



THE MEDIEVAL ROOTS OF ANTISEMITISM

**CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES FROM
THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE PRESENT DAY**

Edited by
Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß



The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism

This book presents a fresh approach to the question of the historical continuities and discontinuities of Jew-hatred, juxtaposing chapters dealing with the same phenomenon—one in the pre-modern, one in the modern period. How do the circumstances of interreligious violence differ in pre-Reformation Europe, the modern Muslim world, and the modern Western world? In addition to the diachronic comparison, most chapters deal with the significance of religion for the formation of anti-Jewish stereotypes. The direct dialogue of small-scale studies bridging the chronological gap brings out important nuances: anti-Zionist texts appropriating medieval ritual murder accusations; modern-day pogroms triggered by contemporary events but fuelled by medieval prejudices; and contemporary stickers drawing upon long-inherited knowledge about what a “Jew” looks like. These interconnections, however, differ from the often-assumed straightforward continuities between medieval and modern anti-Jewish hatred. The book brings together many of the most distinguished scholars of this field, creating a unique dialogue between historical periods and academic disciplines.

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The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism

Continuities and Discontinuities from
the Middle Ages to the Present Day

Edited by Jonathan Adams and
Cordelia Heß

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Introduction



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1 Volcanic Archives

Towards a Direct Comparison of Pre-Modern and Modern Forms of Antisemitism

Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß

Auf einem Vulkan läßt sich leben, besagt
Eine Inschrift im zerstörten Pompeji.

(Günter Kunert, “Ich bringe eine Botschaft,” 1962)¹

Continuities and Discontinuities

What causes magma, always present under the Earth’s crust, to break through the surface at a specific moment in time, either in a slow, persistent flow or in an explosive, violent volcanic eruption? And how and to what extent are modern outbreaks of antisemitism informed by older fragments of knowledge about Jews as the Other? Over the past decades, several scholars have made attempts to conceptualise antisemitism as a phenomenon of *longue durée* and to write its history as a history of continuity. Considering the evidence of anti-Jewish violence (verbal and physical) occurring repeatedly over the centuries, this approach has obvious advantages. Walter Laqueur and Robert Wistrich’s accounts of the history of antisemitism can be considered two such examples. They choose a broad approach and take texts, legislation, images, and actual violence as evidence of antisemitic attitudes, and by describing those, the underlying manners of belief and thought are implicitly described as well.² While these broad approaches serve to see the continuities in “the longest hatred,” they leave several epistemological problems unsolved, namely, the relation between antisemitic ideologies and latent knowledge about “the Jews” on the one hand, and tangible outbreaks of violence on the other.

The same applies to those approaches that conceptualise medieval anti-Judaism as fundamentally different from modern antisemitism, with the argument that the religious aspects of Jew-hatred disappeared with the Emancipation and were largely replaced by racist ones. This model of explanation, mostly employed by scholars of modern history, has a fundamental weakness: it conceptualises pre-modern societies as largely monolithic blocks, with one central ideology, namely, the difference between Christians and non-Christians, in which anti-Judaism appears to be the “natural thing to do,” at least from a Christian perspective. Once established, the religious

difference serves as a matrix for modern antisemitism, which, although functioning differently, already has its victims identified. While this concept radically denies a continuity in the essence and nature of antisemitism, it relies on the continuity of victimhood.

Yet a different approach, widely celebrated as a fresh start in the debate about continuities and discontinuities, was David Nirenberg's conceptualisation of anti-Judaism as a figure of thought that re-occurs in various societies over centuries, always adopting the specific needs and circumstances of these societies, but always keeping a relatively unchanged nucleus: Jew-hatred. His book is an example of the reconstruction of an archive of historical knowledge about "Jews." Many articles here relate in some way or another to Nirenberg's analysis of anti-Jewish ideas as a latent, underlying feature of many Western societies, even though they do not explicitly analyse ideas themselves. Instead, the historical comparison aims mostly at a comparison of concrete phenomena and manifestations of antisemitic ideas—the volcanic outbreaks of the latent existing magma, sometimes in the form of violence, sometimes as texts or images producing, merging, or translating stereotypes. The central idea of this volume is the existence of antisemitic ideas and stereotypes as latent components of collective knowledge, existing permanently but leading to specific outbreaks in specific historical circumstances. The interconnection between this latent knowledge and the specific outbreaks are analysed from the historical perspective of continuity or discontinuity. The latent knowledge is, in accordance with recent concepts of memory studies, called "archive," as a more or less systematic collection of different kinds of sources, collected in different historical phases, and stored in a common room of collective ideas and ideologemes. In the cases of specific outbreaks, people draw from this stack of archival knowledge, update the information contained there, and transform or adapt it to their particular needs.

The concept of "archive" provides a specific image for collective memory, knowledge, and the subconscious: a room full of files ordered according to their provenience rather than their topic and content, covering long historical periods, and structuring historical knowledge according to strict and unchangeable principles and rules developed for all archives. The image of the archival storage room also allows for the idea of gaps in collective knowledge, caused by earlier losses of archival holdings through external factors such as fires or wars, or by the structure of the holdings themselves, which necessarily omit certain large areas of source production and still are considered as the most complete foundations of historical knowledge we have access to. In Foucault's terminology, "archive is first the law that determines what can be said."³ The *limits of the sayable* is, however, not only a theoretical concept that determines the political, ideological, and discursive framework within which utterings about, for example, Jews are possible, and legally, culturally, and socially accepted. Pushing forward these boundaries of what can be said can also, as is often argued with reference

to the emergence of violence against minorities and the general role of racist propaganda for this, open spaces for actual attacks. The archives are not only a virtual concept, but they influence first the definitions of victims and perpetrators, and then who actually can become a victim or perpetrator.

Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and, inspired by these, Aleida Assmann have shifted the notion of archive from a place where knowledge is stored to one where it is produced.⁴ As long as the content of the archive is not canonised as an integral part of cultural knowledge and memory and as such constantly remembered and staged, it becomes a passive knowledge, half-way between remembering and forgetting. Applied to the “archive” of antisemitism, this means that the historical knowledge we draw from in the moments of outbreaks of antisemitism is structured specifically and mirrors its own evolution.⁵ Understanding the principles and structure of the archive means understanding the structure of the contemporary evidence of outbreaks of antisemitism. The direct comparison in this volume of specific phenomena from across the centuries is intended to shed light on the archives and to uncover any older, underlying arguments and strategies “justifying” the eruptions of violence.

The present book aims at presenting yet another approach to the question of historical continuities and discontinuities. Its most tangible angle is the chronological one: the juxtaposition of articles dealing with the same phenomenon—one in the pre-modern, one in the modern period—and comparisons between them. How do the circumstances of interreligious violence differ in pre-Reformation Europe, the modern Muslim world, and the modern Western world?

Besides the diachronic comparison, most articles struggle with the significance of religion for the formation of anti-Jewish stereotypes. Not all anti-Jewish phenomena before the Emancipation were religious in character, and many of them in the modern era contain religious aspects. The direct dialogue of small-scale studies bridging the chronological gap brings out these nuances: anti-Zionist texts appropriating medieval ritual murder accusations; modern-day pogroms triggered by contemporary events but fuelled by medieval prejudices; and contemporary stickers drawing upon long-inherited knowledge about what a “Jew” looks like. These interconnections, however, differ from the often assumed straightforward continuities between medieval and modern anti-Jewish hatred. Wherever these are used in contemporary scholarship in order to explain the emergence of modern stereotypes, usually misconceptions about medieval relations are the basis. For example, a common perception of modern studies of antisemitism is that the connection between Jews and money is based on medieval Jewish economic activities and their exclusion from the Christian guilds and professions. Recent studies by medieval scholars such as Giacomo Todeschini have countered this perception, showing it to be overly simplified: while it is true that Jews were active in money-lending, these activities were not nearly as exclusive as suggested. Jews owned property, were active in all kinds of

handicrafts and trades, as merchants and artists, and in all other aspects of everyday life. At the same time, the majority of Jews were—just like the majority of Christians—poor, and could hardly pose an economic threat to their neighbours; the often-heard, “go-to” explanation of anti-Jewish violence as deriving (solely) from economic competition does not hold true. Additionally, the Christian campaign against usury was for a long time an internal Christian issue, and its conflation with anti-Jewish resentment is a relatively late projection of this issue onto the Other.

This example shows that the antisemitic archive is both resentful and forgetful. It sustains a basic connection between Jews and money but forgets the historical circumstances in which this connection emerged. The historical root of modern Europe is a *Christianitas* striving to become universal. It was profoundly Catholic, expansionistic, shaped by constant struggles between the Christian majority in the European centre and non-Christian minorities at the peripheries: an obsession with defining and affirming boundaries. Jews became a figure for the Other living amongst Christian Europeans, and this basic idea of Othering has survived, even though the religious nature of the difference is largely forgotten or even neglected.

A question largely undebated in the present volume is whether antisemitism is a form of group-based hostility that is essentially different from other forms such as racism, misogyny, or antiziganism. The neglect of this question lies in the concept of the book: by focusing on antisemitism, it is easy to identify outbreaks of violence across the centuries. But is there any relationship between anti-Jewish hatred and hatred against other, religiously or otherwise, “othered” groups? Why do non-Jews so often through the centuries turn against Jews and pick them as scapegoats? These questions cannot be answered without taking the context of other forms of oppression, violence, and hatred into account, which is not the focus of this collection. The historical context of antisemitic incidents often contains similar outbreaks of violence and hostility towards other groups, such as the poor, heretics and non-Catholics, homosexuals, Muslims, Tatars, lepers, beggars, the disabled, and others who also fell victim to persecution wrapped in the garb of Christianity. The context thus provides a necessary relativisation of the seemingly inevitable focus on Jews as victims and scapegoats. The question is rather why Jews repeatedly became victims of violence in so many different historical circumstances, when these circumstances initially also contained the possibility for a different development.

Religion and Multiple Modernities

The most central difference between medieval anti-Judaism and modern antisemitism is the significance of religion for each of them. This is related to the question of what modernity ultimately is: the emergence of capitalism, the industrial age, the Enlightenment—or is modernity ultimately about secularisation and a general loss of significance for religious models

of explanation and ethics? These questions linger also in the conceptions of medieval versus modern antisemitism, and they have previously been discussed regarding the existence or non-existence of medieval racism.⁶ Most scholars of modern history tend to deny or at least downplay the role of religion for modern societies, and point instead towards the emergence of racist conceptions of human difference in the age of science. Medievalists, on the other hand, have been eager to re-evaluate the “modernity” of the Middle Ages, establishing various points of rupture in the monolithic conception of the period as the opposite of all things potentially denoting modernity. Examples for this are the detection of the “Renaissance” of the twelfth century, of medieval atheism, heresies, radical anticlericalism, and so on—all these phenomena testify to the multifacetedness of religious beliefs and expressions even before the Enlightenment. For the analysis of religious anti-Judaism, this means that Christian hostility towards Jews was possible and obvious, but not inevitable. Medieval Jew-hatred could be and often was religious, but not all people were religious in the same way and not all people necessarily hated Jews for the same things and in the same way. Religion was central and omnipresent as the ideological matrix for human interaction, but it was not monolithic.⁷ Whereas at the beginning of the Middle Ages, Jews’ “right to exist” was founded on their theological role of servitude (*servitus judaeorum perpetua*), this servitude came to be linked to the royal and imperial treasuries of Europe, and Jews’ right to exist “acquired the quality of a secular jurisdiction.”⁸ And Jews were not the only religious Other who occupied the Christian mind and societies; alongside Jews, pagans on the peripheries, Muslims in the Holy Land, and Orthodox Christians in the East formed a common category of threats to the universality of Christianity. The “hermeneutical Jew” was a prominent figure in medieval Christian thought, but he was not in all cases a Jew, and medieval sources often mix up terms like Jew, Saracen, and pagan.⁹ With the Reformation, Protestants used the term “Jew” against and to signify their Catholic opponents—and vice versa. Consequently, medievalists have been trying to explain anti-Judaism not solely as a result of the religious contradiction between dominant Christianity and diaspora Judaism, but as the complex and heterogeneous result of specific social, economic, personal, and religious circumstances.

Scholarship that attempts to integrate religious aspects into the analysis of modern forms of antisemitism is somewhat less common.¹⁰ Rather, scholars of modern history seem to define secularisation as the primary sign of modernity, and do not accept the survival of religious patterns of thought in modern, secular societies. But does this really hold true? The major shift from pre-modern to modern Jew-hatred comes to be defined as nothing more than the shift from a primarily religious resentment to a racist resentment, due to the change in Jews’ newly granted civil rights and status and the consequent loss of significance of the religious factor for the definition of the Other. But this is overly simplified. Not all forms of pre-modern

anti-Judaism were religiously motivated, and in the modern racist antisemitism that emerged around and after the Emancipation, religion continued to play a major role. Jan Weyand has, for example, pointed out the integration of Christianity into the conception of Germanness which became dominant in antisemitic circles: to be German meant to be Christian.¹¹ To be a Jew in Germany meant to be German only on paper, not for real. This mixture of religious, political, and ethnic aspects can also be seen in medieval anti-Jewish phenomena. The attempts to assign Jews a particular physiognomy in Christian art, as described by Sara Lipton in this volume, are one example of this. The fact that not only Jewish locals and travellers, but also converts were repeatedly accused and killed for spreading the plague in the years 1348–50 is another sign that the initially religious difference was seen as so essential and absolute that it could not simply be washed away with the water of baptism—long before the Spanish inquisition focused its attention on *conversos* and doubted their religious status, which is often considered the first emergence of racist aspects in anti-Judaism.

Applied to the initial question of latency vs. outbreaks of antisemitism, we must ask to which extent pre-modern knowledge informs modern antisemitic phenomena. In most modern secular societies, the question of who killed Jesus Christ seems of little significance, and many antisemitic utterings come from people who would probably not define themselves primarily by faith or as Christians. However, this does not mean that traces of religiously informed resentment are not contained in modern antisemitism. When protesters against the Israeli military intervention in Gaza screamed “Kindermörder Israel,” does this accusation not contain traces of a much older figure of thought? That Jews killed Christ has been one of the most fundamental and deadly allegations. Originally deriving from early Christian readings of the Gospel, the concept of deicide Jews flourished during the Middle Ages resulting in a broad and general idea that Jews like to kill innocent people, predominantly children, and the idea that Jews are child murderers has remained a constant in anti-Jewish propaganda. Even if the assignment of the role of *Christian* innocent victim has lost its significance in the political debate, the role of Jewish villain remains in place, and the charge of child murderers resonates in the popular imagination. The delicate and complicated line between anti-Zionism, antisemitism, and legitimate criticism of the State of Israel, its politics of occupation, and its use of overwhelming military force can be defined solely in political terms, but it can also be re-formulated with the knowledge of how fatal the accusation of deicide has been for all Jews through the centuries. Which role does the stereotype of Christ killers and child murderers play in a political context of war, occupation, and general political instability in the Middle East? Does the religious imagery influence criticism of the politics of the State of Israel? These questions are not only relevant for the analysis of modern antisemitism; they also point towards a more nuanced understanding of the role of religion in modern secular societies in general. Obviously, a number

of epistemic ruptures occurred between the years 1000 and 2000. But the prevalence and continuities in antisemitic stereotypes, the (often cynical) actualisation of the archive of religious knowledge for secular-political purposes, suggests that these ruptures also allowed for the conservation of certain religious figures of thought that remained significant.

The basic methodological idea of this book, a comparison between pre-modern and modern forms of antisemitism, does not take into account the significant and obvious points of rupture that defined Jewish-Christian relations in the post-Emancipation period until today: the Shoah, the foundation of the State of Israel, and the Six-Day War in 1967. All of these events had and continue to have considerable impact on the antisemitic archive and its outbreaks, but we decided to leave it to the contributors to define whether these events seemed relevant for their specific topic, rather than including events before and after 1945/48 and 1967 in all areas of comparison. Consequently, in some areas of comparison, the line between antisemitism and anti-Zionism plays no role at all, while in others that stretch their chronological range until the present, both Holocaust denial and an updating of antisemitic stereotypes within the conflict in the Middle East are debated. Thus, the significance of the State of Israel for the development of antisemitic stereotypes in the Western and the Arab world is touched upon, but not an explicit part of the concept of this book. This is not to downplay the importance of contemporary political issues for the development of antisemitic stereotypes—but from the long-term perspective of medieval studies, the dialogue bridging the centuries seemed an important first step, while differentiations in various forms of modern antisemitism might be a second one.

Another question that this volume deliberately omits is the significance of the schism of the Western Church—the Reformation—and its influence on antisemitic imagery and outbreaks. In the wake of the five-hundredth anniversary of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, the Protestant Church—in Germany, at least—has made efforts to portray its founder as no longer a straightforward hero, but also to point out his antisemitism. This aspect of Luther's thought is usually described as a “medieval” feature, deriving from his study of older Bible commentaries, such as the one by Nicholas of Lyra, as well as of more contemporary lay didactical works and, not least, plain anti-Jewish propaganda, such as the works of Anthonius Margaritha. Antisemitism was a strong feature of the early Reformation and thus remained relevant and significant for the development of Protestant theology and pastoral practice, consequently bridging the gap between medieval and modern.¹²

Christian Europe: Collective Identities and Religious Violence

The Europe that became the hotbed first for anti-Judaism, and subsequently for racist antisemitism, was primarily a Christian Europe. It was a Christian majority that picked out a non-Christian minority as its victim and as

its matrix for self-understanding and self-identification. It was a Christian Europe in crisis: the Crusades and the loss of the Holy Land, the popular success of heretical movements, the constant struggles between papacy and emperor, and the delegitimation that the Church experienced through the Papal Schism and conciliarism. Just as a crisis of self-understanding among the populations of the emerging nation states, particularly Germany, called for a collective identity formulated through the demarcation of a collective Other, the constant crisis of the supposedly universal *Christianitas* called for various formulations of a collective Other. In pre-modern as in modern societies, Jews were not the only groups that had to serve this purpose, but the religious difference was and remained central.

Today, antisemitism comes both from the Christian (largely “non-practising”) majority and from Muslim (or rather, Islamist) minorities, who are responsible for the largest-scale attacks on Jewish institutions, such as during the terror attacks in Brussels, Copenhagen, Paris, Toulouse, and elsewhere. At the same time, members of the Christian majority still engage in various forms of religious and political antisemitism. And even today, it is a Europe in crisis which produces anti-Jewish hatred, even though antisemitism is hardly a uniquely European problem anymore. Indeed, recent reports have shown a rise in the number of antisemitic incidents in the US.¹³ While most of the case studies in this volume reveal very specific contexts as determining outbreaks of antisemitic violence, such as local networks, economic relations, particular interests of power, Christian Europe provides the universal background of the pre-modern and modern developments. The constant crisis of European Christian identity seems to be utterly relevant for the treatment of religious minorities—Jewish, Muslim, and other.¹⁴ Most of the contributions in this volume focus on Europe, with a few contrasting examples from the US, Japan, the Middle East, and Turkey. That these three latter areas experienced different, alternate modernities, in which Christianity played a minor and different role, alters the narratives and structures of antisemitism but it does not alter the significance of Christian Europe for the emergence and development of anti-Jewish resentment.¹⁵ It was here, predominantly in northern and central Europe, that the shift from religious to racist antisemitism occurred, radicalised, and intensified.

The Present Volume

Ainsi l'antisémitisme est-il originellement un Manichéisme; il explique le train du monde par la lutte du principe du Bien contre le principe du Mal. Entre ces deux principes aucun ménagement n'est concevable: il faut que l'un d'eux triomphe et que l'autre soit anéanti. [. . .] Chevalier du Bien, l'antisémite est sacré, le Juif est, lui aussi, sacré comme les intouchables, comme les indigènes frappés d'un tabou. Ainsi la lutte est menée sur le plan religieux et la fin du combat ne peut être qu'une destruction sacrée.

(Jean-Paul Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive* [Paris: Morigien, 1946 (written October 1944)], 50–51, 54)¹⁶

In Sartre's much-cited essay, the most used quotation is that if the Jew did not exist, the antisemite would invent him: *Si le juif n'existait pas, l'antisémite l'inventerait*.¹⁷ A much less appreciated line of thought in the same essay is the religious nature of antisemitism. Written in 1944, Sartre did not have in mind medieval anti-Jewish hatred, fed by sermons and meditations on the suffering of Christ, but he was attempting to demonstrate the fundamental similarity of religious and antisemitic passion that ultimately leads to the convergence of the two. This definition of antisemitism as a religious, non-questionable, holy belief and passion profoundly points towards Jew-hatred as a phenomenon that bridges both the medieval-modern divide and the absolute demarcation between medieval-religious and modern-secular. That it belongs to the less discussed aspects of Sartre's work also points towards the fact that most scholars prefer to work within the limits of their period and area of profession than cross chronological and epistemological boundaries. We are no exceptions to this—most of the articles collected here restrict themselves to one period and area. Our questions were many when we started the work on this volume. Does the existence of hatred towards Jews in areas with no Jewish population in the Middle Ages and today have the same causes as in those areas with “real” Jews? Can the rise and popularity of antisemitism from the nineteenth century onwards be explained solely within a contemporary framework? Can theories and analytical models of modern racial prejudice be applied to the Middle Ages and vice versa?

The different methodologies employed in the essays demonstrate the many, often conflicting, approaches historians, sociologists, art historians, and theologians use to investigate anti-Jewish stereotypes and phenomena as well as the different questions they are trying to answer. The many essays in this volume do not provide a single, overarching theory of the history of antisemitism, but they do all show a keen interest, either direct or implied, in what came before or what came after. They demonstrate the usefulness and necessity of studying incidents of anti-Jewish phenomena within a broader chronological and geographical framework.

And indeed, despite the varying and heterogeneous approaches, recurrent themes do emerge from this collection: for example, the ever-surprising significance of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a text that has managed to export, initiate, and fuel antisemitism in areas that beforehand had not known Jews (such as Japan) or anti-Jewish conspiracy theories (such as the Arab world). Also, the conflation of different, sometimes conflicting, motives—such as updated or contorted religious knowledge, local economic interests and networks, and the existence of anti-Jewish texts—for the outbreak of anti-Jewish violence remains constant throughout the centuries and points towards a simple but too often ignored fact: antisemitism has never been “the natural thing to do,” the logical result of a straightforward course of events. It has always been a combination of different aspects and interests, and neither the religious difference nor the racist construction is inevitable within a given historical situation.

We hope that the juxtaposition of these studies dealing with the same phenomena in different periods and geographical areas will add to the understanding of the meta-historical nature of antisemitism. Religion re-appears as a focal point of comparison, as well as passion, irrationality, hatred, and ignorance—none of these seems to be specific to either pre-modernity or modernity. Our original idea, a perfectly symmetrical line-up of one medieval and one modern study each on various antisemitic phenomena, proved difficult to put into practice and had to be supplemented and fleshed out with other approaches. For topics such as blood libel, visual stereotypes, antisemitism without Jews, and usury, the “pairing” of pre-modern and modern case studies was beneficial. For questions such as the significance of the theology of land, a long-term perspective within each contribution and a dialogue between scholars of Christian and of Jewish theology seemed more appropriate. Geographical aspects, as well as broad topics such as Christian and Muslim antisemitism, could only be touched upon and elude a one-to-one comparison over the centuries. Thus, the detection of the archives of antisemitism lies in some sections within the direct comparison, in others within parallel developments, and for the entire collection, in the attempt to approach the phenomenon “antisemitism” from as many angles as possible.

The first section, titled “Longest Hatred versus Invented Tradition,” mirrors the differing approaches to the question of continuities and discontinuities, religion and secularisation. Steven Englund argues for the significance of religious aspects in the study of modern antisemitism, while Ulrich Wyrwa advocates a strict divide between religious and racist hatred. The discussion is rounded off by Brian Klug, who opens an analogy between antisemitism and Islamophobia and their significance for European nation-states.

Antisemitism in areas where there is no day-to-day contact between Jews and non-Jews raises the question of how one is to understand Jewish absence with regard to perceptions of and fantasies about Jews. In Christian lands, “the Jew” was hermeneutically and doctrinally constructed—a figment of the individual’s imagination, conditioned and bounded by Christian tradition and the *auctor*-defined past. But how is the image of the absent Jew constructed in non-Christian areas? What authorities condition and bound the individual’s imagination here? The second section “Antisemitism without Jews” draws together studies of medieval (Christian) Norway and modern (non-Christian) Japan, both areas initially without a resident Jewish population. Both Yvonne Friedman and Rotem Kowner find anti-Jewish stereotypes to be much more than literary imports.

Although Christian Europe is of relevance to nearly all of the contributions in the volume, the section titled “Christianity and Antisemitism” collects articles dealing more specifically with the significance of religion for medieval and modern antisemitism respectively. Robert Chazan argues that northern Europe became the breeding ground for the radicalisation and racialisation of antisemitism, and Grzegorz Krzywiec writes about Catholic antisemitism in Poland in the decades before the First World War. Jonathan

Adams analyses medieval continuities in contemporary popular culture with the example of Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ*. All three of them find different aspects of Christian religion, imagery, and culture to be crucial for the development of antisemitism, and all three of them find these aspects to be flexible enough to be adopted and understood in both pre-modern and modern circumstances.

With two contributions in the section "Islam and Antisemitism," Tahir Abbas, Behruz Davletov, and Esther Webman provide evidence for the relevance of European antisemitism even in the Muslim world. Abbas and Davletov contrast the historical situation of Jews in the Ottoman Empire with contemporary stereotypes in Turkey, and Webman explores the significance of the Arab-Israeli conflict for the actualisation and radicalisation of stereotypes in the Arab world. While historically, Jews held a relatively autonomous position within Muslim societies, which was grounded in the Qur'an and which allowed their communities to flourish, the situation changed entirely with the foundation of the State of Israel. Nowadays, a mixture of medieval Christian and modern racist stereotypes merge in the Arab world.

The section "Bodies, Gender, and Antisemitism" deals with the representations of "Jewish" bodies in pre-modern and modern popular art. The depiction of Jews as corporally different began in medieval church art where it was necessary to depict the Jews of the New Testament as the embodiment of evil. An anti-Jewish visual code was developed that comprised various ugly and monstrous features to help the viewer recognise "the Jew." Many of these markers of Jewishness continue to be used today in entirely profane contexts. Sara Lipton and Isabel Enzenbach explore the presence of visual stereotypes in public space in a relatively direct comparison of physical features. Victor Seidler writes more broadly about the (gendered) materiality of Jewish bodies and the ascription of carnality.

Blood libel is probably, next to visual stereotypes, the most striking example of continuities and updated stereotypes. The twelfth-century invention that Jews ritually murdered children to extract their blood for religious purposes has survived through the centuries. Initially only found in Christian areas, this antisemitic canard spread to Arab and Muslim nations and can also be found used in secular discourses. In the section "Blood Libel and Ritual Murder Allegations," Miriamne Ara Krummel and Miri Rubin analyse from different angles the original blood libel accusation from Norwich in 1144, while Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß develop a typology of medieval blood libel accusations in order to discuss whether a case from modern Sweden can be defined as blood libel at all.

For centuries, pogroms constituted the most destructive atrocities committed against Jews to take place in Europe. In the Middle Ages, there are notable examples from Castile, Catalonia, France, and the German lands. With the Khmelnytsky Pogroms in Ukraine (1648–57), these riots reached genocidal proportions; the phenomenon was repeated throughout the nineteenth century in Tsarist Russia. During the Second World War,

local populations in occupied Central and Eastern Europe, encouraged by German death squads, killed their Jewish neighbours in murderous riots—one of the ways that non-Germans became complicit and partook in the destruction of Europe's Jews. These pogroms continued without the Nazis' encouragement even after the war ended. The section "Neighbours" collects three micro studies of anti-Jewish pogroms which turned neighbours into enemies and created perpetrators and victims. In medieval Prague (Milan Žonca) and Seville (Maya Soifer Irish) as well as in post-war Kielce (Joanna Tokarska-Bakir), specific local interests and animosities led to violent outbreaks. While the results of the violence were similar for the Jewish victims, the justification provided by the Christian perpetrators differed widely.

Accusations against Jews of usury and profiteering have a long history beginning with the laws of the twelfth century that prohibited Christians from loaning money at interest. In the section "Economy and Finance," Giacomo Todeschini and Richard E. Frankel compare medieval and modern evidence of the stereotype of the Jewish usurer, the latter also building a bridge between Old Europe and the New World, which shows remarkable stability in the use of the stereotype despite the differences in their medieval history.

The section "Land and Home" explores the significance of the land of Israel for the development of anti-Jewish hatred. Although there have been huge advances in the Catholic and Protestant churches in recent years on Christian teaching on Judaism, attitudes towards the Land and the State of Israel are still difficult. The Jewish homeland continues to be a source of antagonism. Jesper Svartvik draws a long historical line from late antiquity to the modern era in his description of Christian supersessionism and the centrality of the land for Jewish and Christian theology alike. Ruth Langer explores the theological foundations of Zionism and the significance of the Land of Israel for Jews, while Tuvia Singer explores the topics of homelessness and the Wandering Jew as anti-Jewish stereotypes in nineteenth-century Germany.

In the final section, "*Medieval Roots and Anti-Judaism*," Victor Seidler reflects on some of the key themes that run through the volume: the role of authority, memories of violence, Christian Europe, and antisemitism among Muslim Europeans. Carlo Ginzburg comments critically upon the theoretical and empirical framework of this volume as well as on the most recent work arguing for a continuity of anti-Jewish thought, David Nirenberg's book from 2013. Ginzburg points out the ambivalence in Christian-Jewish relations deriving from the common scriptural tradition. In the final essay in the volume, David Nirenberg counters the arguments raised by Ginzburg and concludes with an assessment of the usefulness of the central point of the book at hand: the importance of the past for the present (and vice versa) when examining and trying to understand antisemitism.

Notes

1. "It is possible to live on a volcano, says / An inscription in destroyed Pompeii."
2. Walter Laqueur, *Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991).
3. Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 170: "L'archive, c'est d'abord la loi de ce qui peut être dit."
4. Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B. Young (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 97–107.
5. From the field of social sciences, a study from 2006 works with a similar idea of stored knowledge and contemporary stereotypes but does not describe the development of the stereotypes themselves: Susan Gniechwitz, *Antisemitismus im Lichte der modernen Vorurteilsforschung: Kognitive Grundlagen latenter Vorurteile gegenüber Juden in Deutschland* (Berlin: WVB, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2006).
6. See, for example, Geraldine Heng, "The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages. I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 5 (2011): 258–74.
7. See, for example, Dorothea Weltecke, "Der Narr spricht: Es ist kein Gott": *Atheismus, Unglauben und Glaubenszweifel vom 12. Jahrhundert bis zur Neuzeit*, Campus historische Studien, no. 50 (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010).
8. Thomas Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews: A Journey into Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 12.
9. Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2–4.
10. Most recently, the Evangelische Akademie in Berlin has made an attempt to point out the significant role of antisemitism for Protestant theology. A complete documentation of the conference "Antisemitismus als politische Theologie" is printed in *EPD Dokumentation* 17 (April 2017). As an example of the lack of integration of religion in modern theories of antisemitism, see Samuel Salzborn, *Antisemitismus als negative Leitidee der Moderne: Sozialwissenschaftliche Theorien im Vergleich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010).
11. Jan Weyand, *Historische Wissenssoziologie des modernen Antisemitismus: Genese und Typologie einer Wissensformation am Beispiel des deutschsprachigen Diskurses* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016), 286–95.
12. See, for example, the conference documentation *Martin Luther und die Juden: Luthers Judenschriften und ihre Rezeption—ein Projekt zum Reformationsjubiläum* (Frankfurt am Main: Gemeinschaftswerk der Evangelischen Publizistik, 2016).
13. See, for example, the Anti-Defamation League's "2015 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents," available online at www.adl.org/news/press-releases/adl-audit-anti-semitic-assaults-rise-dramatically-across-the-country-in-2015 (accessed 23 November 2017). See also Mark Openheimer, "Is Anti-Semitism Truly on the Rise in the U.S.? It's Not So Clear," *The Washington Post*, 17 February 2017, available online at www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/02/17/is-anti-semitism-on-the-rise-does-anyone-care (accessed 23 November 2017).
14. For a similar argument about the similarities between "Old" and "New" Europe, see Brian Klug's contribution.
15. See also Victor Seidler's reflections on Christianity and violence in this volume.

16 *Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß*

16. “Thus antisemitism is originally a form of Manichaeism; it explains the course of the world by the struggle of the principle of Good against the principle of Evil. Between these two principles no reconciliation is conceivable: one of them must triumph and the other be demolished [. . .] The knight of Good, the antisemite is holy, so also the Jew, holy like the untouchables, like the natives afflicted by a taboo. Thus the struggle is raised to a religious level, and the end of the combat can be nothing but a holy destruction.”
17. Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive*, 13.

Part I

Longest Hatred versus Invented Tradition



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2 The Medieval (and Ancient) Roots of Antisemitism

Steven Englund

Scholars do not hesitate to debate the question of the medieval origins of the modern state or of the nation. Books pour out on these topics, authored by social scientists as well as historians, pressing the reader to keep well in mind the weighty mantle of age worn by nations and states—not least evidenced by the strong and affective, if secular, “religiosity” that nation-states often generate.¹ So why do many recent scholars of modern antisemitism dispute the relevance of a “deep” past?

A strictly sociological answer to that question would point to the structure and functioning of the present-day academic profession: getting a job and getting ahead in the contemporary university require constantly renewed specialisation and productivity. They, in their turn, suppose reflexive revisionism of previous viewpoints, regardless of whether said revisions are justified or interesting. Then, too, we need to consider that the human brain does not grow apace with the uncovering of new historical sources and the ongoing production of historiography. We long ago reached a point in anti-semitism studies where the amount of material available was overwhelming. The number of books and articles written in this field by intelligent, often brilliant, minds—minds which have come up with complex, original, and controversial thoughts—is disconcerting. It is certainly far greater than in, say, Napoleonic studies where I previously toiled for a decade, or even in nationalism, where I worked for three decades before that. To be obliged to add one’s own mite to Funkenstein, Katz, Yerushalmi, or Nirenberg is intimidating (the more so if one is not Jewish).

But the chief factor at play in the reticence to adduce deep historical causality for modern antisemitism is, I would say, the sticky matter of religion. It is complicated: religion’s multiform afterlife in unbelieving ages; the forms that *le religieux* may take or that individual religiosity may give rise to; the varieties of so-called secular religions.² The most summary inquiry quickly shows that what the unsuspecting contemporist might have taken to be a massive block (orthodox defunct religion) is in fact a moving kaleidoscope of shifting forms. No cheerful readiness to concede personal religious tone-deafness gets one off the hook; just because the scholar herself has no

background or interest in religion, she cannot with impunity exclude or underplay it in her subject matter.

Nota bene, I do not mean to say that formal topics like “Catholic anti-semitism in the Vatican or in the Kaiserreich” is a taboo research topic—far from it. David Kertzer’s and Olaf Blaschke’s works are ready at hand to remind us of the legitimacy of such subjects.³ Rather, I mean that the desirability, still less the necessity, of worrying out the religious inflections and pondering their consequence in hardcore racial-cultural, anticlerical Jew-hatred such as Eugen Dühring’s or Theodor Fritsch’s is not evident, still less congenial, to many scholars. It is easier to take Dühring and Fritsch at their word—i.e., that they are free of any religious motivation and are offering the world an entirely new form of Jew-hatred.

It is easy to do this. All of us, myself included, tend to account for the recent upsurge of antisemitism in Western societies in terms of current geopolitics and immigration trends. It rarely occurs to us that explanations tailored solely in the habiliments of Israeli-Palestinian relations or the problematic presence of numerous Muslim immigrants in modern society pass over in silence the fact that diverse publics intuitively understand the millennial negative meaning attached to the word—the epithet—“Jew” in Christian society. (To the point that “Aryan,” a concept with which we are acquainted, is sufficiently defined as simply the absence of Jewish blood.)

The position that modern antisemitism has no important—indeed, decisive—“back of the store” dimension reminds me of an interview I once conducted, as a young reporter for TIME Magazine, with B.F. Skinner. The task at hand was to elicit from him a clear explication of the new field of psychological behaviourism. “That’s simple,” Dr. Skinner replied (he often found things simple), “it makes no sense—it is quite literally nonsense—to speak of mind and the unconscious when we can neither see nor measure them. Psychology will only be scientific when it concerns itself with the visible, measurable, and duplicable—and that is behavior.”

You see where I am heading: the impulse to reduce modern antisemitism to its racial-economic-socio-political-cultural precipitants and triggers is indis-severable from the impulse to lay out a new academic field for cultivation, different from, and unrelated to, the endless forests of anti-Judaism in theology, literature, philosophy, folklore, and you-name-it. It has the appeal to historians of offering a field permitting archival mastery on a micro-historical basis, studying exempla of anti-Jewish behaviour in given venues and moments—and *keeping it there*. It frees the practitioner from the need to juggle five or six balls at once—balls from the deep past of the instances at hand, including their social psychology or *mentalité*, elements of which may be—usually are—unconscious to the actors. And speaking of the actors, this approach permits the contemporary researcher the demarche of collapsing etic and emic points of view (anthropologists call *etic* the scholar’s view, and *emic*, the subject’s, or as historians say, “the contemporary’s,” view). For it is well known that the antisemites themselves indignantly rejected

any suggestion that they sprang from a Jesse's stem of eternal hatred of the Christ-killers.⁴ To take them at their word reassures the scholar he has "something new" at hand, but this does not relieve him of the need for dubiety as to the complexity of his subjects' political motivations or the frailty and superficiality of their self-understanding.

Let it be said, however: a great deal has been accomplished via the positivist archival approach. Brick upon brick, recent historiography, particularly that coming out of the Centre for the Study of Antisemitism (*Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung*) in Berlin, has constructed an impressive wall of scholarship which establishes for the 1870–1914 era the birth of a "new kind of hostility against the Jews," enfolded in social-political movements: antisemitism-as-a-counter-culture, located not only (familarly) in Germany and Austria-Hungary, but nearly simultaneously in related movements in much of the rest of Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, etc.), including even the French Republic *before* Drumont. While we may not go so far as to claim that antisemitism is an intellectually worked-out ideology in the same way socialism, anarcho-syndicalism, political Catholicism or the myriad of irredentist-nationality movements in the Danubian monarchy are, thanks to the centre we do now see it as a discrete political movement.⁵ We may now claim for antisemitism something like the sorts of discrete and complex social embodiments that we have long associated with socialism, anarcho-syndicalism, political Catholicism, or the myriad irredentist-nationality movements in the Danubian monarchy. It is a splendid accomplishment.⁶

So, what is the problem, you ask. Well, here is an example of one. Three of the most productive of recent scholars write as follows about the specific social contexts that gave rise to "exclusionary violence"—the term now used to refer to violence against Jews. "The analytical problem," note Messrs Hoffmann, Bergmann, and Walser Smith, in the Introduction to a valuable volume of recent essays, "is to explain why antisemitic violence, and not something else, constituted a popular response to problems extraneous to Christian-Jewish relations." The answer, they assert, cannot be the pre-existence of a long-term anti-Jewish discourse, for a *carte blanche* appeal to "the longest hatred" of antisemitism

does not tell us why Christians, now in this context, now in another, appropriated a persecutory discourse directed against a minority rather than, say, a discourse about the abuses of rulers or about the inequalities of class . . . [A]n explanation that focuses on the "structure of belief" or a "cognitive model" tells us little about the specific uses for which historical agents employed, and thus changed, vocabularies of hatred.⁷

True, a generalised "social imaginary," such as that which David Nirenberg has excavated for Western anti-Judaism,⁸ does not tell us anything about the onset of specific instances of hatred in a given situation—any more than a general theory of class conflict can account for the outbreak of revolution in

Mexico in 1910 or in Russia in 1917. This is not because the social imaginary or a general theory are irrelevant, but rather because the preconditions of events are not of the same explanatory order as an event's precipitants; and they, in turn, are not its triggers. Cause in human history, as befitting human beings, is a complex matter and cannot be reduced to Skinnerian behavioural models, much as it would be simpler to account for if it could be.⁹ Unhappily for the already overburdened historian, mind—including the unconscious, both individual and collective—often plays as decisive, if subtler, a role in determining events as does immediate behaviour.

Specifically, to return to the case of anti-Jewish riots, the usual concatenation of issues associated with violence—discursive deployments by anti-semitic actors in specific movements pushing tailored agendas, provoking riots—does *not*, for all that, cover the task of explaining what is going on. Richard S. Levy, in the very volume in which the editorial trio's remarks appear, draws a perturbing conclusion. What emerges from these collected essays, Levy notes, is "that the precise role of antisemitic *ideology* in the violence becomes problematical. Was it causal or a casual accompaniment?"¹⁰ "Casual accompaniment"? If it is merely that, then what is the more dispositive explanatory factor than immediate provocation, conflict, opportunity, etc.? Does "structure of belief" sneak in through the back door, affecting overt behaviour in profounder ways than the precipitants and triggers? No one is maintaining that an ancient social imaginary of anti-Judaism is alone the determinant of, say, the Neustettin riots of 1881, via some kind of *longue durée* black magic, but the most archival-prone, present-minded scholar cannot fail to be aware of influencing elements that are unbeknownst to the carriers and other actors he is studying.

Scholars of modern antisemitism conclude that anti-Jewish violence is best limed as the expression of resentment and rage on the part of an aggrieved population which feels that its traditional and legitimate "moral economy" (to use E. P. Thompson's concept)¹¹ has been violated by the arrival or, more likely, by the promotion, of Jews in some evident social, economic, political way. In worst case scenarios, the moral economy is seen to have been violated by the guardians of the State itself, who are accused of being in cahoots with "the Jew," of having been corrupted by him, of having been "Jewified" or "Judaised."

We may ask—we indeed *must* ask: just what is this disrupted "moral economy" that underlies anger against Jews for positions being opened up for them in, say, the universities or the civil administration, or for the beneficent socio-economic effects on Jews of their political emancipation? It turns out to be nothing new, nothing stated in the formal ideology of *Antisemitismus*. Rather, the committed violation is against something unspoken: viz., the "proper ordering" of Jews (i.e., behind Christians) in society. But that is a very old concept indeed. You will find the same situation reiterated by Maya Soifer Irish in her book on Jewish-Christian relations in medieval Old (northern) Castile.¹² Here, in fascinating detail, one encounters the same

arrangements of socio-economic precipitants and triggers, causing the same sorts of exclusionary violence due to disrupted moral economy, which the contributors to *Exclusionary Violence* are often concerned with—to wit, “those uppity Jews, who do they think they are? They’re ‘Jews,’ for Christ’s sake.” Time and again, we see purely economic triggers, social precipitants, and, decisively, religious preconditions and presuppositions whose presence preclude any easy solution to the apparent problems.

Exclusionary violence against Jews in fact poses a serious problem for the modern historian because it’s so little rational—or modern. Tim Buchen’s and Daniel Unowsky’s analyses of the vast riots against the Jews in Habsburg Galicia, in the summer of 1898¹³ examine the essential role of fantastic rumour (often religion-based) in triggering these events—events which stand in stark contrast to other well-known forms of modern violence—e.g., anti-*Gastarbeiter* uprisings, brutal political campaigns, State-inspired political justice, etc.—all of it more rational and less implicitly religious than the anti-Jewish violence. The role of rumour was to limit any sense of personal responsibility or guilt on the part of the rioters. Buchen, citing Donald Horowitz, argues that rumour mobilised young Polish or Ukrainian men for what was, in effect, a “pick up game” of basketball, rather than formal participation in a plot. That is, it was culturally-learned, something “you just knew.”

The point being: the “hard” socio-economic reasons were in many ways pretexts to an underlying disposition against Jews because they were Jews. Buchen shows that in gathering members for this “pick up riot”—occurring most readily on religious holidays or Sundays—one could not represent the project as profitable nor permit himself to think about or debate its morality. There was a sense that the opportunity had to be fleetingly seized and quickly executed, that it might well be dangerous and illegal, but it was morally “great” in some unspecified way, and therefore had nothing to do with vengeance or profit. The rioters, rather, were righting a profound moral imbalance, even if vaguely aware they were also plundering, harming, and violating. This was unethical but it served a higher purpose. In Galicia, the rioters were seized by an “irresistible” sense that the occasion was “God-given,” that it was royalty and church-legitimated, and finally, that it was “morally incumbent” on the rioters to act, for at bottom their violence against Jews was self-evidently justified, it had “nothing to do” with vengeance or profit, but with the righting of a profound moral and spiritual imbalance. In short, rather different from Social Democratic led strikes and worker action, or the violence of political campaigns, all of which, if they had irrational elements, were less historically and religiously deeply determined.

Thus, when scholars like Hoffmann argue that the only role of “medieval [and *a fortiori* ancient] roots” was as tactical political name-calling, intended to shame and defame the rioters—i.e., they “invented a tradition”—it is hard to concur. There are certainly examples of such tactics to be adduced

in the nineteenth-century history of antisemitism, but at the end of the day the Budapest riots attendant on the Tiszaeszlár ritual murder cannot be adequately explained as the merely “political” instrumentalisation of the medieval blood libel. Accusations of Jewish ritual murder had never disappeared in Europe; they were anything but unknown to the masses, even to the non-practising and unbelieving among them. The same could be said for the accusation, “Christ-killer!” Luther’s anti-Jewish views were not re-paraded in the way kilts were invented, or even the way that Czech and other vernaculars were canonised into formal languages. Protestant and Catholic Christianity were very much alive in the late nineteenth century, if not as well off as they had once been, and the various religious accusations against Jews were familiar to vast masses of people, even non-practising ones. “Christ-killers!” whether sincerely or tactically utilised, was no retrieval for the belle époque. The Christian anti-Jewish tradition lived very actively in these hearts, even in those who no longer believed in Christianity. In this connection, see the eye-opening, when not hair-raising, study by the Polish anthropologist, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, which shows the power of the anti-Jewish blood libel, *even in post-Second World War Poland*.¹⁴ If we do not see this, we fail to account for the Tiszaeszlár affair’s shocking power of “interruption” into normal politics, even normal antisemitic politics of that era. It is sadly the case that this huge and violent episode stood in a direct continuity with a very *longue durée*—a fact that the antisemitic agents tacitly counted on for the widespread popular reception of their “presentist” ideological claims and explanations.¹⁵

But the largest problem with overlooking the persistent power of the deep historical roots of antisemitism arises in the matter of fantastical or chimerical accusations and inflections which constantly suffuse nineteenth- and twentieth-century *Antisemitismus* are, indeed, its most definitive characteristic.¹⁶ I am speaking of the well-known phenomenon which see Jews figure not only as social and economic competitors or even racial-cultural Others, but as world-historical enemies—in ways, for example, speaking of the Nazis, that “neither liberalism nor communism, neither Roosevelt nor Stalin” could ever be. Consider the Third Reich Press Office’s declaration in early 1944 that “The Jewish question is the key to world history.”¹⁷ If this example is too Nazi-extreme, then let us go back a generation, to the antisemites of early Weimar and their overarching conclusion that defeat, revolution, and hyper-inflation were due to “the Jews,” the perpetrators of these catastrophes, as part of their apocalyptic conspiracy against all of Christian civilisation.

Ponder this a moment: one of the smaller minorities on the planet is alleged to be responsible for developments of world-historical import: liberalism, capitalism, socialism, trade unions, banking, class, and, withal, international war. Consider the immensity of the claim that “the social question is the Jewish question.” The Polish and French populations, with their armies and governments, were immensely larger and geopolitically more important

than the Jews, yet could *they* have been plausibly blamed for causing “the social question”? The well-hated Catholic Church, *and even the Jesuits* with their vast network of highly educated underminers, could not, either.

What is presupposed by such a claim? Why was “the Jew,” if not always plausibly, then at least familiarly, in people’s eyes, charged with these unique and incendiary roles? Surely *not* because antisemitic ideology made even remotely satisfying “scientific” cases for such nonsense; on the contrary, the antisemites, as scholars agree, were, with increasing frequency, laughed out of court, as 1914 approached.¹⁸ *Bref*, there are background suppositions here that do not enter into play with *any* other minority. Why can only “the Jew” be familiarly seen as the origin of evil in the world, of being the devil’s creature? No amount of archival ferreting for the racial-economic-social-political-cultural precipitants and triggers of “Thoroughly Modern Millie” antisemitism will provide an answer to this question. What is needed, rather, is to recall the importance of the unstated presuppositions and preconditions of the bimillennial anti-Judaism which laid up the stage, the foundation, on which the entire “circus” transpires. Only the deep religious past can explain this curiously non-ideological, non-“scientific” development in antisemitism which sees the “firming up of an imagination of Jews as a menace that demand[s] no proof from experience.”¹⁹

Consider the economic myth of the Jewish usurer, as powerful a modern AND medieval theme as there ever was. No economy can function without lending, but the role of money-lender was forbidden to Christians, so it fell (often, not always) to Jews to perform this critical task—a task not dissimilar, as Giacomo Todeschini notes, to the role which the *Shabbos goy* plays for Jews. But with a telling difference: the *Shabbos goy* is paid and appreciated, while the Jewish “usurer”—though materially far more important and socially far more ubiquitous—is unacknowledged and attacked. The borrower receives what he badly needs, but instead of being grateful, he reviles the provider. To refer, in this context, to the first century as the Ur-Problem of Christianity’s undeclared dependence on Judaism for its initial theological identity and self-presentation is not to stretch a point. As distasteful or disconcerting as it may sometimes feel to scholars eager to record every wrinkle of change over time, historians are sometimes obliged to note continuities.²⁰

Bref, the social imaginary of anti-Judaism never goes away despite the claims of the “new” antisemites as David Nirenberg shows in his magisterial analysis, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*. One will not understand either their successes or their failures unless we see that anti-Judaism’s deep past offers a special social understanding and historical dimension which make antisemitism different from other ideologies of prejudice in retaining a special relation to religion, even in cases of overtly anticlerical and outspokenly secular racial antisemites. When a Dühring or a Fritsch maintain loudly that “race, not religion, is the key,” why is it they then follow this up with “the only way to fight ‘the Jew’ is with another, greater spiritual

conviction" (Dühring's words, often cited by Fritsch). This is a wild contradiction, unless one keeps firmly in mind both the religious nature of the question and the *longue durée*.

In conclusion, the discursive deployments and political offers of the new *Antisemitismus* are not the same things as the social understanding they implicitly depended on and the popular reception they actually received. How they were "heard" constitutes another research topos from what its proponents intended it to look like. The complex truth of the matter is that in political antisemitism, we always encounter the omnipresent, strong, but subtle (often semi-conscious) role influence of a trinity of unstated spiritual elements: institutional religion, to be sure—and often, especially in the Habsburg realm and French Republic; *le religieux* in the diffuse, or "metabolised," sense; and rogue religiosity, in the motives of individual antisemites. These dimensions may be shown to have suffused the statements and conflicts of "ordinary" political, economic, social, cultural, and racial antisemitism. They carried the "new" antisemitic message to the deepest levels of understanding and emotion in populations that have been bathed in Christianity for centuries. As David Nirenberg has analysed the *imaginaire social* of anti-Judaism, what needs still to be done is to see where and how anti-Judaism joins and underlies political antisemitism.

I might add, as a kind of negative proof of my position, that the umbilical cord of piano wire securing antisemitism to religion may also be adduced to explain political antisemitism's lack of broad public success in the late nineteenth century, down to 1914. Helmut Berding notes the difficulty encountered by many trade unions of lower-middle-class white-collar workers in maintaining an antisemitic presence,²¹ but he does not speculate why this was so. I suggest that it might have had at least in part to do with the fact that without systematic State support of the new ideology, antisemitism's chimerical accusations became, over time, too obviously "religious" for a self-proclaimed secular age. Emotional, highly spiritualised Pan-Germanism and *völkisch* nationalism were, by comparison, more congenial because they did not grow directly from Jesse's stem, as antisemitism did—and therefore did not feel obliged to hide the religious root, and, in failing to do so, be caught out.

In sum, I am advocating that modernists follow Clifford Geertz's advice and adopt a hermeneutical (interpretive) approach to our subject along with the solid empirical one that all historians of course depend upon. The full understanding of antisemitism requires not only the excavation of more evidence about specific conflicts, but reflection on the "webs of significance" in which man is "suspended" and which "he himself has spun" over a very long period of time.

Modern antisemitism might best be seen as a set of charges, conflicts and arguments taking place, as it were, on the broad and busy flatbed of a large lily pad, pullulating with parasitic life, both visible and invisible. Below the surface of the pad, a root weaves its long and serpentine way down through

fathoms, to the bottom of a deep lake. That bottom—to the indifference or possibly surprise and indignation of the vermin fulminating on the lily pad’s surface—is religion, at its oldest.

I am hardly suggesting a return to Heinrich von Coudenhove-Kalergi’s thesis which holds that the essence of modern antisemitism amounts to nothing but rather hoary fanatical religious hatred.²² Indeed, thanks to Maya Soifer Irish and to innumerable other medievalists before her, we know that even medieval Jew-hatred was anything but “purely religious,” and had instead “uncanny similarities with modern violence.”²³ The socio-economic factors leading to medieval anti-Jewish violence is a staple of the field: all recent studies about medieval pogroms, blood libels, or riots, see them as a combination of general religious and specific local economic and political reasons. I am saying that our modern notion of “the social,” as we have inherited it from the Frankfurt School, is indeed the venue of antisemitism, but the latter’s insertion therein cannot be adequately palpated by a scholar who ignores the “barbarous fury” that cannot only be explained by the stated parameters of the actors.²⁴ Or, as Alon Confino puts it, “I do not believe [. . .] that centuries of antisemitism produced the Holocaust. But I do believe that the Holocaust cannot be explained without the deep tradition of anti-Judaism.”²⁵

I have suggested that an arc spanning a wide gamut from, at the one extreme, overt anti-Judaism in an ecclesiastical catechism to, at the other extreme, the fervent spirituality in Dühring’s highly emotive and spiritual reflections on race, via—in the middle of the spectrum—the rogue religiosity of a Hermann Ahlwardt or the “metabolised religion” of German, Austrian, or French society’s *Alltagsgeschichte* may each come into play, and often does. Truth be told, despite Salo Baron’s well-taken but perhaps overly influential attack on the lachrymose theory of Jewish history—and it is certainly true that the history of the Jews cannot and should not be reduced to tears—*ewiger Judenbass* is indeed an *imaginaire social* of Christian, and post-Christian, society.²⁶

Notes

1. For a recent take, see Caspar Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism: An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Ian Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); for a classic, see Joseph Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).
2. See, for example, Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: Une histoire politique de la religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985); Olivier Roy, *La sainte ignorance: Le temps de la religion sans culture* (Paris: Seuil, 2013).
3. David Kertzer, *The Popes against the Jews: The Vatican’s Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Vintage, 2002); Olaf Blaschke, *Offenders or Victims? German Jews and the Causes of Modern Catholic Antisemitism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

4. Thus, Hitler in 1919: “Antisemitism as a political movement must not obey any emotional or religious impulses; it must be founded on facts, the first one of which is that the Jews are a race, not a religion.” Cited in Thomas Weber, *Hitler's First War: Adolf Hitler, the Men of the List Regiment, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 246.
5. On the topic of antisemitism's not being an “ideology like the others,” see Hillel J. Kieval, “Afterword: European Antisemitism—the Search for a Pattern,” in *Sites of European Antisemitism in the Age of Mass Politics*, ed. Robert Nemes and Daniel Unowsky (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2014), 255–63.
6. Some recent examples: Tim Buchen, *Antisemitismus in Galizien: Agitation, Gewalt und Politik in der Habsburgermonarchie um 1900* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2012); Marija Vulesica, *Die Formierung des politischen Antisemitismus in den Kronländern Kroatien und Slawonien 1879–1906* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2012); Klaus Richter, *Antisemitismus in Litauen: Christen, Juden und die “Emanzipation” der Bauern (1889–1914)* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2013); Manfred Hettling, Michael G. Müller, and Guido Hausmann, eds., *Die “Judenfrage”: Ein europäisches Phänomen?* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2013); René Moehrl, *Judenverfolgung in Triest während des Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus 1922–1945* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2014); Andreas Reinke et al., eds., *Die “Judenfrage” in Ostmitteleuropa: Historische Pfade und politisch-soziale Konstellationen* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2015); Iulia Onac, *Antisemitismus in Rumänien 1879–1914* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2010); Christoph Leiska, *Jüdische Integration und Antisemitismus in Skandinavien: Kopenhagen und Göteborg 1870–1917* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2014); Ulrich Wyrwa, *Gesellschaftliche Konfliktfelder und die Entstehung des Antisemitismus: Das Deutsche Kaiserreich und das Liberale Italien im Vergleich* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2016).
7. Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, and Helmut Walser Smith, “Introduction,” in *Exclusionary Violence, Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History*, ed. Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, and Helmut Walser Smith (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 7.
8. David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 296.
9. The classic exposition of the levels of causality—from presuppositions and preconditions to precipitants and triggers is available in Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1994), first published in 1972.
10. Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution*, 296.
11. E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 76–136.
12. Maya Soifer Irish, *Jews and Christians in Medieval Northern Castile: Tradition, Coexistence, and Change* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016).
13. Buchen, *Antisemitismus in Galizien*, see especially Part II: “Gewalt”; Daniel Unowsky, “Local Violence, Regional Politics, and State Crisis: The 1898 Anti-Jewish Riots in Habsburg Galicia,” in *Sites of European Antisemitism in the Age of Mass Politics*, ed. Robert Nemes and Daniel Unowsky (Lebanon: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 13–35.
14. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Légendes du sang: Pour une anthropologie de l'antisémitisme chrétien* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2015). See also the essays on blood libel by Tokarska-Bakir, Miriamne Ara Krummel, Miri Rubin, and Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß in this volume.

15. I deal with this in detail in the chapter on Hungary in my forthcoming book on comparative political antisemitism: Germany, Austria-Hungary, and France, 1770–1920.
16. Recall that chimera is the term Gavin Langmuir uses to describe those charges levelled against Jews which leap into the fanciful and phantasmagorical in *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and *History, Religion and Antisemitism*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
17. Quotations are from Alon Confino, *A World without Jews: The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 194.
18. See the diminution of political antisemitism in Italy and Germany prior to 1914: Ulrich Wyrwa, *Gesellschaftliche Konfliktfelder und die Entstehung des Antisemitismus: Das deutsche Kaiserreich und das liberale Italien im Vergleich* (Berlin: Metropolis, 2015).
19. Confino, *A World without Jews*, 86. Precisely what Napoleon I claimed he was trying to do with the Infamous Decrees of 1808 against the Jews of Alsace was to treat just socio-economic problems, nothing “ideological” or religious. Yet some contemporaries and two centuries of historiography suggest otherwise: i.e., there was a deeper animus at work in the Decrees than the abuses by some Jewish money-lenders. In short, when historians choose to be, they are well aware of the role of underlying *longue durée* anti-Judiasm in the formulation of contemporary charges. For an introduction to this question, see Steven Englund, “Napoléon et les Juifs: deux cent ans d’ambiguïté et d’ambivalence,” *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, December 2008, 45–60.
20. Giacomo Todeschini: “the economic arrival of the religious Jew” does not make the religious part of the problem go away even as the attack focuses on the “economic” (because the Jews’ success has upset gentile expectations about “proper ordering”). *La ricchezza degli ebrei: Merci e denaro nella riflessione ebraica e nella definizione cristiana dell’usura alla fine del Medioevo* (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull’alto Medioevo, 1989), 6. For an explication of the First Century as the Ur-Problem, see Englund, forthcoming, ch. 1.
21. Heinrich von Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Moderner Antisemitismus in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1988), 76.
22. Heinrich von Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Das Wesen des Antisemitismus* (Berlin: Calvary, 1901). Antisemitism, on this author’s telling, came into existence when Christianity (and Islam, for that matter) took up the intolerant fanaticism of Judaism and turned it against the Jews. He urged liberal Christians and Jews to ally in protecting religion as such, against the emerging menace of secularism.
23. Noted in her discussion at the Stockholm meeting.
24. Reinhard Rürup, “The European Revolutions of 1848 and Jewish Emancipation,” in *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, ed. Werner E. Mosse, Arnold Paucker, and Reinhard Rürup (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981), 1–54 (here 16). For his part, Richard Levy writes, the German “parliamentary antisemites were as unaware or as unwilling to admit the strong irrational appeal of anti-Semitism as the members of the [anti-antisemitic] Abwehr Verein were.” *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 152.
25. Confino, *A World without Jews*, 239.
26. For a post-religious “religious” take on the Jews and Judaism, see the fascinating work by Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

3 The Making of Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century Europe as an Invention of Tradition

Ulrich Wyrwa

In 1928, the young scholar Salo Baron launched a sharp critique of what, at the time, was the dominant emancipationist narrative of Jewish history.¹ Soon thereafter, Baron received the first chair for Jewish history at a state university. In 1937, he published the first of what would be an eighteen-volume social and religious history of the Jews from antiquity to the mid-seventeenth century.² In the subtitle of his early essay, he posed a provocative question: “Shall We Revise the Traditional View?” According to the traditional view, Baron explained, Jews had lived for centuries “in a state of extreme wretchedness under medieval conditions, subject to incessant persecution and violence.”³ Further, this view held that this miserable subjugation had come to an end with the age of emancipation. Baron was critical of the Jewish historiography advanced by leading figures, such as Heinrich Graetz, Martin Philippon, and Simon Dubnow. For all of them, Baron asserted, emancipation “was the dawn of a new day after a nightmare of the deepest horror.”⁴

In his brief essay, Baron focused on two factors. First, the assertion that “the Jews did not have ‘equal rights,’” to which Baron responded by pointing out “that there was no such thing then as ‘equal rights.’” To the contrary, “the status of the Jews in the Middle Ages implied certain privileges which they no longer have under the modern state [. . .]; the Jewish community enjoyed full internal autonomy.” The existence of the Ghetto was key to the “traditional” view. Baron responds to this established narrative by pointing out that “the Ghetto grew up voluntarily as a result of the Jewish self-government, and it was only in a later development that the public law interfered and made it a legal compulsion for all Jews to live in a secluded district.” Summing up, Baron states: “The Jew, indeed, had in effect a kind of territory and state of his own throughout the Middle Ages.”⁵

Besides the Ghetto, the “terror of the Inquisition” played a pivotal role in the descriptions of medieval Jewry. “Its horrors have been fully portrayed,” but it “had no jurisdiction over professing Jews,” Baron insisted. To the contrary, Jews “had virtual immunity from [. . .] the operations” of the Inquisition.

Baron further argues that not even “actual events”—“persecutions, riots, pogroms, monetary extortion”—served to diminish the legal privileges afforded Jews in the Middle Ages. Finally, he concludes that it is unquestionably “time to break with the lachrymose theory of pre-Revolutionary woe.”⁶

At the same time as Salo Baron was proposing a new perspective on medieval Jewish history, at the University of Vienna, the young Jewish historian Lucie Varga,⁷ who had studied general medieval European history and would later act as Lucien Febvre’s assistant in Paris, submitted her dissertation about the concept of the “dark” Middle Ages.⁸ In her introduction, she pointed out that catchphrases like the “dark Middle Ages” are culturally and historically loaded. This expression, Varga noted, is primarily associated with the alleged spiritual terror, atrocious superstition and religious fanaticism of the Middle Ages. In her dissertation, Varga expressed the hope of combating the thoughtless persistence of this expression.

Her hopes proved in vain; despite all of the atrocities of the twentieth century, this metaphor for the medieval period remains intact,⁹ and despite all the evidence to the contrary provided by medievalists,¹⁰ it continues to hold sway over public perception. Even more to the point, in spite of the persecution and the terror delivered onto Jews in Nazi Germany, the description of the medieval period as the “dark ages” for Jews, to once more draw upon Salo Baron, continues to dominate Jewish historiography as well.¹¹

Salo Baron advanced a critique of the narrative of Jewish emancipation that went against the grain. Working with his anti-lachrymose understanding of medieval Jewish history, this paper will challenge both the narrative of antisemitism as the “longest hatred”¹² and the perception of antisemitism as an eternal phenomenon within the Western tradition.¹³

We will begin with a brief overview of the early intellectual reactions to antisemitism among both European Jews and non-Jews to see how this new phenomenon was interpreted by contemporary observers. This will be followed by a discussion of the way in which some aspects of the antisemitic language draw upon medieval motifs.

I

The way in which both Jewish and non-Jewish contemporary observers perceived the emancipation and progress of Jews is reflected in the fundamental shock they felt at the sudden and unexpected eruption of violence against Jews in the early nineteenth century. Eyewitnesses perceived the outbreak of the 1819 Hep-Hep Riots¹⁴ as a rebirth of medieval atrocities. Some of them even interpreted the expression Hep erroneously to be a return to the cry of the crusaders as they entered Jerusalem: “Hierosolyma est perdita” (Jerusalem is lost).¹⁵ In any case, the idea that the Hep-Hep Riots marked a return of medieval horror was widespread, even among Jewish observers.

For example, in his history of the Jews, Heinrich Graetz wrote: “With the cry of ‘Hep, hep!’ against the Jews, the Middle Ages revived again like a jeering ghost.”¹⁶ He added that once the Hep-Hep violence spread across Germany, “no feature of the persecution of the Jews of the Middle Ages might be wanting.”¹⁷

The rapid increase in political and economic change in the final third of the nineteenth century created a general feeling of unease among the population, spurring a new hatred of Jews. In 1879, this public sentiment gave rise to the new term “antisemitism.”¹⁸ Once again, Jewish and non-Jewish observers alike primarily interpreted this outbreak of hostility toward Jews as a rebirth of medieval hatred. When leading German antisemites launched a petition campaign in August 1880,¹⁹ the French newspaper *Le Petit Parisien* saw it as the return of the popular clamour of the Middle Ages.²⁰ British newspapers like the *Times* adopted this diction when they reported about the situation in Germany in November 1880: “During the last few months the newspapers have recorded insults and acts of violence” towards Jews “throughout Germany which would compare in some instances with the indignities offered them in the Middle Ages.”²¹ On the occasion of the Tiszaeszlár ritual murder accusation, the British-Jewish author Joseph Jacobs described in the *Jewish Chronicle* the medieval origins of the blood libel.²² In 1892, the Austrian Jewish newspaper *Freies Blatt: Organ zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* characterised antisemitism as a kind of medieval fanaticism.²³ Striking a combative stance in 1899, the Bulgarian Jewish newspaper *Човешки права* (*Čoveški prava*, Human Rights) declared its intent to prevent a return to the Middle Ages.²⁴ When faced with an outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in Kishinev (Chişinău) in 1903, the Italian rabbi, Flaminio Servi, also spoke of “a horror like in the Middle Ages.”²⁵

After the term antisemitism was coined, and immediately following the first wave of antisemitic agitation in Germany, the metaphor of a rebirth of the medieval hostility toward Jews gained entrance into the European public sphere. In this light, the German Jewish newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* reported from Brussels that the French newspaper *Gazette*, widely read in Belgium, had described the antisemitic agitation in Germany as worthy of the Middle Ages.²⁶

While both Jewish and non-Jewish contemporary observers labelled antisemitism as the rebirth of an old medieval hatred of Jews, this assertion was not based on meaningful analysis, but rather was an expression of their own worldview and their understanding of historical progress. In keeping with this narrative, in Berlin in 1901, the Christian author Heinrich Coudenhove-Kalergi published the first comprehensive presentation of the history of antisemitism,²⁷ treating antisemitism as a pathological phenomenon that had to be seen first and foremost as an expression of religious hatred. Describing the various ways in which Jews were persecuted in the Middle Ages, primarily at the hands of the Church, he further asserted that a process that had begun in ancient times and continued through the Middle Ages was now feeding modern antisemitism in its racial form.

There were, however, contemporary witnesses who accurately analysed the novel nature of this phenomenon. In 1896, the archivist and historian Georg Winter published a study on antisemitism in Germany from a cultural-historical and socio-political perspective and established that the then current antisemitism differed in one distinct way from the persecution of the Jews in earlier centuries.²⁸ “Formerly, Jews had been persecuted because of their religion, but today it is no longer possible to stage a huge popular movement under this banner. The religious motive, therefore, could not be used anymore.”²⁹

One of the first comprehensive contemporary historical examinations of antisemitism was published by the Jewish historian Martin Philippson³⁰—an author whom Salo Baron erroneously identifies as a representative of the lachrymose narrative tradition.³¹ Philippson, a reputed historian, arrived at the specific conclusion that antisemitism had nothing to do with medieval religious hatred. He observed that the clarion call for antisemitism had come from Pope Pius IX in the early 1870s, when he attacked Jews first for being journalists, as well as disparaging Jews for being solely devoted to making money. This, according to Philippson, “was the hour of the birth of modern antisemitism.”³²

With the advent of scholarly research into antisemitism, an increasingly precise understanding of its particular characteristics gradually emerged, underscoring differences from religious hatred and the medieval persecution of the Jews. For example, in 1926, the Jewish social scientist and philosopher Julius Goldstein provided an analysis of the new *völkisch* antisemitism, presenting the emergence of antisemitism in the nineteenth century as an expression of bourgeois dialectics, with an earlier liberalism undergoing a transformation into conservatism during the second half of the century.³³ For Goldstein, antisemitism was primarily an expression of the German middle class’s loathing for its own democratic and liberal past.

These early historical studies of antisemitism challenged the initial interpretation of this phenomenon as a rebirth of medieval and religious hatred of Jews. They had gradually come to a clearer understanding of the specific features and the precise historical context of this new phenomenon of antisemitism. It was, in fact, the outcome of social and political upheaval resulting from the far-reaching transformation of society and everyday life in the nineteenth-century age of industrialisation, commercialisation, urbanisation, and the politicisation in the Western World.³⁴

Nevertheless, one can observe in the development of scholarly research into antisemitism something like the movement of a pendulum, swinging from interpretations focused on religion to interpretations with a secular approach—and back again. Shortly before the First World War, Heinrich Coudenhove-Kalergi’s religious interpretation was replaced by Martin Philippson’s social and historical interpretation, supplemented during the interwar period by Julius Goldstein’s political and cultural assessment of the then nascent *völkisch* antisemitism. After Auschwitz, the pendulum swung back to a theological perspective, with an emphasis on the long historical

view³⁵—for example, the first volume of Léon Poliakov’s extensive *Histoire de l’antisémitisme* was published in the mid-1950s.³⁶ Non-Jewish authors, Michael Müller-Claudius among them, placed an emphasis on the religious roots of antisemitism,³⁷ and in his book published in 1963, the Reverend James Parkes wrote, “there is no break in the line which leads from the beginning of the denigration of Judaism in the formative period of Christian history [. . .] through the horrors of the Middle Ages, to the Death Camps of Hitler in our own day.”³⁸

In the 1970s, as part of the trend toward social research and social history, this religious approach was once again replaced by a socio-historical method; Reinhard Rürup and Werner Jochmann were two of the most influential German historians involved in this development.³⁹ It was in this context that the Israeli historian Uriel Tal would recall that the leading nineteenth-century German antisemites “understood anti-Semitism not simply in terms of a rejection of Jews and Judaism, but also as a critique, and even a negation of Christianity and religion in general.”⁴⁰ In fact, according to Christhard Hoffmann, in historically assessing the relationship between Christian anti-Judaism and modern antisemitic hatred, the religious tradition of hostility toward Jews is not relevant.⁴¹

In recent years, as part of a generalised resurgence of religion in public discourse,⁴² there has been a renewed interest in a religious interpretation. Michael Ley’s work reflects this new religious turn,⁴³ and more recently David Nirenberg has presented anti-Judaism as a Western tradition, underlining the religious roots and elaborating the medieval contributions.⁴⁴ Overestimating the importance of the continuity of anti-Jewish stereotypes and prejudices leads him to ignore their eclectic character. Antisemites have taken up older anti-Jewish motifs and adapted them to their own antisemitic obsessions, but there has been no continuity of specific motifs or precise ideas over time. Furthermore, Nirenberg disregards the fact that the same issue does not necessarily mean the same thing in different historical contexts.

Nevertheless, the debate regarding the opposing interpretations of the roots of antisemitism is not ending any time soon, and this will certainly not be the last scholarly swing of the pendulum.⁴⁵ Beyond Nirenberg’s overall perspective and the recent resurgence of religion, the thesis that antisemitism must be seen as a result of a religious conflict is far more alleged than substantially proven by the sources. To answer the question of the relationship between Christian-religious and secular motifs in the emergence of antisemitism, it seems necessary to go back to the sources.⁴⁶

II

Four linguistic and practical antisemitic motifs are central to any discussion of the medieval religious roots of nineteenth-century antisemitism: first, the ritual murder accusation; second, the accusation of well-poisoning; third, the medieval expulsions, and fourth, the accusation of usury.