
41. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 121.
42. Oberman, *op. cit.* p. 35.
43. *Ibid.* p. 32.
44. Moritz Stern in 1893 republished the tract accrediting authorship to Osiander. Cf. Hsia *op. cit.* p. 136 and Oberman, *op. cit.* pp. 35 and 57 n.61-62.
45. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 137.
46. *Ibid.* p. 137.
47. *Ibid.* p. 141.
48. For a detailed summary of Osiander's views on the veracity of ritual murder charges and the criterion for discovering the truth behind such charges, cf. Hsia, *op. cit.* pp. 137-140. Also, Oberman, *op. cit.* p. 35.
49. Rumours had begun to circulate long before the corpse was found, saying that a Jewish boy had been overheard telling his playmates that "the dog was dead after it had howled for three days." Since the villagers believed that Jews called Christians "dogs", they concluded that the boy had been tortured by Jews for three days before he had died. A shepherd duly came forward and claimed that he had seen some Jews dump a body in the forest. The authorities found the mutilated body where the shepherd had said and concluded that it was a ritual murder case. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 126.
50. Oberman, *op. cit.* p. 36.
51. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 127.
52. *Ibid.* p. 127.
53. The theme of the Jewish poisoner remained hardy throughout this period. During the early sixteenth century a Jewish convert, named Johann Pfefferkorn, admitted that, although not a trained physician, he had dabbled in medical practice and that, before his conversion he had endeavoured, along with his co-religionists in Halle, to poison Archbishop Albert of Magdeburg and Elector Joachim I of Brandenburg. Although unsuccessful in these two cases, he was able, together with some Jewish associates to administer deadly poisons to thirteen other Christians. (It should be noted that this Pfefferkorn, who hailed from Halle and was killed in 1514 for anti-Christian acts, is not to be confused with the Pfefferkorn who advocated the destruction of the Talmud.) Cf. Baron, *op. cit.* Vol. XI p 159.
54. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 127.
55. We will recall that a similar claim had been dealt with by Osiander when, during the 1529 Poesing trial, it was claimed that Jews needed blood to anoint their priests. Osiander pointed out that there had been no Jewish priests since the fall of Jerusalem, and Jews relied now on rabbis to guide their faith.

Eck, obviously aware of this, did not make the same mistake, and claimed that Jews anointed their rabbis with blood.

56. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 127.

57. *Ibid.* p. 129 for Eck's account. For the tale of the Freiburg ritual murder cf. Mark Edwards Jr., *Luther's Last Battles*, (Cornell University Press: Ithaca 1986) pp. 119-120; and Steven Rowan, "Luther, Bucer and Eck on the Jews" *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 16, No 1 (Spring 1985) pp. 86-87.

58. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 129.

59. Oberman, *op. cit.* p. 36.

60. *Ibid.* p. 37.

61. For further details cf. *ibid.* pp. 36-37; Hsia *op. cit.* pp. 31-37; Rowan *op. cit.* p. 87.

62. Cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* p.224; Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 152; see also note 66 below.

63. Baron, *op. cit.* Vol. XIII, p. 217.

64. *Ibid.* p. 217.

65. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 222.

66. As quoted in Falk, *op. cit.* pp. 63-64.

67. Gerhard Falk, *The Jew in Christian Theology* (McFarland & Company: North Carolina 1992) p. 61.

68. Cf. Baron, *op. cit.* Vol. XIII pp 219-225 shows how a number of situations led to a build-up of hostility in Luther; Edwards Jr., *op. cit.*, chapter one, for an account of connections between Luther's anger and his illnesses; most scholars hold with the idea that Luther became disillusioned with Jews when his conversion attempts failed, Rowan, *op. cit.* p. 88, Hay, *op. cit.*, p. 167; whilst Falk believes that Luther had always been hostile toward Jews thus the hostilities of his later years were the expected culmination. See Falk, *op. cit.* pp. 63-64.

69. Cf. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* pp. 57, 72, 73, 74, and especially p.99; Hsia, *op. cit.* pp. 131ff.

70. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 132.

71. *Ibid.* p. 133.

72. *Ibid.* p. 133.

73. Cf. reference to Jesus Christ was born a Jew, Poliakov, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 222.

74. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 218.

75. Rowan, *op. cit.* pp. 83-85.

76. For a persuasive argument that the supporters of the Reformation saw their actions as a rite of purification, see Robert W. Scribner, "Reformation and Ritual", *The German People and the Reformation*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cornell University Press: Ithaca 1988) pp 122-144.

77. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 114.

78. Cf. Scribner *op. cit.* pp. 135-137, for further accounts of image mutilations.

79. Hsia, *op. cit.* pp. 148ff.

80. Cf. references to the studies of Marcel Mauss, in Hsia, *op. cit.*, p. 148 and n.32.



81. Hsia, *op. cit.* p. 150. Cf. also p. 148-151 for details of Margaritha and *The Entire Jewish Faith*.
82. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 107.
83. *Ibid.* pp. 107-108. Flud claimed that the poison used was obtained after Jews enticed a redheaded Englishman, into one of their homes, tied him to a cross during the heat of the day. They inserted a piece of wood in his mouth to keep it open, and had some adders sting him in the back. The poor man soon died, and the Jews collected the slaver dripping from his mouth, out of which they manufactured the disease-bringing unguent.
84. *Ibid.* p. 108.
85. *Ibid.* p. 240.
86. *Ibid.* p. 240.
87. For a full account of Weyer's theories, see H. C. Erik Midelfort, "Johann Weyer and the Transformation of the Insanity Defence" *The German People and the Reformation*, ed. Hsia, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-261.
88. Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder, op. cit.* p. 144.
89. *Ibid.* p. 144.
90. *Ibid.* pp. 151-152.
91. Cf. *ibid.* p. 153 for a table of the executions for infanticide in Nuremberg between 1500 and 1700.
92. Cf. *ibid.* pp.155ff for examples of such murder tales.
93. *Ibid.* p. 155.
94. For example in 1537 two Jews in an Alsatian village near Enisheim were accused of stabbing a Christian boy and drawing his blood. The bailiff arrested the two Jews and interrogated them, but also questioned many villagers, and in the process uncovered information to the effect that the boy's grandmother and the two Jews had previously argued over the repayment of a loan. The bailiff sought advice from higher authorities, and was advised to continue questioning, but under no circumstances to apply torture, and eventually was instructed by Charles V to release both Jews. Indeed, the bailiff was rebuked for his inhumane treatment of the two Jews after it was discovered he had fed them on a diet of bread and water. The process of investigation in this case was far different from the old formula of arrest, torture and execution. For further details cf. Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder, op. cit.* pp. 156f.
95. A partial text of *Judaism Unmasked* can be found in Richard S. Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts* (D. C. Heath and Company: USA. 1991) pp. 33-36.
96. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 34-35.
97. *Ibid.* p. 35.
98. *Ibid.* p. 35.
99. *Ibid.* p. 36.
100. For details of the affair over publication of *Judaism Unmasked*, cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 6, pp. 545-546; and *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 4, pp. 36-37.
101. Cf. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, p. 408.
102. For details of the Rohling controversy cf. Strack, *op. cit.* pp. 155-168; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 14, p. 224; Hay, *op. cit.* pp. 135-136.

103. Cf. Hsia, *op cit.*, pp. 219, 220, and 221 for reproductions of the engravings.
104. Cf. Strack, *op cit.*, p. 191-192 for the tale of Andrew of Rinn.
105. Hsia, *op cit.*, pp. 219-222.
106. *Ibid.* p. 223.
107. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, p. 409.
108. *Ibid.* Vol. 10, p. 400; Vol. 9, p. 369; Vol. 2 p. 139.
109. *Ibid.* Vol. 2, p. 451; Vol. 10, p 253; Vol. 8, p. 583.
110. *Ibid.* Vol. 2, 408.
111. Cf. Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust* (Fontana/Collins: London 1986) p. 43.
112. Flannery, *op cit.*, p. 318 n. 53.
113. Cf. Searchlight, No. 186, December 1990, p. 3 and No. 182, August 1990, p. 3.
114. *Ibid.* No. 186, December 1990, p. 3 and No. 182, August 1990, p. 3.

#### Chapter 4. Conspiracy in the Modern World.

1. Hugo Valentin, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion -The Greatest Forgery of the Century." Reprinted chapter taken from, *Antisemitism, Historically and Critically Examined* (The Viking Press: New York 1971).
2. All references to *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, and all further quotations will be taken from the 1934 British reprint of the Nilus edition (circa 1905) translated from the original Russian by Victor E. Marsden. Copies can be seen at the Jewish National Library, Jerusalem. This edition contains no reference to a publisher, but it was known to have been circulated by the British Union of Fascists.
3. *Ibid.* p. 5.
4. *Ibid.* pp. 6-7.
5. *Ibid.* p. 6.
6. John Gwyer, *Portraits of Mean Men* (Cobden-Sanderson: London 1938) p. 20.
7. Cf. *The Protocols, op. cit.* protocol no. 4, pp. 20-21.
8. The term "goyim" is used throughout *The Protocols* to denote non-Jews. The Hebrew word *goyim*, plural of *goy*, means literally "nations" and is used to denote Gentiles in contradistinction to Jews. However, in *The Protocols* the term is used in a derogatory sense.
9. *The Protocols, op. cit.* p. 14.
10. *Ibid.* p. 13.
11. *Ibid.* p. 16.
12. *Ibid.* p. 17.
13. *Ibid.* p. 18.
14. *Ibid.* p. 19.
15. *Ibid.* p. 19.
16. *Ibid.* p. 21.
17. *Ibid.* p. 24.
18. *Ibid.* p. 26. In the original Russian edition this passage used the term "general war" in the sense that those who opposed the Jews would be embroiled in some type of war. However, in the translations made after 1914 those who

believed in the genuineness of *The Protocols* translated this phrase into "World War" or, as we have in this edition, "universal war". Cf. Valentin, *op. cit.* p. 6.

19. *The Protocols*, *op. cit.* p. 29.

20. *Ibid.* p. 32.

21. Cf. *ibid.* protocol 12.

22. Cf. *ibid.* protocol 14.

23. Cf. *ibid.* protocols 12-14.

24. *Ibid.* p. 44.

25. *Ibid.* p. 50.

26. Cf. *The Times* May 8, 1920.

27. Valentin, *op. cit.* p. 2.

28. Krushevan, just a few months earlier, had instigated a pogrom at Kishinev in Bessarabia, in which forty-five Jews were killed and over four hundred injured, and which saw the destruction of some 1,300 Jewish houses and shops. Cf. Cohn, *op. cit.* pp. 65-66.

29. *Ibid.* p. 66.

30. Cf. Gwyer, *op. cit.* p. 86 and Herman Bernstein, *The Truth About "The Protocols of Zion"*, (KVAT Publishing House: New York 1971) pp. 26-33.

31. Of the 1905 edition only one copy has been preserved, and is currently in the possession of the British Museum, which acquired it in 1906. For suggestions concerning the significance of the book being printed by the Imperial printing office, Cf. Gwyer, *op. cit.* pp. 77-98, where he relates the somewhat fantastic tale suggested by *The Times* in 1921. They suggested that Nilus was a protégé of the Russian Grand-Duchess Elizabeth, and that the *The Protocols* were printed in order to discredit one M. Philippe, a French mesmerist and charlatan, who had become confidante of the Tsar and Tsarina. M. Philippe had established a separatist branch of Freemasons, known as the Martinists, within the Russian Court. Rumour linked the Martinist sect with such atrocities as Satan worship, orgies and seances. To make matters worse he had enticed the Tsar into becoming the lodge's first president. These crimes had irked many and a work that discredited the Freemasons as being in alliance with Jews (the antisemitic Tsar's sworn enemies) could only be beneficial in ridding the empire of Philippe. (Cf. pp. 81-82.). A little less sensational is Bernstein's suggestion that the tract was little more than an antisemitic document aimed at rousing Tsar Nicholas II, a particularly weak willed man, into taking action against those who threatened his throne. Cf. Bernstein *op. cit.* pp. 26-27. See also Cohn, *op. cit.* p. 67 and Poliakov, Vol. IV *op. cit.* p. 103-104, who both claim that the document was a forgery originating with the secret police aimed at influencing the Tsar.

32. See last note and Cohen, *op. cit.* p. 67.

33. Hans Kosmala, *Studies, Essays and Reviews*, Vol. III, (E. J. Brill: Netherlands 1978) pp. 4-6.

34. Quotation taken from Cohen, *op. cit.* p. 68.

35. *Ibid.* p. 68.

36. *Ibid.* p. 69.

37. Bernstein, *op. cit.* p. 28.

38. *Ibid.* p. 28, Cohn, *op. cit.* p. 69 and Valentin, *op. cit.* p. 8.

39. For further examples cf. Cohn, *op. cit.* pp. 69-71 and Valentin, *op. cit.* pp. 8-9.
40. For further examples cf. Valentin, *op. cit.* p. 10 and Hans Curtiss, *An Appraisal of the The Protocols of Zion*, (Columbia University Press: New York 1942) pp. 32-43.
41. Cohen, *op. cit.* p. 71.
42. For a reproduction of the text see Bernstein, *op. cit.* pp. 259-264.
43. For further details on Joly, cf. Gwyer, *op. cit.* pp. 44-53. For the complete text of *Dialogue aux Enfer* see Bernstein, *op. cit.* pp. 79-258.
44. Cohen, *op. cit.* p. 75, and for a comparison of the texts pp. 275-9.
45. *Ibid.* p. 156 and also Kosmala *op. cit.* p. 19.
46. Goedsche was a Prussian postal official who had been dismissed from his job for forgery, and who instead had turned to the large scale production of trashy novels, which he wrote under the pseudonym, Sir John Retcliffe.
47. For the full text of "The Jewish Cemetery in Prague" see Bernstein, *op. cit.* pp. 215-284.
48. Readclif went on to have a somewhat colourful career at the hands of the antisemites who used his work, a career which saw him as an English diplomat, a historian, a heroic antisemite and even a rabbi! Cf. Cohn, *op. cit.* p. 37.
49. *Ibid.* p. 38.
50. Curtiss, *op. cit.* p. 89.
51. For further details of *Tayna Yevreystva* see Gwyer, *op. cit.* pp. 65-76.
52. Cohn, *op. cit.* p. 107.
53. Litvinoff, *op. cit.* p. 89.
54. There were of course exceptions to this rule, such as Baruch Spinoza and Moses Mendelssohn, but generally these men did not sit well with most Jewish communities. Indeed Spinoza, generally thought of as a central figure in the history of philosophy was expelled from his community and his father's house at the age of twenty-four, and never readmitted. Johnson, *op. cit.* pp. 288-291.
55. Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto*, (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1956) p. 44.
56. *Ibid.* p. 44. In Frankfort the city council passed a law which prohibited anyone from striking or insulting a Jew on the streets. It proved of little avail.
57. Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 147.
58. *Ibid.* p. 160.
59. For further details regarding Mendelssohn, consult Johnson *op. cit.* pp. 297-303 and Litvinoff *op. cit.* pp. 115-118.
60. For details of Voltaire's antisemitism cf. Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction* (Harvard University Press: Massachusetts 1980) pp. 34-47 and Johnson *op. cit.* p. 309.
61. For details of the struggle for full emancipation in France, cf. Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 163; Litvinoff, *op. cit.* pp. 125-128; and Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 306.
62. Cf. Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 164 and Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 306.
63. Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 164 and Johnson, *op. cit.* pp. 306 and 307.
64. R. F. Byrnes, *Antisemitism in Modern France*, (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey 1950) p. 19.
65. *Ibid.* p. 110 and pp. 112-113.
66. *Ibid.* p. 111.

67. Abbé Barruel, *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*, Vol. I, trans. into English by Robert Clifford, (T. Burton: London 1798) p. xxii.
68. *Ibid.* p. xxii.
69. *Ibid.* p. xxiii.
70. For an examination of the errors in Barruel's theory cf. Cohn, *op. cit.* p. 26.
71. Barruel tried for many years to contact the mysterious Simonini, although all his efforts came to nothing. Cf. *ibid.* p. 27.
72. *Ibid.* p. 27.
73. *Ibid.* p. 28.
74. For a full description of the Jewish/Masonic relationship during the late eighteenth century and onwards, including the Jewish struggle to be accepted into the lodges, cf. Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723-1939* *op. cit.*.
75. Cohn, *op. cit.* p. 29.
76. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 310.
77. *Ibid.* p. 310.
78. Cohn, *op. cit.* p. 30.
79. *Ibid.* p. 42.
80. *Ibid.* p. 44.
81. For a full description of Gougent des Mousseaux's theories concerning the equalities of the roles of Jews and Freemasons in the conspiracy for world domination, cf. Katz, *Jews and Freemasons*, pp. 157-159.
82. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 157-159.
83. Byrnes, *op. cit.* p. 131.
84. For full details of the crash of the Union générale bank, cf. *ibid.* pp. 130-136.
85. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 349.
86. For further details cf. Byrnes p. 118.
87. For further information on Proudhon cf. *ibid.* pp. 121-125.
88. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 349.
89. *Ibid.* p. 349.
90. Litvinoff, *op. cit.* p. 176.
91. Cf. Byrnes, *op. cit.* p. 138.
92. *Ibid.* p. 139 and Hays, *op. cit.* pp. 177 ff.
93. Byrnes, *op. cit.* p. 140.
94. Figures taken from *ibid.* p. 152.
95. Figure taken form Litvinoff, *op. cit.* p. 206.
96. Poliakov, Vol. IV, *op. cit.* p. 52.
97. *Ibid.* p. 52.
98. *Ibid.* p. 53.
99. *Ibid.* p. 53.
100. *Ibid.* p. 54.
101. Litvinoff, *op. cit.* p. 210.
102. Poliakov, Vol. IV, *op. cit.* p. 54.
103. *Ibid.* p. 57.
104. For a full account of the Dreyfus affair, cf. Betty Schechter, *The Dreyfus Affair: A National Scandal*, (Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston 1965). For

- an account of the affair and the role of the press, cf. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. IV pp. 50-58.
105. Cf. Leon Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism: From Voltaire to Wagner* Vol. III (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London 1975) p. 233.
106. Litvinoff, *op. cit.* p. 145.
107. For a full description of the Romantic Nationalist Movement cf. Shmuel Almog, *Nationalism and Antisemitism in Modern Europe 1815-1945*, (Pergamon Press: Oxford 1990) pp. 6-16.
108. Saul Ascher, *Germanomanie* ("The German Illness" or "The Illness of Germanism"), quoted in *ibid.* p. 7.
109. Cf. Hugo Valentin, *Antisemitism*, (Books for Libraries Press: New York 1936, reprinted in 1971) p. 51.
110. Taken from Friedrich Rühls, *On the Claims of the Jews to Civil Rights in Germany*, quoted in Hugo Valentin, *op. cit.* p. 51. See also Rose, *op. cit.* pp. 128-129.
111. Valentin, *op. cit.* p. 52.
112. For further details of the "Hep Hep" riots cf.. Almog, *op. cit.* p. 8.
113. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 126.
114. *Ibid.* p. 126.
115. For further details concerning the Young Hegelians, especially their connections with the English Deists and French Materialists, cf. Shmuel Ettinger, "The Young Hegelians- A Source of Modern Antisemitism?" *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 28, (Summer 1983). Cf. also the critique of Ettinger's article by Otto Dov Kulka, "Critique of Judaism in European Thought: On the Historical Meaning of Modern Antisemitism," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 52 (Fall 1989).
116. Daumer, who ultimately became a devout Catholic relates in his book *My Conversion* that when he first had doubts about his atheism he did not feel it possible to approach Christianity, and turned instead to Judaism. Cf. Ettinger, *op. cit.* p. 73.
117. For details of the Moloch legend cf. the entry in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 12. For Biblical allusions to the cult of Moloch consult *Leviticus* 18:12.
118. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 256.
119. For details of the Damascus Affair cf. Litvinoff *op. cit.* pp. 161-164, and Flannery *op. cit.* p. 169.
120. Cf. Poliakov, Vol. III, *op. cit.* p. 413.
121. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 256.
122. *Ibid.* p. 256.
123. Poliakov, Vol. III, *op. cit.* p. 410.
124. *Ibid.* pp. 410-411.
125. *Ibid.* p. 411.
126. *Ibid.* p. 411.
127. *Ibid.* p. 411.
128. Cf. *ibid.* p. 411. It is interesting to note that Daumer's depiction of Judas the enlightened Jew flies in the face of all Christian antisemitism up until that time, which represented Judas as the ultimate Jew, blind to the Christian faith,

rejecter of Christ and ultimately the cause of His death. Cf. Maccoby, *op. cit.* for further details.

129. Poliakov, Vol. III, *op. cit.*

130. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 258.

131. *Ibid.* p. 258.

132. Bruno Bauer, the antisemitic leader of the Hegelian left, in 1843 published an essay demanding that Jews abandon Judaism completely and transform their pleas for equal rights into a general campaign for human liberation both from religion and state tyranny. The essay sparked a lively debate amongst antisemites and Jewish supporters alike. Cf. Johnson, *op. cit.* p.351.

133. Poliakov, *op. cit.* p. 414.

134. Ghilany's first essay was entitled *The Jewish Question* and written in 1843. His second, *Judaism and Criticism: Hebrew Human Sacrifices and the Necessity of a Timely Reform of Judaism* followed in 1844.

135. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 260.

136. *Ibid.* p. 260.

137. Mammon was not really a god at all but a Hellenized Aramaic word meaning "riches". In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus insists that "You cannot serve God and mammon." (Luke 16:13; Matt. 6:24), meaning that money should not stand before God. However, early Christian superstition soon blended "mammon" with the conception of the demonic Jew, elevating mammon to the role of devil-god and depicting Jews as his loyal worshippers. For a study of the secularisation of the Blood Libel legend cf. Rose, *op. cit.* pp. 44-50.

138. Cf. *ibid.* pp.306-309.

139. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 309-310.

140. "Philosophy in Action" is one of two essays Hess contributed to *Twenty-One Folios from Switzerland* (Zurich, 1843). It was the same book in which Bauer's controversial essay "Capacity of Present-day Jews and Christians to be Free" appeared.

141. *Ibid.* p. 314.

142. *Ibid.* p. 49.

143. *Ibid.* p. 50.

144. *Ibid.* pp. 50, 315-316.

145. *Ibid.* p. 316.

146 For the significance of Marx's Jewish ancestry, see Robert Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky*, (Harrop: London 1976) and Julius Carlebach, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London 1978) chap. 8.

147. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 351.

148. Poliakov, Vol. III, *op. cit.* p. 422.

149. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 351.

150. Poliakov, Vol. III, *op. cit.* p. 422.

151. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 301.

152. *Ibid.* p. 301.

153. Poliakov, Vol. III, *op. cit.* p. 423.

154. Rose, *op. cit.* pp. 360-364.

155. Kulka, *op. cit.* p. 137. Cf. also Almog, *op. cit.* pp. 24-25.

156. Cf. Almog, *op. cit.* pp. 24-25. Also Ettinger, *op. cit.* p. 80.
157. Taken from Richard Wagner, *Judaism in Music* (1850), as quoted in Kulka, *op. cit.* pp. 136-137.
158. For an examination of Wagner's use of the term "Judaization" cf. Jacob Katz, *The Darker Side of Genius*, (University Press of New England: London 1986) p. 33.
159. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 365.
160. Cf. Poliakov, Vol. III, *op. cit.* p. 438.
161. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 373.
162. *Ibid.* p. 374.
163. Emancipation was achieved in Austria in 1867, in the North German Confederation in 1869 and after the unification of the Empire was extended to the whole of Germany.
164. For full details of the theory of the years 1873-1879 being one of an incubation period for political and social antisemitism see Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction*, pp. 247 ff.
165. The financial crisis came about due to the fact that Bismarck had demanded 200,000,000 francs from France after her defeat in 1870, and France had paid this huge sum - twice her total annual budget - in less than three years. The vast sum threw the German economy badly out of gear. There was a short period of wild speculation, and then, in May 1873 an appalling crash. Cf. Parkes, *op. cit.* p. 26.
166. Marr is credited with having invented the term "antisemitism".
167. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction*, *op. cit.* p. 260.
168. For a full analysis of Marr's *The Victory of Judaism Over Germanism*, cf. Paul Massing, *Rehearsal for Destruction*, (Harper: New York 1949) pp. 6 ff.
169. For further explanation cf. P. G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Antisemitism*, (J. Wiley: New York 1964) p. 48.
170. Massing *op. cit.* p. 11.
171. Pulzer, *op. cit.* p. 51.
172. *Ibid.* p. 51.
173. Cf. Valentin *op. cit.* p. 60.
174. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction*, *op. cit.* p. 287.
175. Cf. Robert Wistrich, "Antisemitism as a 'Radical' Ideology in the 19th Century," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 28 (Summer 1983) p. 90. See also Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction*, p. 289.
176. Valentin *op. cit.* p. 60.
177. *Ibid.* p. 60.
178. For further details see Wistrich, *op. cit.* *Jerusalem Quarterly* 28, p. 85 and Pulzer, *op. cit.* pp. 156-162.

#### Chapter 5. The Conspiracy Theory in Modern Germany.

1. See above Chapter 4, note 1.
2. Karl Deitrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship* (Praeger Publishers: New York 1970) p. 22.
3. George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (Grosset and Dunlap: New York 1964) p. 6.
4. *Ibid.* p. 9.



5. Cf. *ibid.* p. 16.
6. *Ibid.* p. 17.
7. *Ibid.* p. 4.
8. *Ibid.* p. 4-5.
9. *Ibid.* p. 15.
10. Polenz's book is also important in that Hitler felt that it had borne an influence on his thought. Cf. *ibid.* p. 22.
11. *Ibid.* p.27.
12. For example cf. Gustav Freytag's novel, *Debit and Credit* (1855) and Wilhelm Raabe's immensely popular *Hungerpastor (The Pastor to the Hungry)*(1863). For further information see Mosse *op. cit.* pp. 127-128.
13. *Ibid.* p. 128.
14. Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles 1961) p. 40.
15. *Ibid.* p. 41.
16. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 35-52 for a detailed examination of Legarde's views on religion.
17. Mosse *op. cit.* p. 38.
18. *Ibid.* p. 131.
19. *Ibid.* p. 132-133. Cf. also Bracher, *op. cit.* pp. 40-41.
20. Mosse *op. cit.* p. 133.
21. *Ibid.* p. 133.
22. *Ibid.* p. 134.
23. Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth* (Basic Books, Inc.: New York 1974) p. 317.
24. *Ibid.* p. 317.
25. *Ibid.* p. 317.
26. Friedrich Hertz, *Race and Civilisation* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd.: London 1928).
27. Poliakov, *Aryan, op. cit.* p. 317.
28. Mosse, *op. cit.* p. 106.
29. For the full English text of "In the Cemetery at Prague" cf. Bernstein, *op. cit.* pp. 265-284.
30. For details of the Medieval conception of the Jew as having the characteristics of the Devil see Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* pp. 44-52 (1966 Volume).
31. Mosse, *op. cit.* p. 95.
32. *Ibid.* p. 95.
33. *Ibid.* p.137.
34. It should be noted that the idea that Jewish assimilation was part of the conspiracy plan for world conquest was not unique to Volkish thinkers. For example Wagner, in his treatise *Judaism in Music*, made similar accusations.
35. Mosse, *op. cit.* p. 141.
36. Cf. Werner Sombart, *Capitalism and the Jews* (Burt Franklin: New York 1969). Compare also the work of Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (George Allen and Unwin: London, 1948) where he argues that the rise of capitalism was connected to the growth of Protestantism.
37. Mosse, *op. cit.* p. 142.
38. Stern, *op. cit.* p. 69.

39. *Ibid.* pp. 188-189.
40. Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1992) pp. 127-129.
41. In the three wars between 1864 and 1871, the total number of Germans killed was 33,351. Figures taken from Stern, *op. cit.* p. 69n.
42. For further details of the factors that contributed to the First World War, cf. Fulbrook, *op. cit.* pp. 148-151.
43. Cf. Stern, *op. cit.* pp. 206-207.
44. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. IV, p. 140.
45. Fulbrook, *op. cit.* p. 153.
46. Poliakov, *op. cit.* Vol. IV, p. 143.
47. Following the rumours that Jews were being posted mainly to positions in the rear of the army, the minister for war undertook a survey, the results of which were never published. However, in some areas Jews who were actually found serving in the rear were automatically reassigned to other positions. Cf. *ibid.* p. 149.
48. *Ibid.* p. 149.
49. *Ibid.* p. 151.
50. Litvinoff, *op. cit.* p. 269.
51. *Münchener Beobachter*, October 4, 1919. The article quoted is claimed to be the work of an unknown Catholic clergyman from Basel. Quotation is taken from Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.: New York 1974).
52. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 471.
53. Fulbrook, *op. cit.* p. 160.
54. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 471.
55. Cf. Johnson *op. cit.* pp. 456-459 for details of reactions to Bolshevism and *The Protocols* in other European countries.
56. Flannery, *op. cit.* p. 205.
57. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-45* ( Penguin Books: London 1990) p. 42.
58. *Ibid.* p. 42.
59. Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blue print for Power* (Wesleyan University Press: Connecticut 1972) p. 49.
60. Dawidowicz, *op. cit.* p. 42.
61. Robert Wistrich, *Hitler's Apocalypse: Jews and the Nazi Legacy* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London 1985) p.15.
62. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Hutchinson & Co. Ltd.: London 1989 edition) p. 52.
63. *Ibid.* p.48.
64. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 52-60.
65. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 263.
66. *Ibid.* p. 263.
67. Quotation taken from *Mein Kampf* as quoted by Dawidowicz, *op. cit.* p. 44.
68. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 272.

69. Hitler claimed to have studied the popular *Handbuch der Judenfrage* written by Fritsch in which he invoked the spectre of Jewish eroticism as a weapon of racial bastardisation. Cf. Wistrich, *op. cit.* p. 16.
70. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 295.
71. *Ibid.* p. 295. Hitler's reference to "Negroes" is part of the propaganda concerning the use by the French of Senegalese troops as part of their forces occupying the Rhineland.
72. Wistrich, *op. cit.* p. 17.
73. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 227.
74. *Ibid.* p. 233.
75. *Ibid.* p. 224.
76. *Ibid.* p. 225.
77. *Ibid.* p. 225.
78. *Ibid.* p. 55.
79. See Manheim's footnote p. 55 of *Mein Kampf*.
80. Wistrich, *op. cit.* p. 16.
81. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 473.
82. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* pp. 53, 54, 54, 154, 155, 277, 277, 277, 281, 296 and 298. See also Jäckel, *op. cit.* pp. 58-59 for further examples.
83. *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*, trans. by Colonel R.H. Stevens (Cassell: London 1961) pp. 57, 57, 89 and 105.
84. *Ibid.* p. 109.
85. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 473.
86. *Ibid.* p. 474.
87. For full details of *Der Stürmer's*, antisemitic themes see Dennis E. Showalter, *Little Man. What Now?: Der Stürmer in the Weimar Republic* (Archon Books: Connecticut 1982).
88. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 86-108. For the cases of ritual murder see pp. 104-108.
89. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 53.
90. *Ibid.* p. 54.
91. *Ibid.* p. 55.
92. *Ibid.* p. 286.
93. *Ibid.* p. 287.
94. *Ibid.* p. 175.
95. *Ibid.* p. 59.
96. *Ibid.* p. 60.
97. Jäckel, *op. cit.* p. 99.
98. This is the first of Hitler's early speeches of which a complete copy has survived. Cf. *Ibid.* p. 50.
99. *Ibid.* p. 51.
100. For Hitler's attitude towards the Social Democrats see *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* pp. 56-57. For further examples of areas in which Hitler envisaged the forces of internationalism at work see Jäckel's references to Hitler's article in the antisemitic daily *Völkische Beobachter*, of January 1, 1921, Jäckel *op. cit.* pp. 52 and 130 n.11.
101. Z. A. B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda* (Oxford University Press: London 1964) p. 83.
102. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 598.

103. Johnson, *op. cit.* pp. 472-473. For some of Rosenberg's ideas on the threat of Jewish-Bolshevism cf. Robert Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology* (B.T. Batsford Ltd. :London 1972) pp.61-80.
104. Taken from Zeman, *op. cit.* p. 84.
105. *Ibid.* p. 84.
106. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* pp. 56-59 for Hitler's account of his early encounter and his attitudes to Social Democracy.
107. *Ibid.* p.604.
108. Cf. Norman H. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. I (Oxford University Press: London 1942) p. 37.
109. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 568.
110. Zeman, *op. cit.* p. 86.
111. *Ibid.* p. 86.
112. *Ibid.* pp. 86-87.
113. *Ibid.* p. 87.
114. *Ibid.* p. 88.
115. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 569.
116. *Ibid.* p. 285.
117. *Ibid.* p. 290..
118. *Ibid.* p. 287.
119. *Ibid.* p. 286.
120. *Ibid.* p. 290.
121. Quotation taken from Jäckel, *op. cit.* p.104.
122. Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks* (Thornton Butterworth Ltd. :London 1939) p. 234.
123. See for example Fredrick Busi, "Anti-Semites on Zionism - The Case of Herzl and Drumont", *Midstream* (February 1979), pp. 18-27.
124. In his commentary on *The Protocols* Rosenberg referred to a speech made by Lord Cecil Robert in which he had said that the establishment of the League of Nations and recognition in the Balfour Declaration of the principal of a Jewish home in Palestine were the only notable results of the First World War. For Rosenberg, and indeed for many of his readers, this was sufficient proof that it was Jews who had brought about the war in order to achieve their sinister ends. See Cecil, *op. cit.* p. 73.
125. Cf. Wistrich, *op. cit.* p. 156.
126. Jäckel, *op. cit.* p. 51.
127. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 294.

## Chapter 6. The Conspiracy Theory in the Contemporary World.

1. Rauschning, *op. cit.* p. 238.
2. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 294.
3. *Ibid.* p. 60. (Italics in original text). For a further elaboration upon the theme of Hitler as the Messiah of the Aryan race cf. Dawidowicz, *op. cit.* pp. 47-48.
4. For historical accounts of the Holocaust cf. Dawidowicz, *op. cit.*; Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution* (Oxford University Press: London 1986); Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust* (Fontana/Collins: London 1986). Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction Of European Jews* (Holmes and Meier: New York

1985, abridged version); Rubenstein and Roth, *Approaches to Auschwitz* (SCM Press Ltd.: London 1987). For survivor accounts cf. Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limit* (Schocken Books: New York 1986) and Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Bantam Books: New York 1982).

5. Taken from Fleming, *op. cit.* p. 17.

6. Dawidowicz, *op. cit.* pp. 142-143.

7. Figures taken from *Holocaust* (Published by The Board of Deputies of British Jews), p. 3.

8. Hilberg, *op. cit.* p.64.

9. Dawidowicz, *op. cit.* p.266.

10. V. H. Bernstein, *Final Judgement: the Story of Nuremberg* (Boni and Gaer: New York 1947), p. 132.

11. *Ibid.* p. 134.

12. Gilbert, *op. cit.* p.154.

13. Dawidowicz, *op. cit.* p.478.

14. Bernstein, *op. cit.* p.135.

15. Jigs Gardner, "The Keegstra Affair" *Midstream* 31, 9 (November 1985) p. 7.

16. *Ibid.* p. 7.

17. *Ibid.* p. 7. Emphasis in the original text.

18. *Ibid.* p. 7.

19. *Ibid.* p. 7.

20. *Ibid.* p. 7.

21. *Ibid.* p. 7.

22. *Ibid.* p. 7.

23. *Ibid.* p. 8.

24. *Ibid.* p. 8.

25. Alan Davies, "A Tale of Two Trials: Antisemitism in Canada 1985" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1989) p. 79.

26. *Ibid.* p. 79.

27. *Ibid.* p. 79. Spelling and grammar as in original text.

28. *Ibid.* p. 83.

29. *Ibid.* p. 83.

30. *Ibid.* p. 83.

31. See note 41 above.

32. Gardner, *op. cit.* p. 9.

33. *Ibid.* p. 9.

34. *Ibid.* p. 8.

35. At one point Le Pen's party had ten seats in the European parliament, thirty-five in the French National Assembly, and polled over four million votes in the presidential election. Cf. Michael Billig, "Rhetoric of Conspiracy: Arguments in National Front Propaganda," *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 22, no. 2. (Summer 1988).

36. "Holocaust "Revisionism": Reinventing the Big Lie", *ADL Research Report*, (Anti-Defamation League: New York 1989) p. 27.

37. Cf. Billig, *op. cit.* p. 25.

38. *Nationalism Today* issue number forty-two, published in early 1988. Quotation taken from *ibid.* p. 25.

39. *Ibid.* p. 26.
40. *Ibid.* p. 26.
41. Cf. Norman Cohn, *op. cit.*.
42. *Ibid.* p. 25.
43. *Ibid.* p. 26.
44. *Ibid.* p. 26.
45. *Ibid.* p. 26.
46. *Ibid.* p. 26.
47. *Ibid.* pp. 26-27.
48. *Vanguard*, November/December 1987.
49. Billig, *op. cit.* p. 31.
50. *Ibid.* p. 31.
51. *Ibid.* p. 31. Emphasis in the original text.
52. *Ibid.* p. 31.
53. Dawidowicz, *op. cit.* p.157.
54. Cf. Peter Pulzer, "Erasing the Past: German Historians Debate the Holocaust," *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol. 21, no. 3 (1987) and ADL Report, *op. cit.* pp. 29-30.
55. *Ibid.* p. 9.
56. *Ibid.* p. 9.
57. Cf. ADL Report, *op. cit.* p.29 and *Searchlight*, (November 1990) p.18.
58. Cf. the introduction to David Irving, *Hitler's War* (Hodder and Stoughton: London 1977).
59. Arno J Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?* (Verso: London 1990).
60. *IHR. Special Report: Worldwide Growth and Impact of 'Holocaust' Revisionism*, (Institute for Historical Review: California 1987), p.38.
61. Cf. Lipstadt, *op. cit.* pp. 183-208.
62. Cf. David Irving's introduction to *The Leuchter Report* by Fred Leuchter, (Focal Point Publications: London 1989).
63. Cf. Ditlieb Felderer, *Anne Frank's Diary: A Hoax* (Institute for Historical Review: California 1979).
64. The subject of Walter Sanning's study, *The Dissolution of Eastern European Jewry* (Institute for Historical Review: California 1983).
65. Cf. Udo Walendy, *Forged War Crimes Malign the German Nation*, (Kolle-Druck: Germany 1979).
66. Cf. A. R. Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, (Historical Review Press: Brighton 1977).
67. M. Bardèche, *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise*, (Les Sept Couleurs: Paris 1948).
68. Cf. Seidel, *op. cit.* p. 95.
69. *Ibid.* pp. 95-96 and Lipstadt, *op. cit.* p. 50.
70. Lipstadt, *op. cit.* p. 51.
71. Pierre Hofseter, Introduction to Paul Rassinier, *The Holocaust Story and the Lies of Ulysses* (Institute for Historical Review: California 1978) p. xiv. The above work was also published as *Debunking the Genocide Myth: a Study of the Nazi Concentration Camps and the Alleged Extermination of European Jewry* (Noontide Press: California: 1978).
72. *Ibid.* p. 164.

73. *Ibid.* p. 164.
74. *Ibid.* pp.292-93.
75. Cf. *ibid.* pp.288-399, for full study.
76. *Ibid.* p. 389.
77. Lipstadt, *op. cit.* p. 66.
78. *Ibid.* p. 66.
79. *Ibid.* p. 66.
80. *Ibid.* p. 66.
81. Richard Harwood, *Did Six Million Really Die?: The Truth at Last* (Historical Review Press: England 1974). In 1974 Historical Review Press did not actually exist, the address given on the publication was of a vacant building owned by Robin Beauclair, a farmer with National Front connections. Later issues were distributed by Historical Review Press from its headquarters in Brighton, Sussex, from where the organisation continues to distribute Denial literature. The work was also distributed for a time under the title *Six Million Lost and Found*. Allegations that Harwood was in fact Richard Verrall of the National Front, have never been disputed.
82. Quotation made by Colin Holmes, as given by Lipstadt, *op. cit.* p. 106.
83. Richard Harwood, *Did Six Million Really Die?: The Truth at Last* (Historical Review Press: London undated) pp. 2, 3.
84. Harwood, *op. cit.* p.4.
85. *Ibid.* p.4.
86. *Ibid.* p.3.
87. *Ibid.* p.3.
88. *Ibid.* p.3.
89. *Ibid.* p.4.
90. *Ibid.* p.4.
91. *Ibid.* p.5.
92. *Ibid.* p.5.
93. Gilbert, *op. cit.* p. 682.
94. Harwood, *op. cit.* p.5.
95. *Ibid.* p.28.
96. To illustrate his theory, Harwood quotes an extract from the obituary column of the New York Jewish weekly, *Aufbau*, which tells of the death of Arthur Kingsley, formerly known as Dr. Konigsberger of Frankfurt an questions, "could it be that some or all of these people whose names are 'deceased ' were included in the six million of Europe?" *Ibid.* p. 7.
97. *Ibid.* pp. 20-26.
98. *Ibid.* p. 14.
99. *Ibid.* p. 19.
100. Robert Faurisson, *The Rumour of Auschwitz* (also called *The Problem of the "Gas Chambers,"*) (Revisionist Press: New Jersey, 1979).
101. Ditlieb Felderer, *Anne Frank's Diary: A Hoax*, (Institute for Historical Review: California 1979 ).
102. Wilhelm Staeglich, *Auschwitz: A Judge Looks at the Evidence*, (Institute for Historical Review: California 1990).
103. Arthur Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (Historical Review Press: Brighton 1977).

104. Seidel, *op. cit.* p. xxviii.
105. *Ibid.* p. xxviii.
106. Lipstadt, *op. cit.* p. 137.
107. *Ibid.* p. 139.
108. *Ibid.* p. 140.
109. *IHR. Special Report, op. cit.* p. i.
110. Cf. Davies, *op. cit.* p. 77.
111. Cf. *ADL Report, op. cit.* p. 25.
112. David Irving's introduction to *The Leuchter Report*, by Fred Leuchter, (Focal Point Publications: London 1989) p. 3.
113. *Ibid.* p. 19.
114. *Ibid.* p. 15.
115. Fred Leuchter, "Inside the Auschwitz 'Gas Chambers' " (Institute for Historical Review pamphlet), p.4.
116. *Searchlight*, (August 1991) p. 12.
117. *Ibid.* (January 1991) p. 24.
118. Dr Miklos Nyiszli, *Auschwitz* (Grafton Books: London 1973).
119. *Ibid.* p.48.
120. Seidel, *op. cit.* p. xxvii.

#### Conclusion.

1. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man's Quest for God* selection of which is reprinted under the title "The Meaning of the Hour" in Albert H. Friedlander, *Out of the Whirlwind* (Schocken Books: New York 1976) p. 490.
2. Langmuir, *op. cit.* p. 235.
- 3.. See details of the ancient tale *Against Apion*, cf. Hay, *op. cit.* p. 137 and Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* p. 126.
4. Heschel, *op. cit.* p. 491.
5. Quotation taken from, *St. John Chrysostom, Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, translated by Paul W. Harkins (The Catholic University of America Press: USA 1979).
6. Cf. Simon, *op. cit.* p. 216.
7. Quotation taken from Hay, *op. cit.* p. 213.
8. For the full English text of "In the Cemetery at Prague" cf. Bernstein, *op. cit.* pp. 265-284.
9. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.* p. 295.
10. *Ibid.* p. 294.
11. Mosse, *op. cit.* p. 95.
12. Heschel, *op. cit.* p. 489.



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