



Middlebury Institute of  
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*Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism*

# The Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism

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## Holy Hate: Religious Antisemitism's History and Contemporary Political Influence

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***Author’s Note:** Anti-Jewish prejudice, hostility, perceptions, stereotypes, and conspiracy theories have a millennia-old history predominantly rooted in religious mythology, theological dogma, and the philosophies and polemics based upon them. While today we call this prejudice antisemitism—a term devised by 19<sup>th</sup> century German nationalists who sought to ground their hatred in the pseudoscientific sophistry of opposition to a scientific, Jewish “Semitism” as a means of legitimization and differentiation from earlier religiously-oriented anti-Jewish bigotry—anti-Jewish prejudice has been described using various labels throughout history, and the term antisemitism has distinctly modern connotations. Nevertheless, for the purpose of the clarity of this report, the term antisemitism will be used as the general label for anti-Jewish conspiracies and beliefs grounded in negative stereotypes, perceptions, and claims about Jewish people, since this is the modern terminology used in common parlance.*

## Introduction

In recent years antisemitic conspiracy theories have played a significant factor in the large-scale radicalization of right-wing politics into outright fascism and religious nationalism, as well as contributing to the surge in militant accelerationism among the extreme right. With the rise of more overtly fascist worldviews from the political right, even the cynical “philosemitic” pretense of Christian Zionism has given way to the return of the explicit antisemitism that has defined the last two thousand years. As the [Holocaust](#) fades from living memory, the collective revulsion at its grisly horrors has been slowly eroded by the determined thrust of an assemblage of ethnic, racial, and religious nationalisms that constitute a major political force around the world. Thus, the crude and violent antisemitic invective of yesteryear returns with a fresh coat of paint in contemporary right-wing mass movements.

Historically, antisemitic conspiracy theories have provided a centralizing framework for other racist conspiracy theories (e.g., *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the Great Replacement) and have contributed to violent manifestations of Christian nationalism during the pogroms and within the framework of the Holocaust. The phrase “never forget” is frequently invoked in reference to the pernicious legacy of the Holocaust that hangs over its survivors and descendants—but forget the world

has, particularly when it comes to the wider lessons of the history of antisemitism in religion, culture, and politics. Consequently, we are ushering in a new era defined by the crimes, mistakes, and prejudices of the past. As written in Kohelet: What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

The presence of antisemitism in political discourse exists across the world and predates contemporary political conceptions and movements. Thus, to tackle holistically and truly understand the depth and pervasiveness of the problem, the meanings behind certain symbols and tropes that might not be well-understood as contributing to radicalization into hatred and violence, and to provide reference points for why and how certain assumptions came to exist and how they have manifested throughout history, we must turn to the history of antisemitism. This report will attempt to lay out the particularities and nuances of antisemitic beliefs that originate in religious movements, their histories, and how they continue to influence and express themselves through political movements today.

The development of religious antisemitism was shaped by negative pagan attitudes towards Jews in pre-Christian classical antiquity being subsumed into and exacerbated within the early church's theology, mythology, rhetoric, politics, and the construction of the New Testament of the Christian Bible itself. Seeking to differentiate themselves from Jews while ingratiating themselves with the initially hostile Roman Empire, many early Christians deployed antisemitic conspiracy theories and tropes that were already familiar within the societies they lived in. These conspiracy theories and negative perceptions that allege an ingrained corrosive, impure, diseased, impious, and scheming Jewish character that positions them as the primary antagonists against god and man alike, along with the deadly conspiracy theory of blood libel that developed in Medieval Europe—the ritual murder and consumption of non-Jews as a Jewish reenactment of the crucifixion of Jesus—were combined with the supersessionist belief of replacement theology and the charge of deicide. This religiously-motivated bigotry later had a direct and profound influence on the economic, nationalist, and racial antisemitism in the Western world, which in turn influenced religious antisemitism in a self-reinforcing feedback

loop. In no uncertain terms, this is not to say that Christians as people are inherently antisemitic—this could not be further from the truth—though antisemitism, however, has a long and institutionally rooted history within these religious traditions and their histories. Antisemitism thusly functions as the nexus of radical religious and political ideologies, necessitating familiarity with the history, nuances, and dangers of antisemitism if one is to understand the form, substance, and transmission of anti-democratic extremism today, especially and particularly on the political right.

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## Pagans and Jews in Classical Antiquity

While the origins of religious antisemitism are primarily rooted in the early Christian church, earlier pagan attitudes against Jews in the Ptolemaic Kingdom played a key role in the development of antisemitic conspiracy theories. The belief that Jews are an impure, impious, and nefarious other became prevalent in classical Greco-Roman antiquity. In his historical work *Against Apion*, 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman-Jewish military leader and historian Flavius Josephus writes: “The Egyptians began the slanders against us (Gilad 2018, Nirenberg 2013).” In the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, a Jewish garrison outpost was established with the Egyptians at Elephantine to defend against a Nubian invasion, and a Jewish temple where animal sacrifices were carried out was built there to serve their religious needs. The Persian Empire conquered Egypt in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and in the year 425 BCE Egypt staged a failed uprising against Persia during the transition of power from King Artaxerxes I to Darius II, a rebellion in which the Elephantine Jews did not participate. Viewing the Jews as disloyal, in league with their Persian oppressors, and objecting to the Jewish Passover observance of the sacrifice of a lamb, being an animal they held as sacred, the Egyptians destroyed the Jewish temple and community at Elephantine in 410 BCE. Moreover, the Egyptians considered the holiday’s connection to the exodus narrative from Jewish scripture as factual, historic defeat of their gods and country, despite the biblical exodus being regarded by scholars today as having little historical basis (Nirenberg 2013). Consequently, we see the beginning of the emergence of anti-Jewish attitudes in Egypt that was furthered by Greek historian Hecataeus in his 310 BCE work *Aegyptiaca*, in which he recounts the exodus narrative through an anti-Jewish polemic that castigates Jewish monotheism and disbelief in the concept of a god in human form, in addition to attributing to Moses the development of Judaism as “an unsocial and intolerant mode of life (Nirenberg 2013).” A century later during the reign of Greek pharaoh Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Manetho, an Egyptian priest of Heliopolis, likewise recounted the exodus narrative as the origin of the Jewish people while further claiming the the Jews are a nation of unclean lepers loyal only to themselves, disdainful and disbelieving of Egyptian gods, and further charging Jews in toto with the destruction and desecration of Egypt. Translations into Greek of the Book of Esther also altered the text to describe Jews as the enemy of mankind and all gods, necessitating utter destruction

in a paradigm of a redemptive and purifying violence that still today characterizes extreme anti-Jewish politics (Nirenberg 2013).

These ancient motifs that are recognizable in our contemporary politics began to proliferate in Egypt during classical antiquity and quoted as factual descriptions of Jewish people by several pagan writers of that time, each framing the narrative in terms of a malignant Jewish character and corrosive influence on the Egyptian national body. Such views spread throughout the region and were used as justification for the destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and outlawing of Judaism by Hellenistic Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168 BCE and in calls to “wipe out completely the race of the Jews” by the advisors of Antiochus VII Sidetes during his 134 BCE conquest of Jerusalem (Nirenberg 2013). These antisemitic narratives in Egypt were largely cultivated by the ruling Greek class as a means of controlling the subjugated native Egyptians, conveniently redirecting their ire by giving certain Jews more privileges than Egyptians in some respects while simultaneously collectively scapegoating Jews—themselves non-citizens—as a hostile foreign out-group responsible for the Egyptians’ oppression, a model that was later imitated in European Christendom (Nirenberg 2013).

The pagan influence on the later development of antisemitism in Christian doctrine and policy in the Roman Empire is also seen in Egypt following their subjugation to Roman rule in 30 BCE. Among the histories recounted as “The Acts of Alexandrine Martyrs” are stories that present the sympathetic, heroic Greek citizens as speaking truth to Roman power, and characterizing that tyrannical power as either Jewish or intrinsically corrupted by the mere presence of Jews, real or imagined. Examples of such are the execution of Isodorus of Alexandria for accusing the Roman emperor Claudius of defending the Jewish king of Judea, Herod Agrippa, because he, Claudius, is “the cast off son of the Jewess Salome,” and the Alexandrine delegate Hermaiscus accusing the emperor Trajan of being corrupted by his “Privy Council filled with impious Jews,” with both lacking any factual basis (Nirenberg 2013). Following the passage of King Agrippa through Alexandria on his way to Judea, the

local Greek population rioted in protest, looting Jewish homes and shops, murdering Jews by burning them or dragging them to death, and forcing the Jewish population into what they referred to as the city's "Jewish ghetto." In the wake of the riot, two delegations were sent to Rome, one being headed by Philo of Alexandria, a wealthy and influential author of biblical commentaries that was one of the few Jews in possession of citizenship, and the other led by the aforementioned Apion referenced by Josephus; a noted Homeric scholar, historian of Egypt, and immigrant to Alexandria known for authoring polemical writings against Jews. Apion's delegation enjoined the Roman emperor Caligula from granting Jews citizenship and to ensure the preclusion of Jewish self-rule, even if devolved. What makes Apion a figure of particular interest in the development of religious antisemitism, however, is his accusation in one of his antisemitic treatises that Jews kidnap a Greek every year in order to ritually murder and consume them while declaring their hostility to all non-Jewish peoples, the Greeks above all (Nirenberg 2013). Such claims form the early basis of what is known as blood libel, a particular and pernicious antisemitic conspiracy theory that has been employed to deadly effect from the Middle Ages until today, notably in the QAnon movement, that alleges the Jewish ritual murder and consumption of non-Jews, particularly children, as a reenactment of Jesus's crucifixion. Upon gaining audience with Caligula, the Jewish delegation was greeted by the emperor with derision characterized by antisemitic religious attitudes we would find familiar to us today: "Are you the god-haters who do not believe me to be a god, a god acknowledged by all the other nations but not to be named by you?" Caligula was assassinated by conspiratorial elements in his government before coming to a final decision, but his successor, Claudius, barred Jews from citizenship while upholding their traditional political rights (Nirenberg 2013).

Later, in 66 CE, while meeting to select delegates to Rome, a crowd of Alexandrine Greeks spotted three Jews in their midst, accused them of being spies and enemies, and burned them to death. In the ensuing riot, Greeks and Roman soldiers entered the Jewish ghetto and slaughtered fifty thousand Jews. In 115 CE, claiming an invasion of the city by "impious Jews," the Alexandrines carried out the total destruction of the Jewish community of Alexandria and destroyed all monuments to Jewish life



there, with most Alexandrine Jews fleeing the murderous violence to elsewhere in North Africa and Rome (Nirenberg 2013). These events happened concurrently with the Jewish uprisings against Roman rule in Judea that resulted in genocide, the brutal suppression and outlawing of Jewish practice, the banning Jews from Jerusalem, and the global displacement of the Jewish people into a primarily diasporic existence. The destruction of the Jewish temple, subjugation of the Jewish people, and the arrival of masses of Jewish slaves and refugees to the shores of Europe was memorialized on the Arch of Titus that stands in Rome today, along with the famed Colosseum funded with the spoils of stolen Jewish wealth and constructed by imported Jewish slaves. These interlinked events, attitudes, policies, and conspiracy theories framing Jews as the negative other laid the groundwork for their eventual development, institutionalization, and global dissemination by Christianity as a political power and institution, and constitutes a profound and direct influence on major historical events, political developments, and ubiquitous attitudes that shape our world today.

## Jews and the Early Christian Church

A crucial aspect in the development of antisemitism in Christianity and the central role it has played within Christian theology, culture, and the secular societies and political movements that it produced, is the political needs of early Christianity within its socio-political context of the 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Roman Empire. This process is primarily reflected in the New Testament scriptures of the Christian Bible. The earliest works in the Christian New Testament canon are themselves dated to decades after the death of Jesus, written by anonymous authors who did not personally know Jesus, in a language that he likely did not speak, and in places he likely never walked. Within this temporal and geographic frame, Christians were struggling to establish themselves within a Roman Empire that was hostile to them, even more hostile to Christianity than it was to Judaism. Jews, themselves persecuted, were nonetheless a legally recognized religion in Rome, a status not afforded to Christianity and its adherents. Following the first Jewish-Roman war that resulted in the destruction of the second Jewish temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, Jewish recognition came at the cost of *Fiscus Judaicus*, a tax levied on Jews in order to fiscally support the Roman imperial cult, discourage proselytism, and exempt those

who paid it from having to sacrifice to the Roman cult (Josephus et al. 1981). The nascent Christian community, then a separate religious community following the death of Paul, albeit largely composed of people of Jewish descent, identified themselves as Jews, yet would not pay the tax, nor were they confirmed as fellow Jews to the Roman authorities by the Jewish authorities, often resulting in their execution.

Seeking to demonstrate their legitimacy and loyalty to the Roman state, many in the growing incipient Christian community, particularly those adhering to the prevailing Pauline Christian theology of Christians who were not of Jewish origin, continuously amended their religious outlook out of political need and expedience by directing their anger at the Jewish community they sought to dissociate themselves from and supersede, scapegoating Jews as the cause of their centuries-long violent persecution within and at the hands of the Roman Empire rather than holding the Roman authorities themselves responsible. This process of change in Pauline Christianity likewise took place in the writing of Christian scripture, which placed the burden for the death of Jesus at the feet of the conquered Jewish people, and not the Roman court that convicted him and Roman authorities that executed him in the Roman manner of crucifixion, and furthermore served an in-group purpose of discouraging Christians from enjoying the friendly relations they had generally shared with the Jewish community for generations (Carroll 2002, Nicholls 2004). The enshrinement within the Christian Bible itself of using Judaism, Jews, and Jewishness as a means of framing, explaining, and defining negative human traits in and of themselves in contrast to positive behavior and virtues being labeled as fundamentally and intrinsically Christian cemented supremacist thought and antisemitic poison into the heart of Christianity as an institution (Nirenberg 2013). In doing so, it set the religion onto the path that led to its continued central role in fascist and authoritarian movements worldwide, radicalization into these movements, and the 20th century extermination of the Jews of Europe in the genocide known as the Holocaust or *Shoah* (Friedländer 2008).

The Christian New Testament verses that charge Jews with deicide, malevolence, murderousness, impiousness, greed, dishonesty, hypocrisy, being Satanic or demonic in nature, and being an affront to man and god, as well as declare the supersession of Christianity over Judaism and Jews as people, are too numerous to include in their entirety. However, certain verses are specifically and frequently referenced as a means of justifying antisemitic belief, policy, and violence throughout history, most notably during the Crusades, the Khmelnytsky Uprising, the state-sponsored pogroms of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Holocaust, and the frequent violence that took place in Europe during Holy Week and following passion plays. Due to Matthew 27:24-25 NIV, Christianity has held all Jews in all places and at all times collectively and individually responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus:

“When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!””

This theme of deicide, of labeling Jews as ‘Christ-killers’ deserving of suffering and hellfire, may also be seen in Matthew 23:37-38 NIV:

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.”

Matthew 23:31-33 NIV, in castigating the Pharisees—the forebears of modern, post-Second Temple Rabbinic Judaism—further centralized the charge of Jewish deicide to Christianity’s sense of self and their religious origin mythos (Carroll 2002, Ehrman 2011, Nicholls 2004):

“So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started! You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”

Economic antisemitism that later shaped both European policy in the Middle Ages and the antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories based upon said policies is reflected in the references made in Mark 11:15-19 NIV to Jews as impious, thieving moneylenders set upon murdering Jesus:

“On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’” The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.”

John 7:1 NIV posits that Jesus, a Jew, avoided traveling within Judea because “the Jews were looking for a way to kill him,” a common motif in the Gospel of John in referring to all enemies of Jesus collectively as “the Jews.” Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 state that “those who say they are Jews, but are not” are in actuality the “synagogue of Satan.” Similarly, John 8:44 NIV presents Jews as inherently Satanic and deceitful:

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Echoing the pagan antisemitism of classical antiquity and the Christian accusation of Jewish deicide, Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 NIV:

“For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God’s churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.”

Additionally, Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews is in its entirety an anti-Jewish screed aimed at discouraging Christians, particularly those of Jewish origin, from returning to Judaism as a result of both friendly

intercommunal relations and Roman persecution of Christianity. Paul framed his arguments in the language of supersessionism, also commonly known as replacement theology, which, with a few notable exceptions, typifies the mainstream of Christian thought and theology even today, casting Christianity as the fulfillment of and successor to a Judaism impugned as an ossified, incomplete, and inferior culture. Paul was also the first Christian thinker to claim that Jews are disqualified from salvation by not believing in the divinity of Jesus.

The aforementioned verses and the prevailing interpretations across Christendom took on an increasingly intolerant quality as Christianity grew in size and influence as a political and state power (Ehrman 2011). St. Peter the Apostle described Christians who did not worship to icons as possessing “Jewish minds,” conceiving of perceived negative behavior and traits even in non-Jews as being fundamentally and intrinsically Jewish in their nature. Tertullian, the popular 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century Carthaginian Christian writer, claimed that the inferiority of Judaism was not due to the religion in and of itself, but that the Jews as a people are uniquely degraded, impious, ignorant, and sinful, in contrast to the superseding Christian community who represent the antithesis of these allegedly “Jewish” qualities. Summarizing his position of the blindness of Jews and their ignorance of their own scriptures and writings and reflecting Justin Martyr’s earlier anti-Jewish narrative *Dialogue with Trypho*, Tertullian wrote: “Let the heretic now give up borrowing poison from the Jew (Nirenberg 2013).”

In 312 CE, the western Roman emperor Constantine I converted to Christianity for what scholars today believe to be the consolidation of power during a period of strife and war in the empire (Carroll 2002). The following year Constantine and Licinius, the emperor of the eastern Roman Empire, passed the Edict of Milan that decriminalized Christianity. In 325 CE, after becoming the sole ruler of the Roman Empire, Constantine assembled the First Council of Nicaea to further consolidate the various Christian sects under his rule into a more uniform movement under what is known as the Nicene Creed. The council further established the parameters of Christian theology and instituted the

separation of the date of Easter from that of the Jewish holiday of Passover upon which it had previously been based, with Constantine stating in his post-council letter:

“... it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul ... Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Savior a different way (Eusebius et al. 1999).”

Furthermore, as recounted in Theodoret’s *Ecclesiastical History*, Constantine writes in his epistle to the bishops not present at the Council of Nicaea:

“It was, in the first place, declared improper to follow the custom of the Jews in the celebration of this holy festival, because, their hands having been stained with crime, the minds of these wretched men are necessarily blinded. ... Let us, then, have nothing in common with the Jews, who are our adversaries. ... Let us ... studiously avoiding all contact with that evil way. ... For how can they entertain right views on any point who, after having compassed the death of the Lord, being out of their minds, are guided not by sound reason, but by an unrestrained passion, wherever their innate madness carries them. ... lest your pure minds should appear to share in the customs of a people so utterly depraved. ...Therefore, this irregularity must be corrected, in order that we may no more have any thing in common with those parricides and the murderers of our Lord. ... no single point in common with the perjury of the Jews (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2022).”

In the years 326-328 CE, Constantine’s mother, Helena, undertook a pilgrimage to Palestine in order to locate the relics of Jesus’s crucifixion, such as the cross, nails, sign, seamless robe, crown of thorns, and Roman instruments of torture, which were brought back to Europe for display and veneration. Later Christian legends of Helena’s pilgrimage claim that the cross was located only after torturing a local Jewish man into confessing its secret burial spot, a story rendered in the section of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Arezzo fresco *The Legend of the True Cross* titled *Torment of the Hebrew* by painter Piero della

Francesca (Carroll 2002). In 329 CE Constantine passed legislation that barred Jews from marrying Christians and made Christian conversion to Judaism a crime punishable by death.

Late 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century Christian scholars likewise contributed antisemitic precepts and rhetoric that became foundational to Christian thought through history that still play a large role in contemporary politics. St. Ambrose of Milan, who saw Jews as a special category of the damned, advised the emperor Theodosius not to censure the Christian mob, led by their bishop, for destroying the synagogue at Callinicum, nor to have the synagogue rebuilt, arguing that people would think “the emperor has become a Jew (Carroll 2002, Nirenberg 2013).” Ambrose also recounted the legend of Helena’s recovery of the relics of the crucifixion through the torture of a Jew as fact, and further claimed that the Jews, being responsible for Christ’s death, collectively hid the relics thinking that it would bring about the destruction of Christianity. Now that they are recovered, Jews “... are now [themselves] conquered (Carroll 2002, Nirenberg 2013).” In doing so, Ambrose built upon the charge of Jewish deicide in order to frame Judaism and Jews as innately diametrically opposed to Christianity in a Manichaeistic duality, and additionally argued that the destruction of the Jews ought to be a goal of both Christian and secular authorities (Carroll 2002, Nicholls 2004, Nirenberg 2013). Ambrose is honored as one of the Doctors of the Church in Western Christianity and a saint by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran churches.

St. John Chrysostom wrote a series of profoundly influential homilies titled *Adversus Judaeos*, meaning “Against the Jews,” castigating not only the Jewish people, but also Christians who were friendly with Jews and joined the Jewish community in their observances and festivals (Carroll 2002, Nirenberg 2013). The homilies in their entirety were an incitement to violence, and were thusly used as such throughout history. Chrysostom notably advocated for the annihilation of Jews altogether, saying:

“When animals have been fattened by having all they want to eat, they get stubborn and hard to manage... When animals are unfit for work, they are marked for slaughter, and this is the very thing which the Jews have experienced. By making themselves unfit

for work, they have become ready for slaughter. This is why Christ said, “As for my enemies, bring them here and slay them before me (Carroll 2002).””

Chrysostom is honored as a saint by the Roman Catholic, Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran churches among others, with annual feasts and festivals held in his honor, as well as being considered a Doctor of the Church by the Roman Catholic Church and one of the Three Holy Hierarchs by the Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic churches.

St. Jerome of Stridon characterized Jews as the embodiment of the negative other to Christianity, which is framed inversely as the embodiment of all that is good, with such declarations in his homilies as, “My enemies are the Jews; they have conspired in hatred against me, crucified me, heaped evils of all kinds upon me, blasphemed me,” “... the ceremonies of the Jews are harmful and deadly to Christians,” and, “Judas is cursed, that in Judas the Jews may be accursed... their prayers turn into sins.” It is believed that Jerome’s rhetoric heavily influenced the Good Friday Prayer for the Jews, and he is recognized for his teachings on Christian morality by being honored as a saint by the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, and Anglican churches, along with recognition as a Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church (Nirenberg 2013).

Ambrose’s pupil, St. Augustine of Hippo, endorsed the collective punishment and subjugation of the Jews at the hands of the Catholic Church that became Church policy for centuries. However, he rejected Ambrose’s and Chrysostom’s advocacy for the extermination of the Jews in favor of keeping them alive and in eternal suffering as a testament to both their depravity in the eyes of god and of Christianity’s veracity and legitimacy, saying, “Not by bodily death, shall the ungodly race of carnal Jews perish... Scatter them abroad, take away their strength. And bring them down, O Lord,” as well as his most famous pronouncement on Jews:

““Do not slay them, lest at some time they forget your Law.” ... For if they lived with that testimony of the Scriptures only in their own land, and not everywhere, the obvious result would be that the Church, which is everywhere, would not have them



available among all nations as witnesses to the prophecies that were given beforehand concerning Christ (Augustine 2022).”

This formulation by Augustine allowed Jews to survive as a people in both a literal and figurative sense, but also ensured their subjugation at the hands of Christianity in its codification as official church policy by Pope Gregory I in the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Carroll 2002). This oppression fed into itself as a self-fulfilling prophecy; the suffering that characterized Jewish existence was the only reason Jews were not collectively murdered, and the Christian authorities directly responsible for the reprehensible condition of the Jews themselves used Augustine’s philosophy as the guiding principle behind their policies that made such decrees of Jewish suffering a reality. The role Jews accordingly played in Christian theology and eschatology makes their misery a prerequisite for Christian redemption, an archetype exemplified throughout Christian history and in the contemporary politics of evangelical Christians among others.

## Jews Under Christianity

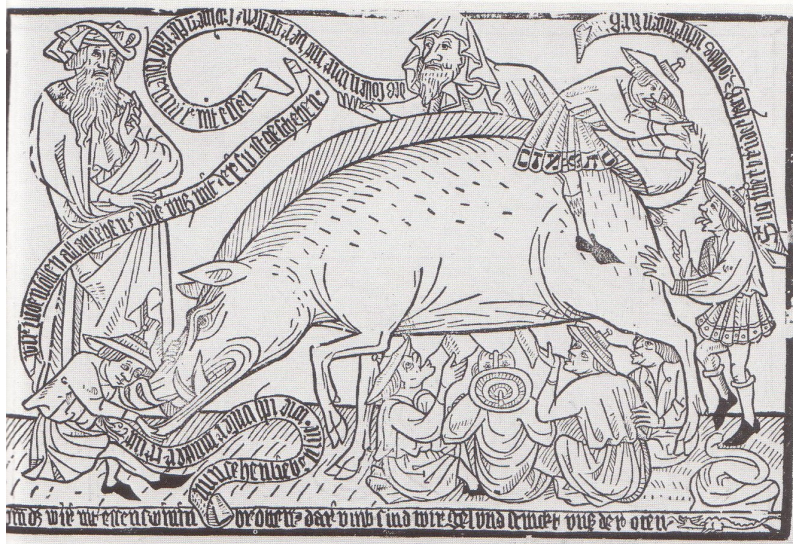
The early Middle Ages of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries brought about the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire and cemented it as the basis of Roman imperial political power and outlook, resulting in the expulsion, forced conversion, enslavement, confiscation of property, and the mass murder through burning at the stake of entire Jewish communities. Having been predominantly concentrated in Southern Europe, Jews migrated north in the following centuries looking for safety and opportunity, settling primarily in the Rhineland of Germany and France as well as in the Iberian peninsula, and often at the behest of local Christian rulers such as Charlemagne who believed them to be in possession of esoteric and beneficial economic expertise. Nevertheless, antisemitism became entrenched within Christianity over these centuries, with the religion solidifying into a rigid hierarchical organization under the pope, and Judaism becoming decentralized and locally-based among scattered diaspora communities across the world. While the Iberian Jewish community, known today as Sephardim, came to flourish in what is referred to as the Golden Age of Jews in al-Andalus under Muslim rule in the 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Jews of the Rhineland, known today as Ashkenazim,

faced increasingly hostile policies from both the monarchs and church authorities under which they lived.

The First Crusade, being a series of wars supported and carried out by the Catholic Church, took place between 1096 and 1099 CE. Its objective of conquering the Holy Land from its Muslim rulers found a large audience in Western Europe, with Christian armies amassing under the banners of Christian priests and nobility in what became the template for Christian nationalism and its unquenchable thirst for imperialist conquest over infidels. While Muslims represented a distant enemy to the Christian masses, a role they still largely play in the Christian nationalist imagination, Jews were the enemy near at hand, long-smearred as the killers of Christ. The Crusader armies of Europe did not see why they must travel across the world to kill non-believers when there were masses of Jews right there at home, people they had been raised to hate for generations. As a result, in the ensuing Rhineland Massacres of 1096 CE, Crusaders led by Peter the Hermit and Emicho tortured and brutally murdered much of the Jewish communities of the Rhineland based in the cities of Worms, Mainz, Speyer, Trier, Lorraine, and Cologne, even as the Jews were in many cases afforded protection by the local bishops and Christian merchant class. Three years later the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem, burning the Jewish community to death as they sought refuge in their synagogue and carrying out the mass murder of Jerusalem's Muslim community in a furor of genocidal religious antisemitism and Islamophobia (Carroll 2002, Nicholls 2004). These massacres represented the beginning of large-scale, genocidal violence in the name of Christian imperialism, and represented a model for future policies and projects within Christendom.

Despite the papal bull *Sicut Judaeis* issued by Pope Calixtus II in 1120 to protect the Jewish community from violence such as that of the First Crusade, the Second Crusade in 1147 and the Shepherds' Crusades of 1251 and 1320 resulted in the massacres of Ashkenazi communities in France following the preaching of local bishops that faithfully tread the path laid out before them by St. John Chrysostom's and St. Ambrose's antisemitic exhortations to slaughter the Jews in the name of Christ

as a function of god's will, demonstrating the imbalance and inconsistency between the Church's institutional antisemitism and their official position forbidding the violence that inevitably results from such teaching of hatred (Carroll 2002, Nicholls 2004). The Church also saw fit to enact legislation that directly contradicted their own official policies outlined in *Sicut Judaeis*, with Pope Innocent III declaring that Jews and Muslims must wear special clothing or articles that distinguish themselves as such. Beginning in the 13th century, Jews throughout Spain, France, England, and Germany were required to wear yellow badges bearing Jewish symbols along with a conical hat called a *Judenhut*, with the former lasting into the 18<sup>th</sup> century in many localities and the latter gradually phasing out in the 16<sup>th</sup> century until Jewish badges were brought back in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century during the era of the Third Reich and the Holocaust (Carroll 2004). The Lateran Councils of 1179 and 1215 advocated for the compulsory segregation of Jews into what in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were called ghettos, small areas delineated as the only locations in which Jews may reside. Concurrent with the passage of yellow badge laws and the institution of Jewish ghettos, Christian rulers began expelling their Jewish populations in their entirety. Edward I expelled the Jews from England in 1290, an edict that was only nullified over 350 years later by Oliver Cromwell. Philip IV expelled all the Jews from his lands in France in 1306, some 125,000 people, and an additional 100,000 Jews were later expelled from French territory by Charles VI in 1394, among numerous other expulsions from Germany, Italy, and elsewhere



in Western, Central, and Southern Europe (Carroll 2002). Additionally, churches and cathedrals in Germany at this time adorned themselves with murals and sculptures of a *Judensau*, depicting Judaism as a filthy sow being suckled by grotesque caricatures of Jews eating its excrement.

Reviving the ritual murder charge from Apion's writings in classical antiquity, Medieval Christianity began to accuse Jews of ritually murdering Christian children to use their blood in the making of matzah, the flatbreads eaten on the holiday of Passover, despite blood being strictly forbidden in Jewish dietary customs, even in kosher animals. The first known incident of this blood libel was the accusation of the Jewish community of Norwich ritually slaughtering a young child named William in 1144, with the monk Thomas of Monmouth decades later writing an antisemitic hagiography, *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich*, in which he falsely claimed that a secret annual international Jewish council decides upon where a Christian child will be murdered based upon alleged prophecies that Thomas himself fabricated whereupon the annual murder of a Christian will restore the Jews to their ancestral homeland in Palestine (Schwartz 2016). These blood libel charges led to the mass murder of Jews across Europe between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, from England to Italy, primarily through being burned alive (Carroll 2002, Nicholls 2004, Nirenberg 2013). The conspiracy theory continues to be referenced as fact in political discourse about Jews today, and it constitutes a major facet of far-right beliefs of Jewish-led cabals murdering and consuming white, Christian children.

In the same time frame, Christians manufactured allegations of host desecration against Jews, which built upon assumptions of Jewish guilt of deicide in claiming that Jews stole hosts—meaning communion wafers—as a means of defiling them in a reenactment of the crucifixion of Jesus. At times these accusations included various Christian relics and objects as well, and all presented without evidence. Despite its lack of factual basis, these conspiracy theories were used as justification for the annihilation or expulsion of numerous Jewish communities across continental Europe during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and in isolated instances into the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The Black Death of 1346 to 1353, a plague which took the lives of up to half the population of Europe, including that of its Jewish population, was collectively blamed upon the Jewish community in Christian conspiracy theories of Jewish plots to secretly poison wells. As a result, hundreds of Jewish communities across Western Europe were physically tortured into false confessions and burned to death in their entirety. Despite their attempts at fighting off the Christian attackers, the Jews of the Rhineland cities of Mainz, Worms, and Speyer were annihilated in totality as the Christian mobs pillaged their properties and belongings (Carroll 2002). As a result of the Crusades and the conspiracies of blood libel, host desecration, and well-poisoning, the Ashkenazi community was destroyed almost in its entirety in these acts of genocide predicated upon religious anti-Jewish hatred, with all Ashkenazim today descending from the roughly 350 survivors of these pogroms in Europe who made their way east, predominantly into the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Hungary, Romania, and Bessarabia (NBC News 2014).

At the same time, Christian forces in the Iberian peninsula were fighting the Muslims in order to retake their former lands and restore them to Christianity, a period called *Reconquista*. Despite distrusting the Jews and seeing them as too close to the Muslim community, Spanish Christians during *Reconquista* granted the Jewish community relief and a degree of autonomy as they recaptured their former cities. This, however, came to an end in the 15th century in the backdrop of an increase in antisemitism throughout the continent and expulsions of Jews from England and France. Beginning in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and incited by the Archdeacon of Ecija, Ferrand Martinez, 200,000 Jews were coerced into conversion into Christianity under threat of death or serious violence, despite this being officially against Church policy (Carroll 2002, Nirenberg 2013). These Jews, called *conversos* or Crypto-Jews, were regarded with suspicion and denigrated with the slur of *marranos*, meaning pigs, by the Spanish Christians because they were forced into converting to Christianity rather than doing so of their own accord, despite this coercion coming at the hands of the selfsame Christian community. In Toledo, Spain in 1449, the first blood law was passed, called the *limpieza de sangre*, which barred the descendants of the 200,000 Jewish and one million Muslim converts to Christianity from holding

numerous professional and ecclesiastical positions on account of their “unclean blood,” demonstrating a growing racial element to the religious antisemitism and Islamophobia of Christianity and its national and political aims (Carroll 2002). Such racist policies were approved by Pope Alexander VI in 1496 and lasted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century among such Christian organizations as the Jesuits, which officially banned candidates “who are descended from the Jewish race” until 1946 (Carroll 2002).

In 1478, the Spanish Inquisition was formally introduced by the Catholic monarchs of Spain, King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile, as a means of rooting out those in the convert communities who still observed Jewish and Muslim cultural and religious practices throughout the entirety of Spanish-controlled land, including in the Americas. The burning of convicted heretics began in 1481, and the Jews were expelled from the Andalusia region of Spain in 1483, the same year that Pope Sixtus IV named Tomas de Torquemada the Inquisitor General of Aragon, Valencia, and Catalonia. Among the evidence used to identify alleged Crypto-Jews were looking at the stars on Friday and Saturday nights, a lack of smoke from their chimney on Saturday, buying vegetables before Passover, and buying meat from a butcher who was also a convert (Ben-Sasson 2002). There were roughly two thousand executions by burning, the overwhelming majority being Jews having been denounced by family, friends, and neighbors. The Inquisition, however, was binding only on those officially Christian and not on unconverted Jews or Muslims. The Alhambra Decree was passed in 1492, giving Jews the choice between conversion to Christianity or death, a policy likewise extended to Muslims in 1502. Those Jews who did not convert fled to Portugal—from which they were expelled a few years later—the Netherlands, Eastern Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and the Americas. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, being a relatively liberal state, attracted the bulk of Jewish refugees from the mass-slaughter, oppression, and expulsions of Western and Central Europe, primarily Ashkenazim, becoming the epicenter of Jewish life in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century until their near-total extermination in the Holocaust.

Religious antisemitism in Christianity further developed at the institutional level in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with both the papal bull *Cum nimis absurdum* and the Protestant Reformation under the German priest and theologian Martin Luther. Pope Paul IV issued *Cum nimis absurdum* in 1555, which revoked all the rights of Jews in the Papal States, restricted them to unskilled jobs, reinstated yellow badges, forbade Jews from owning property or building synagogues, and confined Jewish communities to walled and locked ghettos (these policies in fact being the origin of the word ghetto itself), the largest being in Rome, where poverty, starvation, and disease ran rampant (Carroll 2002). The Jews were forced to swear loyalty to the Pope annually under the Arch of Titus, sit through compulsory weekly Christian sermons, and entertain Christians by publicly debasing themselves in the nude. Pope Pius V encouraged the construction of Jewish ghettos in neighboring states, and several of these ghettos lasted into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the Jews of Rome locked inside the ghetto until 1870. Martin Luther, the seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation and the namesake of the Christian denomination of Lutheranism, initially tried to convince Jews to convert to Christianity through his reforms, thinking that their failure to convert until that point was a result of antisemitic Catholic policies that he forcefully condemned (Carroll 2002). Initially, Luther wrote in 1523 the essay *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*, in which he vociferously condemned the church's antisemitism, albeit by upholding antisemitic assumptions of Jews as inherently inferior and necessitating Christian salvation:

“If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and blockheads govern and teach the Christian faith, I would sooner have become a hog than a Christian. They have dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs rather than human beings; they have done little else than deride them and seize their property. When they baptize them they show them nothing of Christian doctrine or life, but only subject them to popishness and mockery...If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the Gentiles ... When we are inclined to boast of our position we should remember that we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ. We are aliens and in-laws; they are blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord. Therefore, if one is to boast of flesh

and blood the Jews are actually nearer to Christ than we are...If we really want to help them, we must be guided in our dealings with them not by papal law but by the law of Christian love. We must receive them cordially, and permit them to trade and work with us, that they may have occasion and opportunity to associate with us, hear our Christian teaching, and witness our Christian life. If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either (Luther 2022).”

This was in sharp contrast to his 65,000-word treatise composed in 1543, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, within which, having failed to convert the local Jewish communities, Luther advocated for burning down Jewish synagogues, schools, and homes, confiscating Jewish money and property, and either enslaving Jews in perpetuity or “slaying” them. Luther also wrote in 1543 the book *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi*, in which he slandered Jews as “the Devil’s people” and favorably referenced the *Judensau* as an accurate depiction. Luther’s work was used as justification for the expulsion and mass murder of Jews from Lutheran Protestant states in Germany in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Protestant churches in 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany favorably referenced and published Luther’s antisemitic writings as evidence that Jews were a demonic race that cannot be converted to Christianity. It thusly became hugely influential among the overwhelming Christian majority of the Nazi Party and their supporters throughout the Third Reich, and had an indelible and direct impact upon the Nazi-led genocide of six million Jews in the Holocaust, nearly 40% of the global Jewish population (Carroll 2002).

The Cossack riots of the Khmelnytsky Uprising in the 17<sup>th</sup> century ended the Golden Age of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Ukrainian Cossacks, led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky, rose up against Polish-Lithuanian rule from 1648 to 1657. During this uprising, the Orthodox Christian Cossacks murdered tens of thousands of Jews because of their refusal to convert to Christianity and the Cossacks’ belief in conspiracy theories of Jewish economic behavior, even murdering many Jews who did convert (Nirenberg 2013). The Cossacks skinned the Jews alive and fed them to dogs,



dismembered them, trampled them with wagons and horses, buried them alive, cut them open and sewed living cats up into their guts, and impaled Jewish infants on spears before roasting them over a flame and forcing their mothers to consume them (Hannover, Mesch 1983). The forced conversions were so widespread that Polish King Jan Kazimierz gave orders allowing Jews coerced into conversion to Christianity by the Cossacks to return to Jewish practice (Nirenberg 2013). The Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytsky is today regarded as a national hero in Ukraine, with a city, region, and the highest military award being named in his honor, his image displayed upon Ukrainian currency, and a monument in his honor placed in the center of Kyiv, the nation's capital.

The late 18<sup>th</sup> century brought the demise of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as it was partitioned into the neighboring Prussian, Habsburg, and Russian empires between 1772 and 1795. The bulk of Eastern European Jewry fell under the grip of the Russian Empire, and in 1791 was confined by the empress Catherine II to the Pale of Settlement in accordance with the antisemitic tenets of the official state Russian Orthodox Church. The Pale of Settlement was a region comprising Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, most of Poland and Ukraine, and parts of Latvia, and Jews were forbidden to live, travel, or do business outside of these borders with additional restrictions within the Pale itself. From 1827 to 1856, some 70,000 Jewish males aged 12 to 25 were forcibly conscripted into the Russian military for a service of 25 years following six years of military education. These conscripts, called Cantonists, were starved and made to steal from local populations, barred from elite units and rank promotions, and often coerced into baptism and conversion into Russian Orthodox Christianity (Ofek 1993).

The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries also brought the secularization of traditionally religious antisemitism into proto-fascist nationalist movements. Jews in Western Europe were largely emancipated in this time, resulting in their Christian fellow citizens asserting the religious bigotry and conspiracy theories they were raised upon in a secular nationalist context. The notion that a Jew could be a fellow French or German citizen was considered intolerable, and the centuries of conditioning in thinking about Jews

and Judaism in the abstract as an inherent force characterized solely as a malleable and negative other easily shifted from conspiracy theories of a Jewish plot against Christendom to a Jewish plot against the national body through corrosive moral, economic, and political influence. This represents a prime example of how the biases and conditioning that are deeply rooted in a culture manifest themselves even in its subsequent outgrowths that may lack the context that brought about the prejudice in the first place. Here, the omnipresence of antisemitism in European Christian cultures predates and informs its later secular and political developments and ever-changing concepts of the political left and right in a given time and place, with the prior prejudices merely finding new ad-hoc and post-hoc justifications. The rise of these nationalist movements likewise paved the way for a rival Jewish ethno-religious nationalist movement, called Zionism, in opposition to the violent antisemitism of European nationalism. Zionism proposed a utopian solution to all antisemitism through the founding of a Jewish state in the Jewish ancestral homeland of Palestine, irrespective of its largely non-Jewish Palestinian Arab population, reasoning that a Jewish state, the negation of diaspora Jewry, and a new, socially-engineered Jewish culture antithetical to that of the diaspora would make Jews be seen as equals in the eyes of the hostile non-Jewish world. Zionism found substantially more appeal among non-Jews, particularly Protestant Christians, than it did among Jews, who bristled at the movement's ideals and had no intention of leaving their homes or countries. Christian nationalists see Zionism as a tool to rid their country of Jews in the service of both their white, Christian nationalism and their Christian eschatology that necessitates the ingathering of Jews into the Holy Land in order to be slaughtered by Jesus in the Rapture. Jewish Zionists, on the other hand, used violent persecution of Jews as a recruitment tool for the Zionist movement and to encourage Jewish immigration to the British Mandate of Palestine (later the State of Israel and Palestinian territories, post-1948 and -1967), forming a reciprocal dynamic with white, Christian nationalists that is today more prevalent than ever in illiberal, nationalist, and anti-democratic political movements that seek to derive benefit from the antisemitism long-associated with such politics. These secular and religious nationalist political movements and their overt antisemitic conspiracy theorizing as a means of expressing anti-capitalist and anti-communist thought among other political platforms form the backdrop of modern

antisemitism, anti-democratic politics, and the ubiquitous [conspiracy theories](#) used to transmit these ideas and radicalize people into this worldview.

The 1920's also produced the Christian Identity movement in the United States, an offshoot of 19<sup>th</sup> century British Israelism. Christian Identitarian belief holds that white people of Western European descent—referred to as “Adamites”—are the descendants of Jewish mythological figures Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and are thus the true Israelites and the “chosen people.” Non-European peoples, particularly Jews, are regarded by Christian Identitarians as a cursed, Satanic serpent-hybrid race genetically predisposed to anti-white antagonism that are fit only to be enslaved to the white race or exterminated altogether upon the return of Jesus and the establishment of his Heavenly Kingdom on Earth. These views became popular in the late-20<sup>th</sup> century among white supremacist groups in North America and have since reached and influenced a wider audience through the internet (ADL 2017). More so than the Christian Identity movement itself, however, is how their modes of thinking about Jews proved influential to other religious movements and even ostensibly secular politics. Proponents of antisemitic belief retained their anti-Jewish prejudice while simultaneously calling into question whether or not Jews are Jewish at all, adding another layer to the tangled web of antisemitic conspiracy theorizing. This is seen in popular antisemitic conspiracy theories among the far-right, neo-Nazis, pockets of far-left and Middle Eastern anti-Zionist movements, as well as black nationalist religious groups belonging to such movements as the Black Hebrew Israelites and the Nation of Islam. The most prevalent of such conspiracy theories posits that Jews, often specifically naming Ashkenazim, are usurpers and converts belonging to a Central Asian ethnic group called Khazars. The justification given for belief in these baseless, disproven, and bigoted conspiracy theories is often the New Testament verses Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 intertwined with other religious mythology and historical revisionism, and it is now one of several strands of thought driving 21<sup>st</sup> century antisemitic incitement and violence (Smith 2021).

These religious, racial, and ethnic nationalisms became inextricably intertwined as old religious prejudices came to influence secular national politics, which in turn became adopted and championed by religious institutions. This exacerbated the dynamic of Christianity in various temporal, geographic, and denominational contexts at the institutional and often even individual level operating as a legitimation of power over out-groups relegated to lower classes, with adherence to hardline Christian nationalist and often racist politics defining the religious in-group identity more so than any theological precepts. The seminal antisemitic hoax and forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, written in Russia in 1903 during the state-sanctioned mass murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews in the pogroms, is perhaps the best example of this influence of religious antisemitism upon secularized conspiracy theories. While every antisemitic trope in existence long preceded *The Protocols*, the widespread idea of an international Jewish conspiracy that tied them all together had not existed until the 1860s in Russia, when a Jewish man, Jacob Brafman, converted to Russian Orthodox Christianity following a falling out with his Jewish community, and subsequently published a series of antisemitic texts alleging a global Jewish conspiracy against Christianity and Christians, aiming to seize political power in order to subjugate them. *The Protocols* brought this conspiracy theory to the masses with the help of its promotion in America by prominent business magnate Henry Ford and its eventual translation into nearly every language (Friedländer 2008). *The Protocols*, in conjunction with traditional Christian antisemitism, formed the basis of the race science views of Nazi Germany on Jews, in particularly its positioning of Jews as the lowest form of life on Earth and their characterization as a parasitic anti-race whose mere existence in a place portends the destruction of other groups and cultures within that society.

## Extermination, Expulsion, and their Aftermath

Such ideas could not have come to be without two thousand years of antisemitic thought and theology being transmitted through Christian churches, both Catholic and Protestant, and the Nazis thusly found enthusiastic support amongst the Christian masses that comprised not only Germany, where some 95% of the ethnic German population were active churchgoers, but the majority of Europe as

well. The Godesberg Declaration of April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1939 that enjoyed broad support among German Lutheran Protestant churches illustrates their wholesale endorsement of Nazi antisemitism on both political and religious grounds. Point No. 3 states:

“The National Socialist worldview has relentlessly fought against the political and spiritual influence of the Jewish race, on our national life. In full obedience to the divine rules of creation, the Evangelical Church affirms its responsibility for the purity of our people. Over and above that, in the domain of faith there is no sharper opposition than the one existing between the message of Jesus Christ and that of the Jewish religion of laws and political messianic expectation (Friedländer 2008).”

Later in 1939 the Institute for the Study and Elimination of the Jewish Influence on German Church Life was founded and widely supported, going on to publish a de-Judaized New Testament, hymnal, and catechism. Additionally, both former-Jews who had converted to Christianity and Christians of Jewish descent were legally regarded as Jews, forced to wear the yellow badges brought back from Medieval Christendom, barred from all church life, and denied the right to burial in church cemeteries. Even the Confessing Church, the sole German Protestant Church to object to Nazi policy, couched their objections to Nazism in the traditional antisemitic positioning of Jews as the eternal negative other to an innate Christian virtue, likening churches who banned Christians of Jewish descent to be no better than the Pharisees—no better than a Jew (Friedländer 2008). The Roman Catholic Church under Pope Pius XII, which was forceful in its public denunciations of the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program of the disabled and those deemed undesirable, was not willing to speak out against the measures taken against Jewish converts to Christianity and Christians of Jewish descent, much less in defense of the Jewish community that received no solidarity from a single European church or institution. This silence continued even while they knew that Jews and Christians of Jewish descent, including Catholics, were being exterminated in mass shootings and in the gas chambers of death camps in a campaign of genocide with global aims. In the Slovak Republic, a client state of Nazi Germany, state leader and Catholic priest Jozef Tiso collaborated on the enslavement and extermination of Slovak Jews both within Slovakia and through deportation to the German

extermination camps in Nazi-occupied Poland (Friedländer 2008). In Croatia, the fascist organization Ustasha conducted the extermination of Serbs, Jews, and Roma in the name of racial purity and their nationalism of intertwined ethnic Croatian and religiously Roman Catholic and Islamic identities. Catholic clergy in Poland, themselves subjected to persecution and mass slaughter as Polish national and cultural leaders, played an active role in the genocide of Polish Jewry to further an exclusionary Polish nationalism that was overtly Catholic in nature and had already resulted in sweeping antisemitic legislation before the war and subsequent German occupation. The clergy both incited and participated in the various deadly antisemitic pogroms of mass murder that took place in Poland both during and after World War II (Friedländer 2008, Bikont 2015).

Ultimately, six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, nearly 40% of the global Jewish population, with the explicit and implicit aid of Christian churches, clergy, and rhetoric based on Christianity's deep-seated antisemitism, all while the nations of the world stood idly by. High-ranking Nazi war criminals were smuggled off to various countries, predominantly in South America, with the aid of the Vatican through what were termed the "rat lines," and the halfhearted American denazification policy sputtered out and was abandoned by 1951 as the United States' political and moral calculus saw greater benefit in importing as many Nazi scientists and war criminals as they could for American national Cold War efforts than they did in defeating fascism and providing a home for the refugees created by Nazism. Concurrently, pro-Nazi and Islamic nationalist elements in the Middle East and North Africa carried out pogroms in the 1930's and 1940's as a result of the Nazi influence in the region that continued post-war as Nazi war criminals were given safe haven. One such example took place in 1941, with the pro-Nazi government in Iraq collapsing following its defeat by the British, resulting in the Farhud, an antisemitic pogrom at the hands of their Muslim neighbors. Hundreds of Jewish homes were destroyed, with 180 Jews brutally murdered and in some cases dismembered, numerous women raped, and over one thousand wounded, portending the antisemitic violence and ethnic cleansing of Mizrahi Jewry to come a decade later.

Immediately following the end of World War II, only 200,000 Polish Jews out of a pre-war population of 3.2 million had survived the Holocaust, and they were often subjected to violence, pogroms, and mass murder by their non-Jewish Polish fellow citizens between 1945 and 1946. Using the blood libel charge as justification in conjunction with greed and an unwillingness to give back stolen Jewish property, pogroms were carried out throughout the country, most notably in Kielce in 1946 (Gross 2006). An eight-year-old Polish boy went missing, and upon his return home two days later alleged at the suggestion of a neighbor that he, among other Polish children, was kidnapped by the Jewish community for ritual slaughter and consumption. The allegation was quickly recanted, and the boy admitted decades later that the event was coordinated by his father and the authorities. Nevertheless, the authorities and individuals that pinned this “kidnapping” on the Jewish Holocaust survivors incited a pogrom that claimed the lives of 42 Jews, with another 40 wounded. Most were bludgeoned to death with pipes, others were stoned or shot. The Catholic Church in Poland refused to condemn the pogroms, opting instead to repeat the blood libel allegations as well as the still-popular antisemitic conspiracy that Jews are using communism as a tool to destroy the Polish nation, characterized in Polish nationalist rhetoric as “the Christ of nations,” leading to a mass exodus of Jewish survivors from Poland that was largely completed by the near-total expulsion of the surviving community by the communist Polish government in 1968 as a result of antisemitic conspiracy theories (Gross 2006, Gross 2018).

In 1948, the State of Israel was born following the withdrawal of the British forces, which led to a two-phase war; the first was the civil war between Jews and Palestinian Arabs within the former British Mandate of Palestine, and the second being an invasion by Arab armies to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state. Zionism, primarily being characterized by Jewish ethno-religious nationalism within its Israeli context, was and remains the dominant political ideology among Israeli Jews, with proponents of rival left-wing or religious ideologies largely having been exterminated in the Holocaust, fallen out of the movement altogether, or gradually shifting to the political right and into the Zionist mainstream. Zionism was characterized by a broad and often mutually exclusive ideological pluralism in its infancy

that included positions that today would be considered anti-Zionist, and also hotly debated in the diaspora community within which it still largely represents an abstract affirmation of Jewish nationhood and self-determination distinct from its Israeli connotations. By 1948, however, Zionism was a distinctly nationalist and ethnocentric political program and ideology in Israel in response to the history of antisemitism and the Holocaust, and itself responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in an event known as the *Nakba* (Beauchamp 2018). This Palestinian refugee crisis and the ongoing illegal occupation and oppression of millions of Palestinians following the later 1967 Six-Day War is itself a major issue today, including with regards to extremism, conspiracy theories, and anti-democratic politics. Though it certainly bears repeating that neither Zionism nor anti-Zionism are inherently antisemitic, nor are nationalism and anti-nationalism morally equivalent, reactionary antisemitism within the politics of both Zionism and anti-Zionism in response to the subject of Palestinian human and civil rights, often framed in language influenced by the history of religious antisemitism, play an outsized and often symbolic role in contemporary geopolitics that affect the lives of Jews, Palestinians, and various other groups around the world (Sprinzak 1993, Sunshine 2019). In response to the founding of the State of Israel, between 1940s and 1970s roughly 900,000 Mizrahi Jews from the Middle East and North Africa emigrated predominantly to Israel, but also France and the United States, under various circumstances ranging from ideology to expulsion, confiscation of property, and revocation of citizenship as a result of the inflammation of antisemitism within Muslim communities exacerbated by the widespread influx of European Christian antisemitism.

## Post-War and Contemporary Antisemitism in Geopolitics

While much of Christianity had a period of introspection following the Holocaust, most notably the Roman Catholic Church's liberalizing reforms through the Second Vatican Council and its *Nostra Aetate* declaration in 1965 that established positive relationships with both Jews and Muslims on an institutional level, Protestant Christianity by and large associates itself with what they refer to as Christian Zionism (Carroll 2002, O'Donnell 2021). Eschewing the tone of earlier Christian antisemitism, Christian Zionism frames its antisemitic goals and rhetoric in the veneer of ostensibly



pro-Jewish policies that conveniently align with Christian nationalism and eschatology, seeing Jews not as actual people, but political and religious symbols. These claims in support of Jewish nationalism and its goal of mass Jewish emigration to Israel are used as a means of indemnification from the charge of antisemitism as they explicitly demonize and marginalize Jewish fellow citizens in their countries using familiar historical tropes and conspiracy theories, as a political tool to foment racist and Islamophobic rhetoric and influence national policy, and as a basis upon which to cynically and dishonestly frame their platform of white, Christian nationalism as belonging to an inclusive worldview and value system (O'Donnell 2021, Gardiner 2020). Today, however, as the Holocaust fades from living memory and the crude, violent invective of ethnic, racial, and religious nationalism return as a major political force, even the cynical pretense of Christian Zionism has given way to the explicit antisemitism of yesteryear that has defined the past twenty centuries. Former president Trump has repeatedly engaged in explicitly antisemitic rhetoric, far-right elected officials such as Marjorie Taylor Greene, Paul Gosar, Lauren Boebert, Wendy Rogers, and countless others explicitly advocate for white and Christian supremacy while mainstreaming extreme antisemitic discourse<sup>1</sup>, all while various media outlets such as Fox News, One America News, Newsmax, and TruNews incite domestic white supremacist terrorism as the virtual entirety of the Republican and right-wing platform coalesces into nothing more than a collection of various prejudices, conspiracy theories, and domestic terrorist movements that has no left-wing corollary (ADL 2022, Washington Post 2022, Rojas 2022).

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<sup>1</sup> In October of 2022, entertainer and Trump-supporting Republican Kanye West appeared with far-right media personality Candace Owens wearing White Lives Matter t-shirts at one of West's fashion events, with this slogan being a white supremacist slogan in response to the Black Lives Matter movement protesting systemic anti-Black racism following the murder of George Floyd by police officers. Later that week, West was suspended from both Instagram and Twitter following his antisemitic comments on Tucker Carlson's Fox News editorial program as well as social media posts declaring war on the Jewish people and expressing support for both Black Hebrew Israelite and far-right white supremacist conspiracy theories about Jews. West has continued being platformed and spreading antisemitism through various news and talk programs, and has been openly endorsed by Indiana's Republican Attorney General as well as the GOP House Judiciary on their Twitter account. Concurrently, former president Donald Trump posted on his Truth Social account that American Jews "...have to get their act together... Before it's too late!" while lamenting his lack of Jewish support as being indicative of Jews' ungratefulness while further implicitly insinuating that American Jews are not Americans, but merely "living in the U.S." These events have created an ongoing outpouring of antisemitism into the American mainstream, as well as a renewed effort to both understand and fight it among opponents of fascism and supporters of liberal democratic values.

As the Israeli government and electorate have shifted rightwards since the 1990's, largely in order to defend its illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories in the West Bank, so too have they begun seeing allies in far-right figures and movements around the world, courting the support of an assortment of antisemites, racists, Holocaust-deniers, and fascists (The New York Times 2019). These far-right figures and movements likewise derive benefit from Israel as a Jewish token, with the former using them to whitewash their domestic antisemitic incitement and violence and the latter being all too happy to sacrifice the diaspora Jews they already held in disdain as long as fellow illiberal, anti-democratic, and nationalist governments will shield Israel from criticism and consequence. This has resulted in Israel and many of their advocacy groups echoing conspiratorial and Christian antisemitism about George Soros and the Great Replacement conspiracy, as well as the further radicalization of the already extreme far-right settler movement into terrorism against Palestinians and even other Jews who don't fit within their ultranationalist and religious fundamentalist worldview (ADL 2021, Beauchamp 2022, Kingsley 2019). This includes the frequent Christian nationalist-supporting and fascist antisemitism of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's son Yair as well as that of the spokesman for the illegal, far-right, and violently anti-Palestinian Hebron settlement, Yishai Fleisher, who greatly admires Hungarian authoritarian antisemite Viktor Orbán among other fascist leaders in their shared hatred of Arabs, Muslims, and the Jewish diaspora (Kingsley 2019, Roth-Rowland 2022, Shemoelof 2020).

Though hardly a paragon of religiosity himself, disgraced and twice-impeached former president Donald Trump used a platform of overtly racist and antisemitic white and Christian nationalism to propel him into the White House in the 2016 presidential election and to consolidate his grip over an increasingly violent conservative base that stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in a failed coup d'état to overturn Trump's loss in the 2020 election and attempt to murder Democratic lawmakers and then-vice president Mike Pence with Trump's explicit support (Breuninger 2022). Leaning into the economic and conspiratorial antisemitism deeply embedded in Western culture, Trump shared in 2016 an from 8chan—an infamously racist message board—of his general election

opponent and fellow Christian, Hillary Clinton, above a pile of money and the Star of David Jewish symbol along with the phrase, “Most corrupt candidate ever (Diamond 2016, Smith 2016)!” Trump also released an advertisement that showed pictures of notable Jewish people as a voiceover described them as belonging to a “global power structure” that has “robbed our working class” and “stripped our country of its wealth (Chokshi 2016).” At the fascist-organized Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017, various Trump-supporting far-right groups of neo-Nazis, Klansmen, and other assorted fascist movements marched with fascist, Confederate, and Nazi symbols while chanting, “Jews will not replace us,” a reference to the Great Replacement conspiracy alleging a Jewish plot to destroy white, Christian cultures through genocide and the orchestration of mass immigration of non-whites and non-Christians into Western countries (ADL 2021). A left-wing counter-protester, Heather Heyer, was intentionally run over by a vehicle and murdered by one such fascist marcher, James Alex Fields Jr. Donald Trump refused to condemn the fascist mob, opting instead to extol them as “very fine people (Burke et al. 2018, Gray 2017).” Trump’s presidency and the rhetoric of his administration, the Republican Party, and the global political right, incited record numbers of hate crimes and violence, including an over 300% increase in antisemitic attacks since 2015, which had already constituted the majority of all religious-based hate crimes in the United States despite Jews merely comprising 2% of Americans (PBS NewsHour 2022). On October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Robert Bowers entered the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh and gunned down eleven Jewish worshippers. Prior to the terrorist attack, Bowers identified this Great Replacement conspiracy theory as his motivation, writing:

“Open you [sic] Eyes! It’s the filthy EVIL jews Bringing the Filthy EVIL Muslims into the Country!! HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I’m going in (Gessen 2018).”

Numerous other such militant accelerationist attacks followed over the coming years against Jews and other minority groups, namely black, Asian, Muslim, Hispanic, and sexual minority communities. Among numerous others, these included the Poway synagogue shooting in 2019, the Walmart shooting in El Paso in 2019, as well as internationally in a Halle, Germany synagogue and a

Christchurch, New Zealand Islamic Center in 2019; all were carried out on the explicit belief in a Jewish conspiracy to destroy white, Christian culture and people through genocide and replacement through non-white, non-Christian immigration (Broschowitz 2022).

Rick Wiles of the popular far-right outlet TruNews alleges that America is controlled by “Bolshevik, Zionist” forces and the “Synagogue of Satan,” and that Jews murdered Jesus in order to build a “Zionist empire.” This references the antisemitism of the Christian Bible, 20th century European Christian conspiracy theories, and the misdefinition of Zionism not as the real-life Jewish nationalist movement and political platform in Israel and Palestine, but as a code word for the conspiracy theory of a global Jewish conspiracy for the enslavement of mankind as laid out in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Wiles further alleges that the impeachment proceedings against Donald Trump were part of a “Jew coup” in order hand power over to a “Jewish cabal” (the word cabal itself being of antisemitic origin in reference to the Jewish mysticism called Kabbalah) as a means to “kill millions of Christians” and that *The Protocols* “accurately predicted what was going to happen in the world (ADL 2020, Burke 2019).” TruNews was frequently given press credentials by the Trump administration (Grynbaum 2020).

A new conspiracy theory, political movement, and cult called QAnon, primarily based in America and itself composed of various conspiracy theories centered around support for Donald Trump, arose in 2017 and rapidly became mainstream among Republicans and the political right. QAnon’s constituent conspiracy theories are largely built upon longstanding antisemitic beliefs rooted in Christianity, such as blood libel, Satanic pedophilia, economic domination, media control, as well as the related Great Replacement, Zionist Occupied Government, and New World Order-related conspiracy theories (ADL 2021). While often using explicit antisemitic language, believers in QAnon also target non-Jewish political figures by falsely coding them as Jews or alleging them to be working at Jewish behest, with the Jewish component described either explicitly or through dog whistles and code words referencing George Soros, the Rothschilds, or simply as Zionists (Farber 2020). Following the

movement's post-2020 fracture, antisemitic Christian Identity rhetoric about Jews as Khazars is increasingly common (Smith 2021).

The use of Crusader and Medieval European symbolism and imagery has likewise proliferated among the far-right, particularly on social media, as many white and Christian nationalists identify with the concept of a racial Holy War against Jews, Muslims, and non-white peoples, and believe in a pseudohistory of a homogeneously white and Christian culture and population in Medieval Europe. The red Crusader cross shield of the Knights Templar, often adorned with the Latin words '*Deus Vult*,' meaning 'god wills,' has become ubiquitous and intertwined with conspiracy theories and hatred associated with the Great Replacement. Subscribing to the aforementioned pseudohistory based upon fictionalized accounts of the Knights Templar and the history of the Crusades, far-right extremists believe that their 'history' of a racially-foreign Islamic invasion and war on white Christian culture is repeating itself in our times and in doing so are subsuming themselves into an inherently violent, supremacist, and delusional nationalist identity and movement that ascribes unto itself a purpose of divine and existential import (Gabriele 2021, Jones 2019, Koch 2017). Oftentimes, this ties into and works within Traditionalist Catholicism, a radical movement within Roman Catholicism that positions itself against the Catholic majority and rejects the Second Vatican Council's liberalizing reforms that established positive relationships with both Jews and Muslims. Traditionalist Catholics are rabidly antisemitic, subscribing to conspiracy theories and beliefs of Jewish deicide, Satanism, media and government control, and a Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy among others (David 2018, Penneton 2022). Additionally, there is a separate movement called Traditionalism, primarily based upon the writings of Rene Guenon and Julius Evola, among other fascist philosophers. Traditionalism is a hybrid ideology of fascism and religious syncretism based on the Hindu concept of cyclical time, occultism, and the erstwhile pre-Christian European paganism. The key idea in this notion of cyclical time is that Traditionalists believe that a racially pure and hierarchical society will be reinstated following an age of Jewish-led degradation and backwardness called the *Kali Yuga*, which must be

brought to an end through militant accelerationist violence in the aim of bringing about societal collapse (CTEC 2022).

Religious antisemitism among increasingly influential far-right black nationalist movements in America has intensified as well, and has contributed to violence, mass murder, and the precipitous rise in the normalization of antisemitic hatred. The black nationalist religious organization Nation of Islam—which, despite its name, is entirely distinct from Islam—has long been a source of religious antisemitism (ADL 2021). In addition to blaming Jews for the transatlantic slave trade and their own genocide in the Holocaust, their current leader, Louis Farrakhan, has espoused traditionally Christian Identity-associated antisemitism:

"...the satanic Jews that control everything, and mostly everybody, if they are your enemy, you must, must be somebody (ADL 2013)."

"...So when they talk about Farrakhan, call me a hater, you know what they do, call me an anti-Semite. Stop it, I'm anti-termite (ADL 2013)."

"...And you do with me as is written, but remember that I have warned you that Allah will punish you. You are wicked deceivers of the American people. You have sucked their blood. You are not real Jews, those of you that are not real Jews. You are the synagogue of Satan, and you have wrapped your tentacles around the U.S. government, and you are deceiving and sending this nation to hell. But I warn you in the name of Allah, you would be wise to leave me alone. But if you choose to crucify me, know that Allah will crucify you (ADL 2013)."

Farrakhan alleges that accusations of antisemitism against him are a concerted, deceitful, and racist Jewish effort to silence him for speaking out against Zionism and Israel (ADL 2013).

Despite the Nation of Islam's overtly far-right political orientation, even going as far as inviting George Lincoln Rockwell of the American Nazi Party to address them at the 1962 Saviour's Day celebration, their bigoted rhetoric has found support among some left-wing figures, most notably the organizers of the pro-human rights Women's March from 2017 through 2019, Bob Bland, Carmen Perez, Linda Sarsour, and Tamika Mallory, leading to the resignations of all but Perez (Lang 2019, North 2018, Pagano, 2018, Serwer 2018, Stockman 2019). Mallory attended the 2018 Nation of Islam Saviour's Day event in which Farrakhan referred to Jews as both "Satanic" and his "enemy," favorably referencing him as "the GOAT [greatest of all time]" and defending his antisemitism with antisemitic Christian deicide charges by saying, "If your leader does not have the same enemies as Jesus, they may not be THE leader! Study the Bible and u [sic] will find the similarities. Ostracizing, ridicule and rejection is a painful part of the process...but faith is the substance of things (North 2018, Pagano 2018)!" The organizers refused to condemn Farrakhan or the Nation of Islam for their antisemitism, homophobia, and transphobia, in addition to forcing out an early organizer and Jewish woman, Vanessa Wruble, after accusing Jews of leading the slave trade, exploiting other minorities for profit, and "...holding all the wealth (North 2018, Stockman 2019)." Upon her resignation, Sarsour decried the accusations of antisemitism as a deceitful, racist, pro-Zionist smear campaign to whitewash right-wing antisemitism, despite over 70% of American Jews being left-wing Democrats and holding views well to the left of the American mainstream on Israel and Zionism (Pew Research Center 2021, Sales 2018).

The Black Hebrew Israelites, another prominent black nationalist religious movement, likewise propagate antisemitic conspiracy theories and replacement theology deeply rooted in Christianity and particularly Christian Identitarianism that they've adapted to their goals, largely centering around black descendants of slaves being the "real Jews" and the Jewish community as a whole being Satanic imposters, and further alleging that it was for this reason that the Holocaust was carried out by Nazi Germany and their collaborators (ADL 2020, Reuters 2020). Their worldview has become rapidly mainstreamed and entered the public consciousness in late 2022 as a result of the dissemination of its antisemitic tenets by high-profile celebrities such as Kanye West and Kyrie Irving among others. On

December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019, two Black Hebrew Israelites, David N. Anderson and Francine Graham, went to a kosher supermarket in Jersey City, New Jersey and shot dead five people, including a police officer (Dwyer 2019). Weeks later, on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Grafton E. Thomas, a Black Hebrew Israelite with a history of severe mental illness, broke into the home of a Hasidic rabbi in Monsey, New York during a Chanukah celebration after searching Google for “Zionist Temples (Gold 2019).” Grafton stabbed and hacked at the crowd with a machete, wounding five Jewish attendees. One of the wounded, 72-year-old Joseph Neumann, later succumbed to the grievous damage sustained to his skull (Paybarah 2020).

## Conclusion

The history of religious antisemitism extends back over two millennia and is not only inextricably and systemically bound up in much of global culture and religion, even in its very scriptures, but also in its political institutions and philosophies. The boundary between religious antisemitic prejudice and secular, political antisemitic conspiracies is nebulous, with the two necessarily being part and parcel of each other. Even in the absence of an explicit and conscious prejudice, antisemitism colors the way many people think about the world. When one imagines depravity, deceitfulness, impudence, and malevolent, conspiratorial scheming, they are often conditioned to conceive of these as fundamentally and intrinsically Jewish, even in the absence of any actual Jews, resulting from the cultural institutionalization of a repository of longstanding antisemitic motifs from which to draw upon. As the journalist Yair Rosenberg writes, “Once you’ve decided that an invisible hand is behind the world’s problems, it’s only a matter of time before you decide it belongs to an invisible Jew (Rosenberg 2021).” As such, conspiracy theorizing in and of itself almost inevitably leads to antisemitic attitudes and beliefs. Antisemitism thusly functions not as mere prejudice, but a conspiracy theory; an entire, coherent worldview responsible for a litany of crimes against humanity, genocide, mass murder, and still today illiberal, anti-democratic politics that affect Jews and non-Jews alike. Jews and Jewish culture are viewed as symbolic, abstract, and malleable concepts on which to project fears, dislikes, and insecurities. As conspiracy theories often are, antisemitism is completely internally insulated from both



criticism and cognitive dissonance in that any critique or consequence as a result of the expression of antisemitic views confirms the conspiracy theories of Jewish power and control in the mind of the antisemite. While other forms of racism, such as anti-blackness, are rooted in maintaining an existing caste system that relegates its targets to a permanent socioeconomic underclass stereotyped as an inferior race and drain upon society, antisemitism functions as a call to overthrow a perceived establishment through redemptive violence that liberates and redeems the in-group from the omnipresent and omnipotent Jewish control alleged in their conspiracy theories.

Building upon the prior thinking of pagan classical antiquity, Christian insecurity in its own legitimacy and veracity have given form and substance to antisemitism worldwide and far beyond Christian religious institutions and philosophies, coming to manifest in ostensibly secular nationalisms, the now-waning Islamic nationalist movements, and even internalized within the Jewish nationalism that redirects antisemitic canards towards the diaspora Jewish communities and their traditions. Antisemitism undergirds and predates our modern political conceptions, with the cultural waters in which we swim defined by entrenched white supremacy and hegemonic Christian nationalism within which antisemitism is a central and unifying component, a lens through which to view and understand reality. The only salient identity for and among Jews in such thought, irrespective of actual Jews and the particularities of their lives and identities, is that particular identity which the antisemite finds most objectionable. The unifying thread across these ideas is thinking about Jews as the obstacle to be overcome in order to create a better world (Chotiner 2020). Across the political spectrum, but overwhelmingly, predominantly, and increasingly on the right, internal and external political opponents are tarnished by accusations of real or imagined proximity to Jews, a strain of thought with direct origins from pre-Christian pagan classical antiquity through the entirety of Christian history. Discussions of antisemitism are likewise used as a political tool by those who share in the certainty that their perspective is superior to that of a Jew, including and particularly speaking over Jews in order to explain to them what is and is not prejudicial against Jews. The exclusion, gaslighting, and de-centering of Jews and their lived experiences with antisemitism in this discourse, often using fringe, radical

Jewish tokens, is used as a political prop to be wielded against political opponents, exculpate and indemnify the political in-group from the mere possibility of trafficking in antisemitism, and treats Jews as an inconvenient appendage to their own oppression while instrumentalizing it towards the ends of other groups and causes seen as holding more importance.

The contemporary political right is explicitly motivated by a bevy of bigoted conspiracy theories of which antisemitism is both a constituent and a unifying theme in explaining the migratory, economic, personal, and political behavior of immigrants, black people, Muslims, sexual minorities, women, and other minority and marginalized groups that don't belong in their ideal of a hierarchical, undemocratic, white, Christian patriarchy, as exemplified in the Great Replacement conspiracy theory (ADL 2021, Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. 2020). These ideas are used as justification for assaults upon women's and trans rights, minority religious liberty, and the very fabric of democracy in and of itself (ADL 2021, Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. 2020). Concurrently, and at first glance even paradoxically, these white, largely-evangelical Christian nationalists often enthusiastically support and define themselves by their Christian Zionism, which, like their other cultural predilections, is in fact based in their abject chauvinism and vacuous, narcissistic navel-gazing at the expense of all else and all others. Fringe Jewish nationalists represent nothing more than a useful token and political prop, with Jews as a whole being an inconveniently necessary component in their apocalyptic eschatological fantasies (Gardiner 2020). Likewise, these fringe, hardline Jewish nationalists, particularly in Israel, its increasingly-fascist government, and its right-wing advocacy groups, have no compunction in accepting their support, inciting violence and hatred against the overwhelmingly liberal Jewish diaspora, and courting other outright antisemitic fascists around the world through antisemitic and Islamophobic propaganda and conspiracies. The international far-right is consequently viewed as fellow nationalist travelers who will deflect criticism of Israel's illegal occupation, rampant anti-Palestinian discrimination, popular ethnocratic ideals, and credible accusations of apartheid in the occupied West Bank by human rights organizations (Kingsley 2019, Tharoor 2018). In this way, antisemitism is used to consolidate right-wing, ultra-nationalistic factional political power in Israel and

intra-Jewish politics where they represent a minority opinion, while delineating stricter in-group and out-group definitions within their segment of the Jewish community that seeks to legitimize far-right antisemitism against any Jew to their political left (Sprinzak 1993, Sternhell 2019). Moreover, this dynamic seen in right-wing nationalist Jews engaging in antisemitism as a tool to ingratiate themselves with Western powers steeped in white, Christian supremacy is likewise represented in the aforementioned minority nationalist and religious movements, further demonstrating the centrality and systemic nature of antisemitism to contemporary right-wing political discourse, propaganda, and outreach.

While posing a fraction of the threat of the far-right in number, proportion, and effect, and often cynically exploited by the right through whataboutism to undermine left-wing coalitions, notable elements within the political left often frame their opposition to Zionism and Israeli policy firmly within conspiratorial and far-right antisemitic language, using the term Zionists as a shorthand for Jews and imposing a definition of Zionism as an international Jewish conspiracy rather than the actual nationalist movement in Israel and Palestine nor the nuanced and distinct particularities of the identity among the Jewish diaspora as they exist in reality (Burley 2020, Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. 2020, Sunshine 2019). This milieu often engages in blood libel, Holocaust inversion and denial, ZOG conspiracy theories, media and finance control, and other antisemitic canards as a means of criticizing Israel and Jewish identification with both the state and the land. The Khazar origin conspiracy theory and its derivatives is also commonly made avail of to such ends, often through or in conjunction with conspiracy theories vis-à-vis the term antisemitism itself that move the goalposts on antisemitic hatred through the semantic sophistry and appeal to 19<sup>th</sup> century racial classifications in claiming that anti-Jewish hatred isn't antisemitic because Jews are Khazars and not members of the fictional race of Semites, who are thusly likened to all other ethno-religious groups of Middle Eastern origin excepting Jews. Zionism, irrespective of its history and its morality, or lack thereof, is also often presented as white supremacy and Jews as the "real" Nazis orchestrating a genocide of humanity as an antisemitic effort at linking Jews to the ideology and identity chiefly responsible for their genocide and oppression,

including why half the world's Jews live in Israel, and to revel in the cruelty of intimidating Jews and triggering anguish. As Yair Rosenberg writes, "Others do not go so far as to blame Europe's Jews for their own genocide, but instead try to use their murders to attack their descendants, insinuating that this or that group of Jews "failed to learn the lessons of the Holocaust." But Auschwitz wasn't a philosophy seminar with some unfortunate fatalities. And the Holocaust was not some moral test that the Jewish world failed, but a moral atrocity committed against it. ...Those who weaponize a people's greatest trauma to bludgeon them once more inadvertently reveal the very inhumanity that made such brutality possible in the first place (Rosenberg 2022)." These efforts often include bigoted Israel-related litmus tests administered to diaspora Jews predicated upon well-worn and now-secularized Christian assumptions of collective Jewish guilt, as well as tokenizing and weaponizing against the Jewish community as a whole a potpourri of fringe and unrepresentative extremists that regurgitate internalized antisemitic calumnies. This includes the ultra-Orthodox fundamentalist sect Neturei Karta that has associated with Louis Farrakhan, spoke at a Holocaust denial conference in Iran, and grounds their opposition to Zionism and Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people not in the name of human rights and democratic ideals, but solely in service to the fatalistic eschatological dogma that their god is resolutely opposed to any measure of Jewish self-determination before a supernaturally-induced messianic age. Additionally, the self-described "self-hating Jew" Gilad Atzmon, largely discredited and condemned now in pro-Palestinian movements, alleges that "the Jewish people are trying to control the world," that "any form of anti-Jewish activity may be seen as political retaliation [against Israel]," and endorses the mutual exclusivities of both Holocaust denial and justification, favorably recommending the work of David Irving among other Holocaust deniers (Chait 2011, The Guardian 2005, Jewish News 2017, Sugarman 2017, Sunshine 2019). While Atzmon is now seen as beyond the pale by most, left-wing British academic David Miller has been roundly hailed and defended following his firing from Bristol University for accusing his Jewish students of being secret agents for Israel attempting to "impose their will all over the world (Harpin 2021)." Hundreds of academics signed a [letter](#) in support, and have not rescinded this support even following his subsequent venture of co-hosting on Iranian state television an antisemitic conspiracy theory program that was

banned from YouTube, *Palestine Declassified*, with fellow disgraced antisemite and former MP Chris Williamson, himself expelled from the Labour Party for antisemitism. This support has still not been retracted following the publishing of Miller's 2022 paper in the antisemitic conspiracy theory outlet Al Mayadeen alleging Jews and Jewish schools to be "grooming" young children "around the world" and "radicalising them," constituting a "real threat to national security" (BBC News 2019, Bloch 2022, Feldman 2021, Miller 2022). Another such strand of thought common among the far-right and the left-wing fringe is that of David Icke's conspiracy theories that repackage the conspiracy theories contained within *The Protocols* while further claiming Jews to be an interdimensional race of shapeshifting, reptilian extraterrestrials. Among numerous others, Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple*, subscribes to these beliefs contained in Icke's book *And the Truth Shall Set You Free* that she references as both her favorite book and the inspiration for her own antisemitic poetry that further alleges Jews as responsible for all the crimes throughout history and as angling to enslave and rape humanity in the name of Judaism, whose texts and philosophy she alleges to advocate for such a policy. Nevertheless, Walker is often hailed as a left-wing intellectual and moral icon, and rarely receives pushback for such overt antisemitism, which was notably defended by left-wing activist and author Susan Abulhawa as in actuality constituting a salient critique of Israeli policy and Zionism predicated upon Walker's ironclad humanitarian ideals (Abulhawa 2019, Flanagan 2022, Grady 2018). Zionism and anti-Zionism both constitute nebulous labels lacking clearly-defined definitions even within their own movements, and within which discussions often elide the content of held belief in favor of straw-man arguments against imposed definitions detached from reality, and thusly opening themselves up to conspiracy theorizing and rhetoric that is often antisemitic, Islamophobic, lacking in perspective and proportion, and weaponized against democratic institutions. The pervasive culture of downplaying antisemitic violence and the willful ignorance and denial of even the most blatant antisemitism is a historical trend that contributes to the normalization of antisemitism within society that continues to radicalize people into the far-right and its constituent prejudices, conspiracy theories, and violent ideals (Burley 2020, Sunshine 2019). In this way, what defines antisemitism on the political left is not that their antisemitism takes on a meaningfully left-wing form, but rather the extent to

which figures who may associate themselves with the left in actuality platform and endorse right-wing conspiracy theories, beliefs, personalities, and movements that are rooted in historical Christian assumptions, radicalizing them into the far-right for all intents and purposes.

Additionally, violence against Jews as a means of protesting Israeli policy and action has become prevalent, holding an increasingly marginalized and persecuted Jewish minority—and rarely, if ever, the far-right and predominantly white evangelical Christian Zionist contingent that is both overwhelmingly larger and more extreme—as collectively and individually responsible for the actions of the Israeli government, and viewing the particularities of the political dynamics between Jews and Palestinians in Israel and Palestine as being universal across space, time, and circumstance, with Palestinians treated as a stand-in for all non-Jews worldwide (Chotiner 2020). A massive wave of violence against Jews in North America and Europe took place during the Israeli war against Gaza in the spring of 2021 due to such thinking (Beauchamp 2021). The extent to which this takes place reflects the degree to which elements of the left are incapable and unwilling of confronting and rooting out the foundations of white supremacist and Christian nationalist threats to democracy, opting instead to uphold a pillar of the far-right’s prejudicial ideology and theology as a means of recruitment to their causes, framing their policies, and studiously avoiding introspection and confronting their own culpability in creating and contributing to the current state of rampant violence and incitement against the Jewish minority. This dynamic has played out in the United Kingdom, with former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn leading the left-wing party to a historic defeat in 2019 against the right-wing Conservative Party as a result of a years-long and ongoing scandal regarding the party and its leadership’s antisemitism that was so severe it was found to be unlawfully so by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (BBC News 2020, Burley 2020, Knight 2018, Scott 2020). Labour Party members were found to have attended far-right events featuring Holocaust denial and Ku Klux Klan-associated speakers, created a Facebook group of which Corbyn was a member called Palestine Live that shared Holocaust denial and conspiracy theories of Israel orchestrating the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and criminal harassment of Jewish Labour members and MPs among other instances of

institutional antisemitism as found by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, including the denial of such behavior and leveling the charge of weaponizing antisemitism in a smear campaign in service of a Jewish or Zionist conspiracy against the left, the United Kingdom, and non-Jewish minority groups deemed more worthy of their right to dignity and protection (BBC News 2020, Townsend 2020).

The historical trends that produced modern political and national identities, nation-states, and the capitalist systems that uphold class structures that necessitate a disenfranchised underclass cannot be decoupled from the ideas of yesteryear that are invariably rife with various prejudices, including the antisemitism emanating from within the religious traditions of Christianity. This problem exists across the world, predating and informing contemporary political conceptions and movements that cannot be indemnified from the possibility of engaging in antisemitism nor any other prejudice through inherent political disposition or mere assertion. The large-scale right-wing radicalization into fascism and militant accelerationism through antisemitic conspiracy theories and the too-often tepid response by what is ostensibly a left-wing anti-racist, anti-nationalist, and pro-liberal democracy coalition are not a winning recipe for the defense of democratic institutions that safeguard civil and human rights, particularly those of minority and marginalized groups (Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. 2020). This has played out time and time again, from the 1940's Nazi-funded plots to overthrow the United States government by Father Charles Coughlin's pro-Nazi Christian Front and other America First Committee-aligned politicians and far-right organizations, to the modern American right that use the same beliefs to likewise justify white supremacist terrorism and seditious insurrection schemes (Gallagher 2021). Understanding and countering the imminent right-wing threats to democracy and human rights necessitates not only radical change in the material and socioeconomic conditions that prove fertile soil for exploitation through hatred, division, and conspiracy theorizing, but also genuine coalition-building, openness to unlearning unexamined prejudice, and a robust framework of universal principles. This must be predicated upon understanding and grappling with the deeply-embedded and institutionalized prejudices of white supremacy, Christian nationalism, Christian cultural hegemony,

and its attendant capitalist class structures within which antisemitism is a foundational and unifying theme, and a key factor in determining propensity for terroristic and militant accelerationist violence (Broschowitz 2022, Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. 2020, Ward 2017). As long as antisemitism remains an entrenched cultural force used out of poor thinking and political expediency, the seeds of its slanderous animadversion, violence, and incitement thereof against Jews and other minority and marginalized identity groups linked to them through the delusions of far-right conspiracy theories will continue to flower, threaten democratic institutions and human rights, and bear its bloody fruit.



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