

An Appraisal of the
PROTOCOLS OF ZION

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By JOHN S. CURTISS

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FOREWORD

HEREWITH are published, under the auspices and sponsorship of the group of American historians whose names appear below, the results of a careful and objective investigation into the history and credibility of the famous—or infamous—"Protocols of the Elders of Zion." These "Protocols," it is generally known, have been repeatedly cited and drawn upon, during the past thirty years, to prove the existence of a sinister and world-wide Jewish "plot" against Christians and Gentiles, and hence to stimulate and justify "anti-Semitic" movements in one country after another, most strikingly in Tsarist Russia and Nazi Germany, and latterly even in the United States. There has been, of course, a good deal of resulting polemical literature about the Protocols, how they actually came into existence, when and where they were first published, and whether they are really what they purport to be. But while some of this literature is valuable and revealing, none of it has emanated from, or been sponsored by, professional historians. Yet the basic problem of the Protocols—the problem of their authen-

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ticity—is obviously an historical one, to be solved by rigorous application of historical methods.

The present study is historical. It has been made by Dr. John Shelton Curtiss, a trained and competent historical scholar, who comes of old Yankee stock and who is especially qualified for this particular task by reason of his excellent command of European languages (including Russian) and of his previous research experience in the history of Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century—the very place and time at which the Protocols first appeared in print. Dr. Curtiss's study has been read and checked in manuscript by the whole group of sponsoring historians, and these individually accept and endorse his findings as completely destructive of the historicity of the Protocols and as establishing beyond doubt the fact that they are rank and pernicious forgeries.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN needed material for the present study—most of it printed in Russian, French, and German—the resources of several libraries have been utilized. Through the kindness of the British Museum it was possible to obtain a photostatic copy of the work by Sergei Nilus, *Velikoe v Malom* (“The Great in the Little”), upon which almost all published versions of the Protocols are based. Other valuable source material was found in the library of Columbia University and in the extensive collection of foreign books in the New York Public Library. In addition, assistance was given by the Library of Congress and several other learned institutions, including the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Warm thanks are extended to all these libraries and also to numerous persons who answered queries, supplied bibliographical information, or performed other services.

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Hyde Park, N. Y.

February, 1942.

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Chapter One

THE CONTENTS OF THE PROTOCOLS

NO HISTORIAN dealing with the twentieth century can fail to treat the phenomenon of anti-Jewish agitation, which in recent years has spread so widely over the world. The anti-Semitic movement has not been confined to the Third Reich; it has manifested itself in other leading European countries, in the United States and even in certain Arab lands and in Japan. This being the case, it is certainly pertinent to study the Protocols of Zion, a composition that has played a large part in the growth of the anti-Semitic movement. This work has been published in numerous editions in most of the important languages of the world, including Polish, Finnish, Japanese, Chinese, and Arabic.¹ It has been the cause of famous lawsuits in Switzerland and South Africa, and has produced much impassioned writing. The Protocols of Zion have arrayed thousands and perhaps millions of people in

¹ See Bibliography, pp. 107-10.

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opposing camps. In view of these facts, its importance must be acknowledged.

It should be stated, however, that this is not the first study of its kind. There have been a number of others, some of them of great merit.² Indeed, many of the facts presented below and some of the lines of reasoning followed are not original with the author of this study, but have been suggested or presented earlier by students of the question. But while this study may be somewhat lacking in originality, it is one of the few analyses of this kind which, in the judgment of the author, attempts to treat the subject without apologetics for either side and with the impartiality of a historian. It may help to remove misconceptions. The author is a descendant of an Anglo-Saxon family that has been in America since the earliest colonial days.

The Protocols of Zion were first published in Russia early in the twentieth century.³ Most of the numerous later editions of this work have been taken from the second edition of a book by a religious mystic, Sergei Nilus. It is entitled *Velikoe v Malom i Antikhrisť, kak Blizkaia Politicheskaia Vozmozhnost'; Zapiski Pravoslavnago* ("The Great in the Little and Antichrist as a Near Political Possibility; Notes of an Orthodox Person"). The second edition, which the author declared

² See Bibliography, pp. 110-11.

³ In the newspaper *Znamia* ("The Banner"), published at Kishinev by P. A. Krushevan, Aug. 28-Sept. 7, 1903. This was apparently the first time they were printed. See p. 20 ff. below.