

Also by Dan Cohn-Sherbok

A Dictionary of Judaism and Christianity

Dictionary of Judaism

Holocaust Theology

Issues in Contemporary Judaism

Jewish Perspectives on Science and Technology

On Earth as it is in Heaven: Jews, Christians and Islamic Theology

Rabbinic Perspectives on the New Testament

The Jewish Heritage

A Traditional Quest: Essays on Jewish Theology

Exploring Reality (editor)

Islam in a World of Divine Faiths (editor)

The Canterbury Papers: Essays on Religion and Society (editor)

The Sabbath: A Study in Jewish Law and Tradition (editor)

Tradition and Law: Sermons Published in Honour of Robert Runcie (editor)

Using the Bible: Theology and the World (editor)

World Religions and Human Liberation (editor)

THE CRUCIFIED JEW

TWENTY CENTURIES OF
CHRISTIAN ANTI-SEMITISM

Dan Cohn-Sherbok



Fount

An imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers

CHAPTER FOUR

Medieval Persecutions, Ritual Murder and the Talmud

The tradition of anti-Semitism created by the Fathers of the Church continued into the Middle Ages. During the centuries of the Crusades, Jews were massacred throughout western Europe. In the thirteenth century, Christian leaders condemned those who refused to convert to Christianity, and those who were already clinging to the Jewish faith. Christian knights further intensified by a number of charges levelled against the Jewish population. Repeatedly Jews were accused of murdering Christian children to incorporate their blood into unleavened bread for Passover; such allegations of ritual murder spread from country to country and many Jews were victimized for supposedly committing such atrocious acts. Jews were also accused of blaspheming the Christian faith in their sacred literature, and as a consequence copies of the Talmud were burned. In addition, the Jewish population was blamed for causing the Black Plague by poisoning wells. Those who persisted in the Christian onslaught as a result of these allegations played for vengeance. In faithfulness to God, these martyrs went to their deaths confident that Christians would suffer eternal torment for their sins.

Western Jewry in the Middle Ages

The Byzantine tradition of anti-Semitism, which was established by the Fathers of the Church, laid the foundation for future anti-Jewish hostility in the Christian West. Little is known about Jewish-Christian relations in the Roman period, but in later centuries Church Councils promulgated decrees governing relations with the Jewish community. In the fifth and sixth centuries the Church issued legislation (as contained in the *Code Theodosianus* and the Justinian Code) which

denied Jews numerous rights. Repeatedly Church officials warned against the pernicious influence of the Jewish population, and at times attempted to convert them by force.

In the ninth century Archbishop Agobard of Lyons wrote a number of anti-Jewish tracts in which he expressed alarm about Christian contact with those of the Jewish faith. "No matter how fairly we treat them," he stated "we do not succeed in converting them to our spiritual faith. On the contrary, several among us will be seduced by them the food of the body, have also allowed themselves to be inveigled into such a sea of errors that they regard the Jews as the only people of God, so that only among them is to be found the observance of a pure religion and of a faith far more certain than our own." In consequence, Agobard formulated a series of remedies to protect Christians from Jews and Judaism. His successor Amolon reiterated these restrictions: "I have twice publicly asked that our faithful draw these Jews from them, that no Christian serve them either in the cities or in the country, that no Christian perform their labour with the help of their pagan slaves; I have also forbidden the selling of their food and the drinking of their beverages."

Shortly after the year 1000, rumours began to circulate in Christian lands about the "Prince of Babylon" who had brought about the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the persecution of Christians at the instigation of the Jews. In response, princes, bishops and townsfolk sought revenge against the Jewish population, and attacks took place in Rouen, Orleans, Limoges, Mainz and elsewhere. Jews were converted by force or massacred. At the end of the eleventh century, Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont-Ferrand. As Christian knights, monks and commoners set out on their holy mission, they took revenge on Jewish infidels living in the Rhine valley, where Jewish communities were probably the most numerous in Europe. The most horrendous massacres took place.

As hands led by French and German lords swept through the Rhineland, Jews were mercilessly slaughtered. A first massive pogrom took place at Speyer on 3 May 1096, when news of this event reached Worms the Jewish community took refuge in their own homes and in the palace of the Bishop. Yet there was no way they could escape slaughter and death. These terrible events were recorded by the Jewish

Medieval Persecutions, Ritual Murder and the Talmud

chronicler Solomon bar Simson. "The terror fell upon those who were living in the episcopal palace," he wrote. "The foe killed them even as the others, putting them to the sword." None the less a number of these Jews sought to kill themselves as martyrs rather than be put to death by the Christians.

The Crucified Jew

They fulfilled the words of the prophet: "The mothers are laid upon their children and I have slain them," wrote the chronicler. "Then, the brother, that one his parents, his brothers and his sisters, the betrothed killed each other, even as the mothers killed the children." The chronicler, with a full heart the Divine verdict... "The enemies stripped them naked and dragged them off, granting quarter to none, save those few who accepted baptism."

Several days later the Jews of Mainz were attacked and attempted to defend themselves. The Christian chronicler Albert of Aix described these horrific events.

Having broken the locks and knocked in the doors, they seized and killed seven hundred who vainly sought to defend themselves against forces far superior to their own; the women were also massacred, and the young children, whatever their sex, were put to the sword. The Jews, seeing the Christian fire as enemies against them and their children, on account of the weakness of age, took arms in turn against their or-religionists, against the women and children, their mothers, and their sisters, and massacred their own flesh and blood. In the end, the mothers seized the sword, cut the throats of the children or laid off - the choosing to destroy themselves with their own hands rather than to succumb to the blows of the uncrucified.

Although bishops and noblemen protected the Jews in various cities where they were under threat, Jewish communities throughout Europe were beset by the thousands of Jews lost their lives in this onslaught. Despite these massacres, the Christian Jewry was able to resume their former existence in the following decades. However in 1146 Pope Eugenius III and St Bernard of Clairvaux, preached a new Crusade which was accompanied by anti-Jewish sentiments. The crusaders took place in Cologne, Speyer, Mainz and Wurtzburg in Germany, and in Carantan, Rhenemp, and Sully in France. Later in the twelfth century the Third Crusade led to massacres in London, York, Norwich,

Stanford and Lynn. Twenty years afterwards, during the Albigensian Crusade, persecutions took place in the Midi. In 1236, when a further Crusade was preached, massacres also took place in western France, England, and Spain as depicted by the Benedictine Dom Lobineau:

There were few lords who in the first fervour of the preaching did not rush to the right to bear, but so many it became a burden thereafter. To remedy this, the crusaders were permitted to renounce the vow they had made to serve against the infidel. The crusades of the twelfth century, and the cause of the evil which the Saracens were inflicting upon the Christians in the East.

Medieval Persecutions, Ritual Murder and the Talmud

In the next century such fanaticism led to uprisings in the abortive Crusade of 1309 in Cologne, the Low Countries, and Brabant; this was followed by the Shepherd's Crusade in the Midi in 1320 as well as outbreaks in Bordeaux, Toulouse, Albi, and Spain.

Persecution and Christian Opinion

A number of chroniclers of the eleventh century mentioned these massacres of the Jews by crusading Christians. An annalist from Wurzburg described such events with detachment: "An enormous host coming from all regions and all nations, went in arms unto Jerusalem and obliged the Jews to be baptized, massacring by thousands those who refused." Near Mainz 1,014 Jews, men, women, and children, were slain, and the greatest part of the city burned. Other chroniclers expressed their disapproval of such actions. In reply without, the monk Bernhard, "while the Crusades were in progress, the Jews (of Worms), tempted by the Devil and under the influence of the bishop, killed themselves in the apartments of the bishop." Again the Chronicler Fulfiller contemptuously reported: "In the villages they traversed, the latter (the Crusaders) killed or forced baptism upon what remained of those impious Jews, who are truly enemies which the Church tolerates in its bosom. Of these there were a certain number that returned to Judaism, even as dogs to their own vomit."

The Crucified Jew

Despite such reactions, there were some Christian leaders who condemned this barbarism. Thus the monk Hugon wrote: "If many footpith, appear wonderful that in a single day but one massacre animated by the same mystical fervour can have taken place in numerous places." Yet, he continued, "this occurred despite the fact that the clergy was hostile to it and despite the sentences of excommunication by many ecclesiastics and the threats of numerous princes." In an anonymous Saxon chronicle, the author referred to the Crusaders who devastated Jewry as the enemies of mankind: "They lost no time," he wrote, "sowing urea among the wheat, raising up false prophecies, mingling untrue brotherhood, by their lies, by their impious corruptions, they caused destruction, they made the world . . . They decided to avenge Christ upon the pagans and the Jews. . . . They they killed good Jews in the city of Mainz without sparing the women and children. . . . Indeed, it was pitiful to see the great and many heaps of bodies that were carried out of the city of Mainz on carts." Although Christian opinion was divided about the massacres of the Jewish population, these events tended to inflame public hostility and led to the deterioration of the status of Jews in medieval Europe. Such a situation was reflected in inspirational religious works of this period in which Jews were vilified. For example in one text, Jews are presented in the most negative terms:

More basest than naked beasts
More vile than any man's doctine . . .
Many have them set at naught
And God hates them, as well I wist,
And everyone must hate them indeed.

A number of these literary works condemn Judaism and advocate conversion to Christianity. Thus in *Deposition de la Synagoge et de Sainte Eglise*, a Jew describes his desire to convert:

Our foolish hope was in vain,
And expectation has decreed us,
Waiting for one who has not come,
And Messiah has come: I shall be baptized
And renounce my wicked act.

Medieval Persecutions, Ritual Murder and the Talmud

The Crusades and their aftermath thus brought into focus Christian contempt for the Jews who stubbornly clung to their ancestral faith. These medieval persecutions, figures of the New Testament, the people castigated by the Church Fathers. Their only salvation was to turn from their foolish ways and embrace the true faith — either willingly or through force.

Ritual Murder

Although the early Church did not accuse the Jewish community of committing murder for magical purposes, in the twelfth century this accusation appeared in various places. In its final form Jews were charged with murdering Christian children to incorporate their blood in the preparation of unleavened bread for the Passover. The first case of such ritual murder took place in 1144 in Norwich, England. The body of a young apprentice was discovered on the evening of Good Friday in a wood; it was rumored that he had been killed by Jews in imitation of Christ's passion. According to tradition, this murder had been planned by a meeting of rabbis which took place at Narbonne. Although the Church authorities attempted to protect the Jewish population of Narbonne, a leading Jewish figure was killed by a knight who was his debtor. This case was followed by the discovery of the relics of the murdered child (St. William) became the center of pilgrimage. The next case occurred in Würzburg in 1147 during the Second Crusade, when the body of a Christian was found and Jews of the city were blamed for his death. Three years later a different allegation appeared: Jews were censured for profaning the Host. Thus Jean d'Outremouse, the chronicler of Liège, alleged that:

In this year, it happened at Cologne that the son of a converted Jew went on Easter day to church, in order to receive the body of God, along with other Christians. He found his mother and quickly bore it to his house; but when he arrived home he opened the Host and found it to be a corpse. He made a hole in the earth and buried the Host within it; but a priest came along, opened the hole, and in it found the shape of a child, which he intended to bear to the church, but there came from the sky a great light, the child was raised out of the priest's hands and borne up to heaven.

The Crucified Jew

Although accusations of ritual murder were infrequent at first, several Jewish babies in England and Wales were murdered in 1144, and subsequently the allegations spread to the continent. In 1171 Blois, thirty-eight Jews were burned at the stake; in 1191 the number reached a hundred at Bray-sur-Seine. This was followed in the next century by numerous cases, and eventually the Emperor Frederick II convened a group of dignitaries to determine the truth of this allegation. When the nobles and clergy were unable to reach a conclusion, he turned to converted Jews for an answer. Converts from the cities of the empire travelled to his court and pronounced that there was nothing in the Hebrew Scriptures or the Talmud to support the claim that the Jews used blood for ritual purposes. On the contrary, Jewish law forbids such an act. As a result of this investigation, the Emperor attempted to acquit the Jews of this charge, and in 1247 Innocent IV promulgated a bull related to this issue.

Although the Holy Scriptures enjoin the Jews: "Thou shalt not kill" and forbid them to touch any dead body at Passover, they are wrongly accused of parading the heart of a murdered child at the Passover, with the charge that this is prescribed by their laws, since the truth is completely the opposite. Whenever a corpse is found somewhere, it is to be buried, and if it is found in a place where they are persecuted on the pretext of such fables or of others quite similar.

Despite such a pronouncement, accusations of ritual murder and the profanation of the Host continued to circulate. In 1272 another Papal Bull was promulgated to stem the tide of hostility. According to this Bull (of Gregory X), Christians fabricate false charges against Jews to provoke hatred and violence.

It happens sometimes that Christians lose their children and that the fathers of the Jews accuse them of having kidnapped and killed these children. In fact, the Jews are often accused of kidnapping and killing the children of the parents themselves, or other Christians who are enemies to the Jews, hide the children and attack the Jews, demanding of them, as ransom, a certain sum of money, on the entirely false pretext that these children had been kidnapped and killed by the Jews.

Although such Papal decrees were designed to protect Jews from attack, Christians actively pursued the Jewish population. In Brussels,

Medieval Persecutions: Ritual Murder and the Talmud

for example, Jews were accused of profaning the Host in 1370. In consequence twenty Jews were burned at the stake, two commentators on the Talmud were executed, and the city of Mainz, a large Jewish centre, was sacked. In the fifteenth century, a charge of ritual murder was advanced in the trial of the Talmud. Similarly, Jews were accused of ritual murder at Trent in the 1472 – nine Jews were tortured, confessed to killing a boy, and executed. Subsequently several trials for ritual murder took place in Austria and Italy, followed by expulsions and *autos-da-fé*.

Jews during this period were thus victimized for atrocious acts even though Church authorities decreed that these charges were groundless. By libelling the Jews in this manner, the Jewish community was portrayed as sadistic, thirsting for Christian blood. Such allegations inflamed the hatred of the Christian masses, encouraged Jews to be seen as cruel murderers, and persuaded gentiles to view them as sub-human beings. Not surprisingly the Nazis revived the myth in the twentieth century in the same way to incite the Jewish population to a conscious growth on the healthy body of the Aryan race.

The Badge and the Talmud

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council promulgated a series of decrees affecting the Jewish community. Nearly 1,500 Churchmen from throughout the Christian world endorsed the decisions taken by Pope Innocent III. Regarding Jewish clothing, the Council stated:

In the countries where Christians do not distinguish themselves from Jews . . . it is decreed that heretofore Jews of both sexes will be distinguished from other peoples by their garments, as moreover has been prescribed by the Pope of Rome. They are to wear a distinctive badge on their chests, and they are to wear a yellow garment on these days wear their finest garments and mock the Christians clad in mourning. Treasures will be duly punished by the secular powers, in order that they no longer dare flout Christ in the presence of Christians.

The enforcement of such provisions differed from country to country. In France a circular badge of yellow cloth was worn. From the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries, twelve Councils and nine Royal Decrees insisted on the strict observance of this law. In 1301, when

The Crafted Jew

King John the Good recalled the Jews to France after their exile. He ordered them to wear an insignia, which was half red and half white. In Germany a particular type of hat was worn rather than a badge of clothing; texts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries refer to this hat as red and yellow, but in the following centuries a badge took its place. In Poland Jews were required to wear a pointed green hat, whereas in England stripes of cloth were sewn across the chest, often in the shape of 7 Tables of Law. In Spain and Italy an insignia was worn. These various distinguishing marks impressed on the minds of gentiles the differences between Christians and Jews, encouraging Jews to be regarded as a different species from ordinary humans.

During this period the newly instituted Inquisition, under the control of the Dominicans, was charged with the responsibility of eradicating all Jewish influences from the Christian world. The Jews were to be uprooted, and they took an active interest in Jewish ideas. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, these protectors of Church orthodoxy were disturbed that Aristotelian concepts had penetrated into European thought through Arabic and Jewish translations. In 1210 and 1215 the Church condemned Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, and in 1228 Pope Gregory IX forbade contact with Greek philosophy. In the Jewish world similar hostility was levelled toward Aristotelianism, and Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* (based on Aristotelian ideas) was burned. Such antipathy to philosophical speculation provoked two rabbis (Solomon ben Abraham and Jonah Gerondi) to unite forces with the Dominicans of Montpellier. Addressing the Church authorities, they asked: 'Why do you pay no attention to books so much more precious than those of Aristotle? Moses of Egypt (Moses Maimonides) author of the Mishna? Surely you are uprooting your heresies, uproot ours as well, and order the burning of the wicked books.'

As a result of such entreaties, the Inquisition took an interest in Jewish sources, particularly the Talmud. An apostate of Judaism, Nicholas Daim (who had become a Dominican brother of La Rochelle) travelled to Rome to inform Pope Gregory IX that the Talmud contains blasphemies against the Christian faith. As a consequence the Pope urged the kings of France, England, Castile and Aragon to investigate this claim. In France, Louis IX initiated such an investigation, and throughout the country copies of the Talmud were confiscated. In 1240 a public debate was held in Paris between Judas

Medical Persecutions, Ritual Murder and the Talmud

de Chateauneux (the Chancellor of the Sorbonne) and Nicholas Demis, representing Christianity, and Yehiel of Paris and Moses of Sennoy on the Jewish side. Among the questions posed were: 'Did Simon the Magician take the heart of the *goyim* should be seized? Is it true that a Jew who swears on the Sabbath is guilty of murder? Bluff? Does the Talmud state that Jews was an illegitimate child and that he will be condemned in Hell? In response, Jewish scholars countered such queries with quotations from Jewish sources, endeavouring to show that Judaism espouses a tolerant attitude toward Christians and Christianity. Yet as a result of this disputation, the Talmud was condemned and burned. Without success the Jewish community attempted to rehabilitate the Talmud - in 1248 a second commission (headed by the Dominican Albert the Great), confirmed the verdict of the first debate, arousing further animosity toward the Jewish population. Such anti-Jewish sentiment is reflected in *mime-singers* of the period such as Konrad von Würzburg:

Woe to the cowardly Jew, deaf and wicked,
Who have no care to save themselves from the sufferings of hell.
The Talmud has corrupted them and made them lose their honour.
It would be well to forbid their heretical Talmud,
A false and ignoble book.

Again, an anonymous poet declared:

They have fallen so low,
For Gamaliel has taught them
The heretical Talmud
Whose false sayings
Conceal from them the true faith.

In France the *Deposition de la Synagogue de Saint Eglise* echoed the earlier work. In this work the author represented Jews as poisoners of the body and the soul. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Christians continued to persecute the Jews for imagined crimes against Christianity. Isolated from the gentile masses, they were regarded with contempt, hostility, and fear.

The Crucified Jesus

The Black Plague and the Jewish Respons

From 1347 to 1350 the Black Plague destroyed one third of Europe population. According to Boccaccio's account:

In the camps, men fell sick by thousands, and lacking care and aid, almost all died. In the morning their bodies were found at the doors of the houses where they had expired during the night. . . . I reached the point where no further account was taken of a dying man than to stow away his body in the nearest available place. We were the victims of a terrible and a piteous sight. Men were at the very extremity, the poor and wretched families perished with their own, day by night, on their family farms, in their isolated houses, on the roads, in the forests and fields. There they abandoned their customs, even as the city dwellers do. There they gave no concern for their affairs nor for themselves, all respect to the law, from one day to the next, thought neither of working nor of resting by the frains of their labours, but sought rather to consume what they had before them.

[illegible]

Medieval Persecutions. Ritual Murder and the Talmud

The good cities were full of these Flagellants, and the streets as well as the squares were thronged with them. They began to forget the service and ritual of the Holy Church, and maintained in their folly and their presumption that their piety and their songs were finer and more worthy than the ceremonies of the priests and monks. In the time when these Flagellants went among the cities . . . it was commonly said and certainly believed that this epidemic came from the Jews, and that the Jews had cast great poison in the wells and springs throughout the world. In order to stop the plague, said the pious Christians, who were as yet great and small alike full of greed and ambition against the Jews, who were everywhere taken where they could be held, and put to death and burned in all the regions where there were Flagellants came and went.

In Germany it was widely believed that the Jews were immune to the plague. None the less some chroniclers maintained that such an explanation was unlikely. Thus the chronicler Conrad von Meigenberg reported:

In many cells, bags filled with poison were found, and a countless number of Jews were massacred in the Rhineland, in Prussia, and in all the German countries. In truth, I do not know whether certain Jews had done this. Had it been thus, assuredly the evil would have been far worse. But I know, on the other hand, that no German city had so many Jews as Vienna, and so many of them there succumbed to the plague than they were obliged to enlarge their cemetery greatly and to bury two mortuaries in the same place. They would have been very stupid to poison themselves, build-ings.

Throughout Germany most major Jewish communities were destroyed by the plague; indeed the German Jewish population was so decimated by this disaster that in subsequent years a number of cities such as Speyer invited Jews to live in their midst with promises of protection and security. Slowly Jewish communities were reconstituted and Jewish life began anew.

The miscegens of this period and those of previous centuries traumatized Jewish communities. Some of their reactions were incorporated into the Jewish liturgy; others served as the basis of religious chants (*zethor* and *kinor*). In various chronicles of these centuries Jewish animosity was expressed in the most vehement terms: Solomon bar Simeon for example declared:

The Crucified Jew

The pope of sinful Rome rose up and urged all the peoples of Eden to believe in the Christ crucified: to smite the nation of Jerusalem and conquer the city so that the strayed might return to the site of their shame, to the tomb of him whom they have chosen as their God ... Let the bones of Enzoo, the persecutor of the Jews be ground in a mill of fire! ... O God of vengeance, O Lord God of vengeance, appear! It is for our sakes that we have let ourselves be slaughtered every day. Return to us, O God of vengeance, and let us see you, O God of vengeance, for we are so afraid of you that we have let ourselves be slaughtered every day. Return our very eyes let the nation be punished for the blood of thy servants that they have shed.

In addition, numerous literary works of this period exhorted God to mete out divine justice. This in a poem about the martyrdom of Isaac (chastellan of Troyes) and his family who were tried for ritual murder, the author appealed to God for justice:

Sinner have come for Isaac Cohen,
He must atone for his sins.
He says: "What do you want of me? For God I will die.
As priest, I will offer him the sacrifice of my body."
"You cannot escape, we hold you fast.
Become a Christian," but he swift replies: "No.
For the dogs, I would not leave God nor his name!"
Then they thrust him into a slow fire
And another fabled we had father of himon.
Then they thrust him into a slow fire
And with good heart he prayed to God often and low,
Gently suffering his pain in the name of the living God,
God of vengeance, jealous God, avenge us on our foes!
From awaiting your vengeance, the day seems long to us.

Those who perished in the Christian onslaught and remained faithful to their ancestral faith were regarded as halting on the edge of heresy. In their heroism and faithfulness, these victims cried out to God for vengeance. Hatred and faithfulness were thus mixed together in the blood and tears of those who perished in these terrible centuries of suffering.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Demonic Image of the Jew

During the Middle Ages the Jewish community was detested and the stereotype of the demonic Jew became part of Western culture. Repetently during this period Jews were accused of possessing attributes of both the Devil and witches. As the personification of evil, they were relegated to a sub-species of the human race. Jews were also viewed as magicians *par excellence*, able to work magic against the Christian community; this belief served as the basis for the charge that the Jewish population desecrated the Host and committed acts of ritual murder. Yet while it is true that Jews did engage in magical practices, they were excluded from non-Jewish circles of sorcerers and witches, and Jewish magic was dependent on the power of good rather than demonic realm. Thus Christian allegations of this period were based on ignorance and fear. None the less, the masses perceived Jews as demonic and they became the primary victims of this onslaught thousands of innocent victims lost their lives.

The File Jew

In Germany, France, Italy and England, Jews were detested throughout the Middle Ages, and anti-Semitism served as a central theme of Christian literary and artistic compositions. A fourteenth-century French satire, for example, depicts a Parisian Jew falling into a public latrine. When other Jews attempted to help him, he decreed: "I beg you not to pull me out now, for today is the Sabbath. Wait until tomorrow so as not to violate our law." Some Christians were so concerned about the Sabbath that they refused to King Louis. The king then ordered his men to keep the Jews from removing this individual from the latrine. "He has observed the Sabbath," the king proclaimed. "He will observe our Lord's Day as

The Crucified Jew

well." However, when they came to rescue him on Monday, the Jew had died.

After the Black Plague, there were few Jews left in the Low Countries, but numerous works were written about Jewish life. Some referred to the charge of ritual murder:

The Jew, wicked and cruel as dogs,
Brutally seized the child
Threw him down and trampled him . . .
Swiftly stripped him bare
And once he was naked
The Jew, smiling grimly,
Indulged in some words
With daggers and knives . . .

Although no Jews remained in England after the expulsion of 1290, anti-Jewish polemics were repeatedly produced. The first in 1255, a story of ritual murder appeared and during the following century gave rise to twenty-one different versions of the ballad entitled "Sir Hugh or the Jew's Daughter". In the latter half of the fourteenth century Geoffrey Chaucer incorporated this theme in his *Proverbs's Tale*:

Ther was in Asyne, in a greet citee,
Amonges Cristene folk, a Jeweysse . . .
And as the child gan forty for to pace,
This cursed Jew from hant, and heeled hym faste.
And he seide, "I have a maner, a myghty maner,
I sepe that in a wardoun this child shal come."
Where as thine Jewes purgen hire entelle.
O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, shaw also
With cursed Jewes, as it is soothful,
How he shal be a lital while ago,
Peys shal be to . . .

In Italy the theme of the pound of flesh connected with a merciless creditor was transformed into a tale about a Jewish woman in *Il Prometeo* by Stefano Fiorentino.

The Domestic Image of the Jew

These motifs were also found in religious drama of the period. In scenes from the New Testament Jews were portrayed in the most heinous fashion, and numerous epithets were used to characterize them: "false Jew", "false thieves", "false miscreants", "wicked and felonious Jew", "perverse Jew", "diabolical Jew", "false swine". The Jewish people were thus presented as vile and treacherous, and such Jewish characters were always depicted as evil, cunning and spiteful. The Jews were repeatedly enacted to a believing audience. A number of Christian miracle plays of this period dealing with the Assumption of the Virgin, for example, contain a final scene in which "Thus destroy[ed] Jerusalem to avenge the Divine Mother. In other plays contemporary events were presented in equally inflammatory terms. Thus in *Mistère de la sainte hostie*, a Jewish usurer forces a Christian debtor to give him a piece of the Host which he wishes to defile. "Desire seized me to crush it, cast it into the fire and persecute it, and against the ground to trample, beat, beat, and scum it", he declared. Yet no matter what he does, the Host bleeds but remains intact. Witnessing this event, the Jew's wife and family denounce him and request baptism. The Jew, too, says he wishes to become a Christian and when the priest comes for him. But the priest is not fooled and the Jew is burned. As he dies he calls for the devil to carry him away:

O Devil, I feel I am burning
Devils, devils burn and flame
I flare and flame in every limb
I perish now in fire and flame
My body, mind and soul
Burn now and fiercely consume
Devils, devils, devils
And carry me off from this ordeal.

The Devil and the Jews

From the time of the early Church, Christian theologians were preoccupied with demonology, and the Christian masses subscribed to primitive superstitions about the Devil, witches, and wizards. In the Middle Ages, scholars were anxious to explain the role of the Devil in the terrestrial and celestial spheres. According to Thomas Aquinas,

The Crucified Jew

demons could assume carnal form. Although they are incapable of being crucified, they can be transformed into a sexual image, and they had to be. The children of Israel were viewed in this way even in fact, descendants of demons, but were indirectly spared by them.

In the next century, the Dominicans engaged in speculation about the demonic realm. During this period the heretical doctrine of Catharism maintained that Satan rules the earth, and it was believed to be a great sin to commune with him. In 1320 Pope John XXII issued the bull *Super illius specula* against false Christians who "sacrifice to demons and worship them, produce or procure images, rings, flasks, mirrors, and still other things to which they attach the demons by their magic arts, gaining answers from them, seeking their aid in order to carry out their wicked designs, submitting to the most shameful trade for the most shameful things."

Until the early fifteenth century, trials for witchcraft took place in Toulouse in 1335. Two years later the Inquisition in Languedoc produced a detailed description of wizards and their activities. After the Black Plague, the Devil's associates were hunted down, and witch burnings became increasingly familiar events. In seeking out the guilty, the Inquisitors insisted on obtaining the victim's confession, and torture was invariably used to obtain the necessary evidence. In 1404 the Holy Office proclaimed that it had burned over 30,000 witches.

In the fifteenth century, witch-hunting flourished in Savoy, Switzerland and Germany. According to Pope Innocent VIII the Teutonic territories were filled with agents of the Devil. The German inquisitors Sprenger and Insuper published a treatise, *Malleus Maleficarum*, and Sprenger's associates were roundly up throughout the land. During this period the Devil was conceived as a half-demon and half-animal who roamed the earth, searching for innocent victims. Possessing horns, rations, a tail, and a goat's beard, he was black in colour and exuded a strong odour. The Devil was ubiquitous, working evil, sowing hatred, pronouncing spells, and possessing individuals. His chief agent was the witch, a woman of impurity and deceit.

In line with much popular Church teaching about the Jews through the centuries, the Jewish population was perceived as possessing the attributes of both the Devil and witches. Depicted as possessing horns, tails, and the beard of a goat, they were accused of producing a terrible odour (*foetor judaeus*). Although able to perform magical feats, Jews were viewed as suffering from malignant diseases which only Christian

The Demonic Image of the Jew

blood could cure. Born misshapen, they were seen as haemorrhoidal, and men as well as women were afflicted with venereal diseases. Such themes are reflected in the accounts of the blood libels against the Jewish community in Trnava at the end of the fifteenth century.

Finally, the traditions of their ancestors tell them that the blood of a Christian is sacred, and that it is a sin to shed it. The Jews are obliged by circumcision. Secondly, they see that this blood permits them to prepare a dish that wakens mutual love. Thirdly, suffering from menstruation, both men and women alike, they have noted that the blood of a Christian constitutes an excellent remedy. Fourthly, they are obliged, by virtue of an ancient and secret commandment, to offer yearly sacrifice with Christian blood.

Thus in the Middle Ages Jews were viewed as the personification of evil. Dabbling in the occult, they were associated with devils and demons. At times they were depicted as the Devil himself; alternatively, they were seen as intermediaries between the Devil and innocent human beings. Given such diabolical attributes, it is not surprising that the Jews were persecuted and persecuted again. The blood libel was a result hatched without remorse or guilt. As the vermin of the earth, they were a contagion in the body of Europe.

The Jew as Sorcerer

In the medieval period, Christians regarded the Jew as the magician par excellence. Satan was the source of magical powers, and the Jews were seen as the earthly agents. Repeatedly the masses attacked Jewish communities because of their conviction that Jews worked magical practices against Christians. A typical example was the assault upon Jews in England which was initiated by an incident that occurred in September 1189, at the coronation of Richard I. On this occasion a Jewish delegation which had brought gifts and pledges of allegiance to the new king were driven from the palace, accused of casting enchantments on the king, and set upon by the crowds. This onslaught was followed by numerous attacks on Jewish communities throughout the country.

The central feature of this suspicion of magical practice applied to the entire people – every Jewish act was construed as a diabolical device for working magic against gentiles. Thus at the beginning of the thirteenth century in Paris, the custom of casting earth behind one after a funeral brought a charge of sorcery. Again, the practice of washing hands on returning from the cemetery aroused similar suspicions. Because of these charges, some rabbis found it necessary to suspend a number of Jewish practices. In this atmosphere of suspicion the *mezuzah* was also viewed as an object of dread because of the fear of Christian retribution Jews in the Rhineland were forced to cover them, for in the words of a thirteenth-century writer, 'the Christians out of malice and to annoy us, have thrown into the *mezuzot* openings and cut up the parchment.' Yet despite such charges, Christians actually used the *mezuzah* for magical purposes. Thus at the end of the fourteenth century the Bishop of Salzburg asked a Jew to give him a *mezuzah* to fix to the gate of his castle.

In the medieval field Jewish doctors were seen as agents of magic, and were frequently called upon by Christians to perform miracles, despite Church prohibitions reiterated by Popes and Synods. According to tradition, demons were frequently responsible for disease, and medicine was therefore viewed as an effective means of curing the ill. Paradoxically, when his ministrations proved successful, the Jewish physician was seen as a magician to be respected and feared, but if the patient died, the doctor was accused of murder. This charge was linked to the legend of the blind Jew who suggested poison to the Christian general, and to the legend of the Jew who suggested poison to the Christian general. Physicians in medieval times were regarded as *adversari* to the Christian community, and were regarded as *adversari* to the Christian community. So widespread was the belief in Jewish magic that in 1450 when the Polish king Sigismund Augustus demanded of Ivan IV that he allow Lithuanian Jews into Russia for business purposes, Ivan replied, '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.' Similarly Luther wrote: 'If they (the Jews) could kill us all, they would gladly do so, and often do it, especially those who profess to be physicians. They know all that is known about medicine in Germany; they can give poison to a man of which he will die in an hour, or in ten or twenty years; they work the means of healing, and they work the means of poisoning.' Such attitudes provoked the burning of Jews in the fourteenth century for poisoning wells during the Black Death.

Another charge levelled against the Jewish population was that they engaged in acts of sorcery in connection with the Eucharist. Given the belief in transubstantiation, the mutilation of the Host was viewed as a most heinous crime: according to numerous accounts Jews attacked the Host in various ways. In addition some reports related that Jews fashioned a wax image of Christ from wax and through their magic art transmitted various illnesses through the image to Jews and his followers. Such sympathetic magic was also used to inflict suffering on Church leaders. Thus in 1066 the Jew of York accused of having made a wax image of Bishop Eborhard; it was alleged that this object was baptized by a priest (whom the Jews bribed) and burned on the Sabbath – as a result, the bishop became ill and died.

The ritual murder accusation was also linked with Jewish sorcery. In the medieval period a wide range of occult remedies specified the use of human flesh, blood, entrails, hands and fingers; menstrual blood in particular was seen as especially efficacious. In this light the allegation that Jews used Christian blood for magical purposes was readily accepted. One of the earliest medieval references to this practice was made by Thomas of Cantimpré in the thirteenth century, in which he attributed the need for Christian blood to the Jewish affliction of haemorrhage which could only be cured by the blood of a Christian. In 1235 the Jews of Fulda were charged with killing a child and confessed that they did so in order to obtain blood for the purposes of healing. Again, Matthew Paris's account of the crucifixion of Hugh of Lincoln by Jews in 1215 recounts that their intention was to use the boy's bowels for divination. Further, at the beginning of the fifteenth century the city Council of Freiburg requested the expulsion of the Jews from the city because they believed that the Jewish community periodically murdered a Christian child to prolong their lives. From these examples it is clear that the suspicion of magic lay behind the accusation of ritual murder – the notion of using blood for Passover *matzah* was a direct result of this charge.

In the Middle Ages, gentiles who brought before the Inquisition confessed to a wide range of magical practices: the adoration of Satan, the desecration of the Host and other consecrated objects, the sacrifice of infants, cannibalism, the use of human ingredients in salves and poisons, the creation of wax images baptized in their names, and the crime of poisoning. This catalogue of offences determined the character of the charges made against the Jewish

The Crucified Jew

population. As a strange and mysterious people with whom the majority of Christians had little contact, it is not surprising that the Jewish nation was generally regarded as guilty of the most nefarious diabolical rites against humanity.

The Truth behind the Myth

Although the legend of the Jew as sorcerer was a Christian creation, Jews did engage in magical practices in the Middle Ages. Beginning in the geonic period, in the sixth century A.D., Jewish magic drew on mystical and Gnostic sources. Those who practised this art were acquainted with methods of inducing disease and death, arousing and killing passion, and employing demons for diabolical purposes. Among Jews — as among Christians — there was a widespread belief that sorcerers could alter their shapes and roam the woods in the form of wild beasts and that magicians could transform humans into animals. It was also believed that a magician could project his soul to distant places and then return to his body.

The concept of the witch is also found in Jewish literature. In thirteenth-century sources they are depicted as having dishevelled hair, lying at night, and feeding on the blood and flesh of infants and adults. They are accompanied by demons who assume the forms of animals to carry out their designs. Thus Manahem Ziyun, in his commentary on the Bible written in 1430, declared:

There are men and women who possess demonic attributes; they smear their faces with a secret oil . . . and assuming by oil like the eagle over seas and mountains, they fly in the air and descend upon the earth before sunrise; their flight follows a predefined course from which they cannot deviate. Anyone who trespasses upon their meeting place is likely to suffer grave harm. . . . They transform themselves into various animals and into cats.

Again, Meir Seftel ben Israel believed that witches could change their form, because Satan fashions around their bodies the simulated forms of animals. . . . The proof lies in the fact that when the jaws of a serpent are open, the witch or magician appears minus hands and feet. Generally it was believed that such demonic figures

The Demonic Image of the Jew

were not Jewish, yet in some instances Jewish witches were depicted as engaging in such activities.

Despite the Jewish interest in magic, Jews were excluded from the general magical practices of the Middle Ages. The anti-Jews imagined by the Christian Church rises in their own ritual, such as the Sabbat, have little meaning for Jews. Further, demonic practices of this period were based on a worship of Satan, whereas Jewish magic functioned within the context of the Jewish faith which excluded any association with God's arch-enemy. The central principle of medieval Jewish magic was its reliance on the power of good, which was invoked by calling upon the names of God and his angels. It was rooted in the Jewish tradition and exhibited none of the anti-Church elements hunted down by the Inquisition. Thus Jewish magicians were on the whole God-fearing, pious individuals, who observed the tenets of the Jewish faith. Within the ranks of Jewish wonder-workers were scholarly men who had a thorough training in Hebrew and Arabic and an understanding of rabbinic literature and Jewish law. They were able to invoke God's names so as to effect natural cures. Jewish women, too, served as folk magicians, healers of wounds, and preparers of love-potions.

According to tradition, demons and angels populate the world, and through their intermediary the powers of magic can be brought into operation. The particular role of angels is to serve as God's emissaries; demons, on the other hand, can be influenced by the powers of a magician. One of the most common features of medieval Jewish magic was the incantation of names. This act comprised several ingredients: an appeal to ancient masters of magic, citations from or allusions to biblical passages, the invocation of angels, the emanation of holy names, and a specific request or command. A familiar characteristic of this process was to do things in reverse; thus biblical quotations were often recited backwards and the names of angels and demons were reversed. One type of incantation was especially suited to dispelling demons, to free the soul derived from its form rather than content, such as the Talmudic spell against the demon Shabrit:

Shabrit
bri
rit
in
ti

The Crucified Jew

In theory the demon shrank and finally vanished as he heard his name decreasing, letter by letter. Again, a charm directed against a fever demon, quoted by Elieazar of Worms, i.e. "Ochthonos, chthonos, notions, otinos, tinos, inos, nos, os."

During the Middle Ages Jews also utilized sympathetic magic, yet it appears not to have been used either to harm or to kill an enemy. Rather, it was commonly applied to force thieves to return stolen objects; the image of a suspected thief was drawn on a wall, and nails were struck into the image so that he would confess. Another use of sympathetic magic was to arouse passion. In a fifteenth-century work in Hebrew and Yiddish the following instructions were given:

Take virgin wax and make a female figure, with the sex organs clearly delineated, and with the features of the human face. Then bury the figure and cover it carefully so that its limbs are not broken, and leave it thus for twenty-four hours. Then bury it under the leaves, being careful that no one witnesses your act, and cover it with a stone so that it does not break. When you discover it, dip it carefully in sweet three times, so that it is washed clean, one in the name of Michael, and three in the name of the Holy Spirit. Then take a small piece of wax and immerse it in some urine. Then dip the wax in the urine, and pass it in her, pierce the heart of the image with a new needle, in that spot where it will cause most pain.

One of the most popular magical devices was the amulet, which was either worn on the body or attached to objects and animals. Jewish amulets were of two types: written texts, or objects such as herbs, foxes' tails, and stones. A Talmudic amulet which was widely used in the Middle Ages was the 'preserving stone' which was believed to prevent misstrange. A man born with a caul was counselled to wear it at all times as a protection against demons. Towards the end of the Middle Ages it became common to hang a piece of the *Aphrodisiac* (part of the unopened seed of the *Raposa rabe*) in a house or carry it in a pouch to protect one's manhood. Again, a metal plate inscribed with the letter "kaf" (a sign of the Tetragrammaton) was a common amulet. Written amulets were also widely favoured.

An effective amulet, tested and tried against the evil eye and evil spirits, for grace, against imprisonment and the sword, for intelligence, to be

The Demonic Image of the Jew

able to instruct people in Torah, against all sorts of disease and reverses, against all sorts of poverty, against all sorts of evil, against all sorts of forty-eight organs of disease, imprisonment and against the two-edged sword. Help him, deliver him, save him, rescue him from evil men and evil speech, and from a harsh illegion, whether he be Jew or Gentile. Humble and bring low those who rise against him to do him evil by deed or speech, by counsel or by thought. . . .

These few examples illustrate the pervasiveness of Jewish magic and superstition among Jews in the medieval period. Influenced by current cultural and social patterns, Jews formulated their own magical practices, and in the process they preserved the ancient Jewish magical tradition. The practice of sorcery was an important aspect of Jewish folkloric Christian allegations about Jewish magic were misinformed and mistaken. Jews were neither the Devil nor his agents; their preoccupation with sorcery was induced by the desire to protect themselves from ill-fortune. To view Jews as dark and ominous figures with evil designs on the Christian population is to misconstrue their preoccupation with the occult.

Persecution of the Demons

Motivated by the belief in the demonic power of the Jewish people, a number of clergymen encouraged the persecution of the Jews. Thus the preaching friar and miracle worker Vincent Ferrer travelled throughout Spain and France attempting to convert the teachers. As the heads of bands of big game, he carried synagogues and destroyed them. He was not alone in his actions. In 1306, for example, he burnt the synagogue in Montpellier. In 1320, he returned the place the Church of the Immaculate Virgin. This scourge of the Jews also persecuted Jewish communities in Saragossa, Valencia and Tortosa. Another tormentor was the Inquisition, John of Capistrano. In Italy and Germany he preached about death, Hell, punishment, and the Anti-Christ. Leading a campaign against the Jewish population, he threatened princes who protected local Jewish communities with the wrath of God. From 1433 to 1434 he initiated a series of trials for ritual murder which resulted in a number of *autos-da-fé*.

The Crucified Jew

Even individuals of a gentler disposition hated Jews with equal ferocity. Thus Bernardino of Siena, the founder of the sect of the Holy Name of Jesus, believed that the Jews were conspiring against Christians through usury, while Jewish doctors sought to undermine their health. His successor, Bernardino of Feltre, was equally hostile about Jewish practices: "They bleed the poor to death and grow fat on their substance," he declared, "and I who live on the bread of the poor, shall I then be mute as a dog before outraged charity? Dogs bark to protect those who feed them, and I, who am fed by the poor, shall I see them robbed of what belongs to them and keep silent? Dogs bark for their masters; shall I not bark for Christ?"

In the Middle Ages, the Jew the Devil's hand was seen at work, the Jew-Devil walked Earth, and the Devil himself was seen in the face of the Jew. Viewed as evil magicians, they were condemned by the Church. Thus in the thirteenth century the Council of Béziers forbade Christians from resorting to the care of Jews, and this prohibition was repeated by the Councils of Albi, Vienna, and the University of Paris. According to legend, Charles the Bald, Hugh Capet, and the Emperor Charlemagne were poisoned by Jewish physicians, and the Vienna Faculty of Medicine pronounced that the private code of Jewish physicians required them to kill one patient in ten. Thus both Jewish doctors and usurers were seen as united in a common quest to rob Christians of their money and their health. The Jew in the Middle Ages was the embodiment of the demonic counterpart of the Christian saints, and in the mythology of the age Jews came to represent all that is evil and impure.

In the light of this conception of the Jew-Devil, the Jews were depicted in medieval chronicles as predators who sought to destroy the entire social life of the communities where they lived. Hated by gentiles, Jewish communities turned inwards and formed their own closed worlds. Yet despite such isolation, they were not able to protect themselves from the Christian onslaught, and when faced with a choice between death or conversion many went to their deaths as martyrs. During the years of the Black Plague it was reported that they went to die dancing and singing, as gay as if they were on their way to a wedding, and would not convert, neither father nor mother for their children. In the burning fire, women and children leapt into it singing the while. "In some cases Jews committed collective

The Demonic Image of the Jew

suicide rather than die at the hands of the unmerciful Gentiles. Those who met their deaths in this way were assured of the reward of eternal life. Suffering in this life was thus diminished by the promise of heavenly reward. In this light it is not surprising that Jews were regarded as martyrs, the chosen of an entire people. "Whoever has taken the firm decision to remain loyal to his faith and to die, if he must, a martyr, does not feel the sufferings of torture. Whether he be stoned or burnt, hanged alive or hanged, he remains without feeling, no man escapes from his life."

Some Jews, however, were unable to sustain such heroism, and converted under the threat of death. Yet subsequently they wished to return to their ancestral faith. For these apostates, there still remained hope. In the words of the fifteenth-century Talmudist, Israel Isaaclein:

We must remember that he who returns to Judaism imposes upon himself a double burden, for he must bear the burden of his former sufferings and persecutions which the Jew needs must endure. He did not have to bear this burden while he was a Christian, and in truth his fault is expiated when he assumes it of his own free will, with the sole purpose of again becoming a member of the Jewish community.

This period of Jewish suffering was marked at the end of the Middle Ages by the designation of Jewish quarters into ghettos where gates were locked at night. Behind the ghetto walls, the Jewish people withdrew into themselves, ever fearful of their Christian neighbours. Accused of sorcery and black magic, the Jew-Devil was thus imported from the surrounding world – as a result the Jewish pollution of Christendom was restrained, and the demonic dark force of evil turned in on itself.

The Crucified Jew

Such court Jews stood at the pinnacle of the social scale, forming an elite class. Yet the vast majority of Jews continued to live simple lives and frequently endured considerable discrimination. In the municipality of Frankfurt, for example, Jews were forced to wear a distinctive insignia and were forbidden to linger in the streets, walk in pairs, use certain forms of public transport, or attend Christian festivals. The city of Hamburg limited the number of Jews who could reside in the city to 100, and the types of presents given and the kinds of food served. In 1726 the Court of Vienna decreed that only the eldest son of a Jewish family could marry within the law – the others were to remain bachelors. This proscription was applied to Bohemia and Moravia, and later was adopted in Prussia, the Palatinate, and Alsace.

During this period the invention of printing made it possible to popularize numerous works on Judaism which denigrated Judaism and the Jewish nation. By the eighteenth century nearly a thousand texts were produced, including missionary tracts intended to convert the Jewish population, studies of Jewish customs, treatises dealing with the Jewish religion, and polemical works. Among the most famous of these is *The Source of the Jews' Jewish Practices*, a Study of the History of the Jewish Religion, and the *Horrible Fate of the Sephirs*; and *The Jewish Bait*, in which is publicly shown the acceptance and Jewish hostilities, how they drink the blood of Christians, as well as their bitter tears. These works echo the Christian anti-Semitic attitudes prevalent in the Middle Ages.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Christian myth of the wandering Jew became prevalent – in 1602 *The Brief Account and Description of a Jew Named Almasura* was published and translated into numerous European languages. According to this work, the wandering Jew witnessed the Crucifixion and was condemned by Jesus to wander the earth until Judgment. In addition, a number of studies were produced which were devoted to the Jews, such as *The Jews and Accurate Report*, for example, maligned the Jews. After its publication the intervention of the Jewish community brought about its withdrawal, but a second edition was published in 1711. Yet despite such hostility, German Jewry was not subjected to any violent onslaught until modern times when the methodical elimination of the Jewish people became a central policy of the Third Reich.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Spanish Persecution and the Inquisition

Although Spanish Jewry flourished in the Middle Ages, by the fourteenth century Jews came to be regarded with suspicion and hostility. Measures were taken against the Jewish community, and in consequence many Jews embraced the Christian faith to escape attack. Such apostasy as well as the Christian onslaught on Jewry, led to the decline of the *aljamas* (Jewish communities), a trend which was resisted by Jewish leaders. During the fifteenth century the Church initiated a new form of persecution. Under Ferdinand and Isabella the Inquisition was established to purge *conversos* or New Christians – Jewish converts to Christianity as opposed to Old Christians of pure blood – who were suspected of practicing Jewish customs. Tribunals were established throughout Spain which applied torture to extract confessions. The Inquisition was given the right to confiscate property and floggings. Finally, at the end of the century, an Edict of Expulsion was enacted to rid the country of the Jewish race who had polluted the Christian population.

Jewish Persecution in Spain

Despite the fact that the Jewish community flourished in medieval Spain, by the fourteenth century anti-Jewish hostility spread across the Iberian Peninsula, leading to massacres in most Spanish villages. In 1321 the Jewish population was decimated by the Shepherds' Crusade, and in the decades later Jews were accused of bringing about the Black Death. From 1379 to 1562 all mass conversions of Jews to Christianity were forbidden. King Pedro the Cruel and his bastard brother Henry of Trastámara, the majority of Castilian Jews remained faithful to the legitimate king; in response Henry referred to his adversary as the "Judaized king" who was dominated by the Jews. In time it was

The Crucified Jew

rumoured that this Judaized figure was in reality a Jew who had been imprisoned for Pedro at the time of his birth, and was thus a Jew himself. In the eyes of the Christians, this was a terrible insult, for the Jews were seen as the cause of the upheaval that was taking place.

After Henry's victory, the Cortes (legislature) met in Burgos and demanded that measures be taken against the Jews, and the Jewish question became a burning issue of the day. In 1371 the Cortes of Toro described the reason why the kingdom was suffering:

Because of the great liberty and power accorded to the enemies of the faith, especially the Jews, in our whole kingdom, in the royal household as well as in the houses of the knights, the squires, and the nobles, and because of the high offices and the great honours which they enjoy, all Christians are forced to obey men and fear them and bow deeply to them, and all Christians are obliged to give them the best of their goods, and the Jews are lords of all the honours and of all the riches of the kingdom, and all the people are captives of the Jews and subjugated to them. Be it because of the honours which are accorded them in the royal household and in the houses of the great, be it because of the revenue and offices which they hold, for whatever reason, the Jews, evil and rash men, enemies of God and of all of Christianity, cause numerous evils and sow corruption and misery, so that the greater part of our kingdom is impoverished and bereaved by the Jews, in contempt of the Christians and our Catholic faith.

What was to be done to remedy this situation? The Cortes of Toro demanded that there be no Jewish officials or tax-collectors. Jews should be required to wear a distinctive insignia; they should be prohibited from riding on horseback and dressing luxuriously; and all Jewish names should be changed if they were Christian in character. The degradation of the Jews during this period is reflected in numerous literary works. Chancellor Lopez de Ayala, for example, accused the Jews of being bloodsuckers in his satire, *Rimado de Palatino*:

Here come the Jews all alike
And present their detailed writings
To drink the blood of the poor people
Promising jewels and gifts to the courtiers.

Spanish Persecution and the Inquisition

In the latter half of the fourteenth century, anti-Jewish legislation was put into effect in Castile. Yet unlike Jews in other countries, who were persecuted by private individuals, the Jews in Spain were persecuted by the state. In 1391 many Jews looked to conversion to Christianity as a solution to their plight. Thus in 1380 a Cortes petition noted that numerous Jews and Jewesses who had turned to the true faith needed to be protected from their former co-religionists. In the same year Rabbi Shimon Shapir noted with anguish that "many of our co-religionists are abandoning our ranks and pursuing us with their arguments, trying to prove the truth of their faith to us with the aid of verses of the Holy Scripture and of the Talmud." Thus Christian persecution of the Jews in Spain led to apostasy rather than martyrdom; paradoxically such a step eventually gave rise to even greater hostility and bloodshed as the Inquisition sought to root out those backsliding Jews who ostensibly had adopted the Christian faith.

Attack on the Jews and the Decline of the Aljamas

By the end of the Middle Ages, Seville had become the richest city in Spain. From 1378 the archbishopric of Ecija, Fernán Martínez, had been stirring up Christians against the Jewish population there. Although the king ordered him to refrain from such activity, he paid no attention. For twelve years he preached anti-Semitic sermons, encouraging Christians to expel Jews from the cities and demolish their synagogues. After the death of Juan I, king of Castile and Barroso, the Archbishop of Seville, in 1390, Martínez, intensified his campaign against the Jews. On 6 June 1391 the Jewish section of Seville was attacked. The majority of the Jews were forced to convert, and the rest were killed. In the same month massacres of the Jews took place in most of the other Andalusian and Castilian cities, eventually reaching Aragón and Galicia. Rulers attempted to stop such riots, but their efforts were in vain. Throughout Spain mobs pillaged and murdered Jews, believing they were doing God's will. Although some Jews remained loyal to their ancestral faith, many others – including rabbis – accepted baptism. How could the leaders of the community have so readily embraced Christianity? Speculating on this question Joshua Hakohti (who himself later converted, adopting the name Jeronimo de Santa

Pé) discussed motives for such an act in his correspondence with the rabbi of Burgos, Solomon Halevi, who had become a Christian.

Did you perchance live after riches and honours? Or did the study of the Law and the study of the sciences so seduce you and to regard the proofs of faith as vanity and delusion? Or did you desire to be regarded as more apt to gratify the body and satisfy the intellect without fear and longer more apprehension? Or when you beheld the doom of our homeland, the multitude of afflictions that have recently befallen us, which ruined and destroyed . . . did it then seem to you that the name of Israel would be remembered no more? Or perhaps the secrets of prophecy have been revealed to you in the prophetic of him . . . and you saw that our fathers had inherited falsehood . . . and you chose what is true and established?

After such widespread conversions to Christianity, Spanish Jewry divided into apostates and those who remained Jewish. The latter regarded Jewish apostates with horror – they were traitors who had abandoned their people. Converts, on the other hand, viewed their former co-religionists with disdain – religious Jews constituted a constant reproach to their new way of life. None the less familial ties bound both groups together, and converts continued to live in their previous residences and carry on their trades as before.

Yet in some cases the new Christians (*conversos*) became fervent persecutors of Jews. Thus in July 1392, Henry II wrote to the municipal authorities of Burgos: "The Jews of your *aljama* (community) have decided to leave the city and to go seeking refuge in the houses of the best of you, where they live today in your safe harbours, so as to escape the persecutions which they are suffering in the houses of the best of you, where they live *aljama*, for fear that certain of the Christians will persecute them and do them much harm." In 1396, *conversos* in Perpignan incited hatred of the Jews and prevented them from returning to their homes. In some cases these converts turned over the assets of the Jewish community to the Church. In Jerez in 1391, for example, *conversos* donated the community's property to the Bishop of the Dominican monastery "because of the numerous benefits which we have received and receive daily from you, who inform us and instruct us in the Holy Catholic faith, ensuring the health of our souls." Similarly in Llerida the synagogue was turned into a church and dedicated to St. Mary of the Miracle.

In the face of such apostasy the rabbi of Barcelona, Hasdai Crescas, attempted to rebuild Spanish Jewry with the support of the king and queen of Aragon. In 1393 he was granted authority to establish new *aljamas* in Barcelona and Valencia. In addition tax exemptions were granted to all Jews in the cities of Aragon, and a new constitution was granted to protect the rights of the Jewish population. Crescas himself drafted the constitution and the king and queen, which he believed had led the community astray as well as out-Christians.

Despite such efforts to stem the tide of conversion, Spanish Jewry continued to decline. This was due in part to the missionary activities on the part of such preachers as Vincent Ferrer. In his sermons, which the Jews were forced to attend, he emphasized that Jesus and the Virgin Mary were Jews. In his view God did not want conversion by force; rather, "who conquered the world carried neither lance nor knife. The Christians should not kill the Jews with knives, but with their words." Throughout Aragon, Castile and Gascony, Ferrer preached against the Jews. In consequence mobs of Christians attempted to convert the Jewish population through all available means, despite his words of warning. In 1393 he issued a public decree, "Since at Valladolid passed, forbidding Jews to provide food for Christians, those who have names with the title "Don", change their place of residence, cut their hair, and shave their beards. In addition, Jews were forced to wear simple clothing on which a distinctive badge was attached.

During this period Pope Benedict XIII summoned the Disputation of Tortosa in an effort to convert the Jews *en masse*. Christianity was championed by the apostolic Joshua Halohi (or Jerónimo de Santa Fé) who was opposed by fourteen distinguished rabbis of Aragon. The point at issue was whether the Talmud supported the view that the Messiah had appeared in the person of Christ. The Disputation was attended by thousands of spectators, including numbers of Jews who at the close of each session confessed that they had been convinced by Halohi's arguments. Between 413 and 414, three thousand Jews passed through the baptistries of Tortosa in the annals of Jewish history this year is referred to as "the year of apostasy".

The Crucified Jew

The Converse

Despite the disamputation of the *aljamiado*, Spanish Jewry enjoyed a period of calm at the beginning of the fifteenth century. In two bulls promulgated in 1421 and 1422, Pope Martin V decreed that forced baptism was not true baptism and converted Jewry persecuted. Under these more favourable conditions many of those who had converted to Christianity aspired to become full Jews again: this could be accomplished by moving to North Africa or Portugal. Yet this was not a solution open to all Jews, and those who remained in Spain supported their children.

These Marranos kept apart from the Christian community, some were criticised as adults. Such a return to Judaism was encouraged by the Fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. This victory was seen by many Marranos as anticipating the fall of Edom and the deliverance of Israel. Thus in Valencia a group of Marranos, believing that the Messiah had just appeared on a mountain near the Bosphorus, sought to emigrate to Turkey. According to one of these converted Jews:

honour and reverence to the Jews and the synagogues.

The practice of Judaism among the Marrano community was invariably adulterated as they sought to live Jewish lives in secret. Haunted by a sense of guilt, their prayers echoed such remorse:

LORD, I have sinned! I live by my meanness and my unworthiness, ruled by my evilness and by my reason in spite of myself. Thou, who have visited me in true justice and hast cherished me like a son, see how I have fallen in a tribulation so great and so perilous, from which I cannot arise; or escape. Knowing my guilt, I turn to Thee, LORD, repentant, sighing thy name and weeping, as a son turns to his father, begging, "Thy help mercy if forgiveness, that Thou mayest raise me from the great torment and the great tribulation into which I have fallen."

Spanish Persecution and the Inquisition

In other recent interviews from Christian leagues, a number of Maronites attempted to de-Christianize themselves by following bizarre practices – fastening a crucifix to their buttocks, or displaying the signs of Jesus. Others rationalized their duplicity. The son of a Maronite priest and a woman from Beirut, a Lebanese Jew, told Pedro de la Cabañeta answered a Jewish scholar, who asked him how he could justify becoming a Christian, by pointing out the advantages of his new way of life. “Imbecile,” he said, “with a Jewish Torah what more could I have ever been than a rabbi? Now that I have been given all sorts of honours, I think to the little I have earned, I have been given all sorts of honours. I am in command of the whole city of Saragossa, and I make it punishable to deny me anything. What is there to deny me from fasting, I don’t Kippur and I don’t observe my holidays! I feel like I feel like! When I was a Jew, I did not dare observe my Sabbath and now I do anything I want.”

Not all *conversos*, however, sought to live such a double life; many became fervent Christians. Thus Fernán Pérez de Guzmán testified

I am going to put forward certain reasons to counter the opinion of those who, without distinction or difference, absolutely condemn that nation of New Christian converts of India, saying that they are not Christians and that their conversion was neither good nor useful. . . . I believe that among them are people who are good and devoted, for the following reasons: that, before the arrival of the Holy Spirit upon them, which was the cause of their conversion, they were already good people, who, having and I know good reasons, who of their own free will led an austere life in the rigorous orders; that, I have seen them work and wear themselves out in the monasteries, reforming disorder and corrupt orders, and others, such as the honorable bishop (Paulus de Santa Maria), and his honorable son don Alonso, Bishop of Burgos, who have produced writings of great utility for our holy faith.

Yet even the *conversos* who had become committed Christians were unable to escape their origins. Thus the poet Antonio de Montoro wrote to Queen Isabella at the time of her accession to the throne:

I have said the Credo
I have prayed to the pot of fat pork,
I have heard Masses and I have prayed
And still I have not been able to wipe c
The lineaments of a *confesso*.

The Crucified Jew

I have prayed with devotion
And I have counted the beads
But I have never been able to lose
The name of a common old Jew.

From the Christian side these Jewish apostates were despised because of their racial origin, despite the fact they had embraced the Church. The priest Andrés Bernaldez, for example, declared regarding their eating habits:

They never lose their Jewish way of eating, preparing their meat dishes with onions and garlic, and they eat with such care that they use in place of something which gives the breath a very bad odour and their houses and their doorways smel very bad because of this way of cooking, and they themselves attribute their Jewish odour to these dishes.

Such hostility to Jewish converts was at times enshrined in official decrees. In 1449 the city officials of Toledo published a description of crimes committed by *conversos* and proclaimed:

We declare that all the said *conversos*, descendants of the perverse line of the Jews . . . in reason of the above-mentioned heresies and other offences, insults, seditions, and crimes committed by them up to this date, and because they had as disgraceful, unlit, lepro, and unworthy of holding any office, position, or public service, private benefit in said city or public matters or as witnesses . . . to have dominion over Old Christians in the holy Catholic faith.

The Inquisition and the Marranos

Under King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella the Inquisition came into full force, seeking to purge *conversos* who were suspected of practising Jewish customs. In 1578 Philip II was promulgated which established the Castilian Inquisition, four years after the first tribunal came into operation in Seville. Once the Inquisition was established, the tribunal requested that heretics give themselves up – this “*gracia*” lasted for thirty days. Those who came forward to admit that they observed Jewish rites were obliged to denounce all other

Spanish Persecution and the Inquisition

Judizers. In compensation they were spared torture and imprisonment. Their sins were atoned for by flagellation, by wearing the same mark as the condemned on their forebrows, by fasting, by giving alms, and by the right to hold office, practice a profession, or wear formal dress.

At the next stage of the Inquisitional process, Catholics were asked to name any suspects. An edict was promulgated which outlined various ways to recognize such individuals; Judizers celebrated Jewish holidays, kept the dietary laws, consumed meat during Lent, omitted the phrase “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost” at the end of psalms, cooked with oil, and so forth. Once suspects were identified, the Inquisitors sought to obtain a confession. To achieve this end torture was used, interspersed with kind words such as: “I pity you, when I see you so shamed and with a lost soul . . . So do not assume the sin of others . . . Admit the truth to me, for, as you see, I am doing you no damage . . . I assure that I can be able to pardon you and for you soon, tell me who led you to this error.”

Individuals who confessed saved their lives – those who persisted in denying the accusations made against them were burned at the stake. In this quest to root out heresy, there were some who even praised the executions of innocent victims. Thus in the sixteenth century Francisco Pégua stated: “If an innocent is unjustly condemned, he has no reason to complain about the Church’s sentence, which is based on sufficient proof, and what is hidden cannot be judged. If false witnesses have caused him to be condemned, he should accept the sentence with resignation, and rejoice in dying for truth.” Although thousands of Jews died as martyrs, the majority of those who appeared before the Inquisition accepted reconciliation with the Church in exchange for reduced punishment. The majority of those who refused to recant were burned at the stake, their property confiscated. In addition, their children and grandchildren were forbidden to wear gold or silver or hold public or ecclesiastical office.

The first tribunal was established in Seville where the majority of *conversos* attempted to placate the Inquisitors by manifestations of Christian dedication as well as offerings and gifts. The rich *converso* Mesa, for example, had the *quadrado* (the central place of monument) decorated with statues of the prophets. None the less for seven years the Inquisition purged five thousand individuals who were punished and accepted reconciliation with the Church, seven hundred others

The Crucified Jew

were branded heretics and burned. In 1485, Tomas de Torquemada became Inquisitor for all of Spain, and tribunals were instituted in other provinces. In Aragon popular uprisings against the Inquisition took place. In Saragosa an attempt was made to assassinate the Inquisitor. However, from 1486 to 1490 some 4,850 *conversos* were burned. Such zeal was defended by King Ferdinand, who was aware of its economic implications. In response to the Inquisition had created, he answered: "Before consenting to the establishment of the Inquisition in the cities of our kingdom, we considered the harm this could cause craftsmen and commerce. But in our great zeal for our holy faith, we have placed the service of the Lord well above all our other interests, whatever they may be." Ironically, however, the Inquisition drove many *conversos* back to their ancestral faith. In their absence they appealed to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the process they declared the Lord is One? as they met their death. Some Catholics were also so disillusioned by the Inquisition that they converted to Judaism.

Jews who had never undergone baptism were frequently caught up in the coils of the Inquisition. The Inquisitors imposed the duty of identifying, judging *conversos*, and charges were brought against those who attempted to convince baptized kinsmen to keep Jewish practices. In addition, those who promoted the return of *conversos* to Judaism were indicted. Jews were also accused of engaging with *conversos* in ritual murder. In 1490, six Jews and five *conversos* of La Guardia were charged with attempting to destroy Christendom through black magic. According to the accusation made against one of the accused (Ylce Franco),

His soul unbattered and depraved, he went in good company with several others to crucify a Christian child on a Good Friday, in the same way as we Jews do. He was the same among us and crucified him as our Saviour, and he was crucified as a Jew, beating him and spitting in his face, covering him with wounds, and finally, after he had finished turning to ridicule our holy Faith. . . . He mixed in heart with the converted host. With this mixture, Ylce Franco and the others expected that the Christian religion would be overturned and destroyed.

Spanish Persecution and the Inquisition

so that the Jews would possess all the property which belongs to the Catholics, that their race would grow and multiply while that of the faithful Christians would be extirpated forever.

After confessions were obtained, all the accused were burned.

Torture and Expulsion

Torture during the Inquisition was designed to extract confessions from the guilty. When this end was achieved the Inquisitors were satisfied. Yet paradoxically, the innocent suffered more than those who practised Judaism in secret. An example of such suffering is reflected in a report on Elvira del Campo who was accused of not eating pork and wearing clean clothes on the Sabbath:

She was carried to the torture chamber and told to tell the truth when she said that she had nothing to say. She was ordered to be stripped and again admonished, but was silent. When stripped, she said: "Sisters, I have been brought here to tell the truth. I have done nothing. I have done nothing. I do not want to see myself in such trouble, please God, I have done nothing." She was told not to bring false testimony against herself but to tell the truth. The tying of the arms was commenced. She said, "I have told the truth, what have I to tell?" She was told to tell the truth and replied, "I have told the truth and have nothing to tell." One cord was applied to the arms and washed, and she was admonished to tell the truth. She said, "I have nothing to tell." Then she screamed and said, "I have done all they say."

The torture session then intensified, and according to rule more turns of the cord on the arm were applied.

Another turn was ordered. She cried, "I swear me a little, but I may remember what I have to tell. I don't know what I have done; I did not eat pork for it makes me sick; I have done everything; I swear me and I will tell the truth." Another turn of the cord was ordered. . . . She was told to tell in detail truly what she did. She said: "What am I expected to tell? I did everything - I swear me for I don't remember what I have to tell - don't you see what a weak woman I am? Oh! Oh! my arms are breaking."

