

Christianity's Original Sin: anti-Judaism (150 CE – 1789) Professor Susan Nowak, SSJ

Definitions and Issues

Anti-Judaism

Defined by some as a theological construct whose “epicenter is the myth of deicide.”
[*Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present*. M. Perry and F. Schweitzer]

Response of others: On a philosophical level one might be able to make fine
Distinctions, but in practice and reality, it too falls into the definition of Jew-
hated, Judaeophobia, or antisemitism.

“Ultimately, all anti-Semitic accusations and justifications for persecution and
discrimination spring from the primal act of deicide.” [Antisemitism: Myth and
Hate from Antiquity to the Present. M. Perry and F. Schweitzer]

“In the words of Catholic biblical exegete J.D. Crossan, ‘the passion-resurrection
stories [are] the matrix for Christian anti-Judaism and eventually for European
anti-Semitism...without that Christian anti-Judaism, lethal and genocidal
European anti-Semitism would have been either impossible or at least not widely
successful.’” [as quoted in *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the
Present*. M. Perry and F. Schweitzer]

Relationship of theology and history: What happens when theology is divorced
from history

“Almost every Christian writer in the first five centuries of the church
wrote an anti-Judaeos treatise or made anti-Judaism a principal theme of
other writings. Inferences drawn from the Passion story by Christian
theologians and apologists were developed into a composite symbol of the
Jew, one that combined the image of the Wandering or Eternal Jew with
that of the agent of Satan and the Antichrist.. it is hard to image a more
destructive amalgam than this Christian myth of the Jew, rich in its hydra
capacity to be eternally transformed, secularized, adapted to changing
times and circumstances down to the present day, yet all the while
retaining its compelling religious appeal.” [as quoted in *Antisemitism:
Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present*. M. Perry and F. Schweitzer]

Concern of Others

Ruether Thesis: “Most Christians today may seem more than willing to prune back the cruder expressions of these attitudes and practices. But to get at the roots from which these grew is a much more profound problem...as long as Christology and anti-Judaism intertwine, one cannot be safe from a repetition of this history in a new form...I believe that this is actually a critical moment when a deep encounter with the structures of anti-Judaism is not only necessary to atone for this history, but may be essential to revitalizing the original Christian vision itself.” [*Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*. R.R. Ruether]

Ruether Analysis: Theological Critique of The Christian Anti-Judaic Myth

“If we wish to reaffirm the gospel without this anti-Judaic left hand, we must analyze and reconstruct the basic dualism which shaped early Christian self-understanding. These dualism, which make Judaism their negative side, are so deeply ingrained in Christian language that modern critical theology and liberal sermonizing still remain largely oblivious to their implications.”

For example: Christian sincerity contrasted with “Pharisaism”
Christian inwardness over against “Jewish legalism”
“Good news of the Gospel” as a fulfillment which discards
as obsolescent “Old Testament: which is Jewish

The Schism of Judgment and Promise

“The schism of judgment and promise in the exegesis of the historical and prophetic books of the “Old Testament” was originally fundamental to the Christian anti-Judaic argument.”

“The Church Fathers interpreted the Jewish Scriptures as though they spoke of ‘two peoples,’ a people who were sinful and condemned, the Jews, and the people of the Promise, the Church.”

“The New Testament also assumes a christological and anti-Judaic reading of the “Old Testament”; here, the schism between the Christian ‘good guys’ and the Jewish ‘bad guys’ is explicit and intentional.”

“...division of prophecy into anti-Judaic judgement and Christological hope...a profound misappropriation of the dialectics of prophetic religion. Prophetic religion is a religion of self-criticism. Election and messianic hope stand as principles of discernment by which the shortcomings of the present community are judged.

“Messianic hope is not an escapist device that allows the community to deny or cover up its present faults. Rather, it is the reality principle that illuminates the clash between what is and what ought to be.

“The prophetic dialectic works properly only if one sees both sides of the dialectic to be directed at the same people, their hope and their historical actuality

“The judgmental word is valid only when spoken by a prophet who speaks from within his/her identification with this community. The prophet’s identification with it and suffering with its failures is the basis for the prophet becoming the spokesperson for its hopes and the divine demand.

“The meaning of the prophetic dialectic of judgment and promise is destroyed when its cohesion in a single people is pulled apart. By applying prophetic judgment to ‘the Jews’ and messianic hope to ‘the Church,’ Christianity deprived the Jews of their future. They also denied to the Jews the record of their greatest moral accomplishment, the breakthrough from ideological religion to self-critical faith.

“By the same token, the Church deprived itself of the tradition of prophetic self-criticism. The revolution of the prophets was undone by the Church. Prophetic faith was converted into self-glorification and uncritical self-sanctification. Judgment was projected upon ‘the Jews’ from an ecclesiological stance of transcendent righteousness.

“The Church can read the prophets rightly as scriptural texts only by appropriating the judgmental side as well and applying this, not to some ‘other people,’ but to the same people which affirms its hope.

“...the anti-Judaic structure of Christian thought is not only a problem for Jews, but rests on forms of thought that are troubling to Christians as well. Rethinking these modes of thought has become as necessary for Christian identity as it is for improved relationship with Jews. Each of the basic antitheses which was used to vilify the Jews also appears as an antithesis that has retarded Christian theological maturation. Anti-Judaism was originally more than social polemic. It was an expression of Christian self-affirmation. So now rethinking anti-Judaism has become more than an external task. It has become an internal task of Christian theological reconstruction.” [*Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*. R.R. Ruether]

The Schism of Particularism and Universalism

“perhaps the most difficult schism for most Christians to criticize is that which makes Judaism a ‘particularism’ over against a Christian ‘universalism.’

“Catholic Christianity regarded itself as the universal messianic fulfillment of the election of the Jews.

“It was the Jews who struggled against this same ideological universalism in antiquity....The heart of the Jewish struggle against the Greco-Roman empires was a struggle against a pseudo-universalism which assumed that the culture of the dominant group was a universal culture, the culture of true civilization, against which all else was barbarism....The Jews held out against it in principle and struggled to be recognized as a people who defined their own identity independently of this imperial ideology, challenging thereby its universality...For this reason, Jews stood out against imperial ideology as the unassimilable element.

“Christianity, however, took the universalism of the messianic hope and fused it with the ideological universalism of the ecumenical empire. The result was a doctrine of the Church as the one Catholic faith for all humankind which could no longer tolerate the concessions to particularism possible for a polytheistic empire.

“One God, one faith, and One Church for all humankind invalidated the rights of other peoples to exist in other ways before God. There was only one path to God, that of Christian revelation. There was only one society of salvation, the Church, founded on this revelation, the cultural and political vehicle for which became the Roman Empire.

“Faith in Christ is then seen as the launching pad for a universal mission which does not say merely that all peoples can become Christian, but that all peoples must become Christian to be saved. Only through Christ does anyone come to the Father.

“In the post-Nicene Fathers, there was a disposition to regard this universal mission as already achieved in the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the ecumenical empire. Fulfilled messianism then became the new foundation for the ideological universalism of the Christian Roman Empire.

“Faith in Christ is the last word on the unification of all humankind, giving the Church here and now the right to conquer all peoples in the name of its given revelation. The particularity of its historical revelation is regarded as a ‘universal particularity.’ This particular historical revelation is the only true way for all peoples, to which all nations should submit, obliterating their previous identities and histories thereby.

“Christianity imported the universalism of messianic fulfillment into history as its own historical foundation, and later united it with the ideology and political vehicle of the empire, to reestablish a Christian version of imperial universalism.

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This claim to catholicity has functioned as the religious justification for that union of mission and imperialism characteristic of Christian history

The Schism of Letter and Spirit

“Christian anti-Judaic exegesis used the language of both Jewish and Hellenistic dialectics to express its belief in its supersession of Judaism. What was dialectical in each of these traditions become dualistic in Christian usage, dividing into ‘two peoples’ what was originally the dialectics of historical existence.

“Just as Judaism becomes a negative particularism, left behind by a Christian universalism, so too Judaism is seen as that which is transcended temporally, morally, and ontologically.

“Christianity is the ‘new,’ over against Judaism as the ‘old.’ Christianity is the ultimately new, so it itself can never become old. Christianity is the inward and authentic over against a Jewish hypocrisy and outwardness.

“Since Christianity sees itself as possession the incarnation of fulfilled Being, against Judaism, which is mere shadow and anticipation, Judaism is also, in some sense, mere ‘seeming’ over against ‘true Being.’ Judaism is the ‘outward figure of the good things to come,’ which now truly ‘is’ in Christ.

“These modes of thought fuse messianic sectarian dualism (the two eras, the historical and the eschatological) with the Greek dualism of the body and spirit, Becoming and Being, the phenomenal and the noumenal.. Judaism is seen as both the ‘old man’ and the ‘carnal man.’

“Moreover, this judgment is not allowed to remain in the past, as judgment about some presumed bad state of official Judaism in ‘New Testament’ times. It becomes Judaism’s ongoing historical identity to the end of time. The Jews were relegated both to a past and to a morally and ontologically inferior status of existence as their ongoing identity from the time of Jesus to the end of history (which was then projected back on their identity in ‘Old Testament’ times as well.)

“Christianity transcends Judaism historically, morally, and ultimately. It is the fulfillment of what Judaism merely ‘foreshadowed’ in the ‘fleshly way.’...And since Christianity assumes that the Messiah has already come, it is allowed to apply to itself the characteristics of the ‘eschatological era.’

“By historicizing the eschatological, the ‘two eras’ – the historical world and the messianic age to come – become the Christian historical era, over against Judaism as the type of unredeemed humanity.

The line between history and eschatology is imported into history as though it were a line dividing history, at the time of Jesus, into a pre-messianic and a post-messianic era (B.C. and A.D.) Judaism (and all that is not Christian) not only then but now becomes the unredeemed, ‘carnal’ humankind over against the Christian ‘eschatological’ person. [*Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*. R.R. Ruether]

Issues to consider:

In what ways did these anti-Jewish aspects of Christian thought and theology, the anti-Jewish Christian mindset and attitudes, and the anti-Jewish precedents provided by the Churches' historical relationship to Jews significantly condition the plan, establishment, and prosecution of the Holocaust? [*Holy Hatred: Christianity, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust. R. Michael*]

In what ways did the churches' compelling religious, social, and moral ideas provide National Socialism with a conceptual framework for the perception of Jews as less than human; as inhuman, devilish, and satanic; as traitors, murderers, plague, pollution, and filth? [*Holy Hatred: Christianity, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust. R. Michael*]

Anti-Semitism

Holocaust cannot be understood without understanding this term

Two Types

Classical and Religious – hatred based on religious convictions or opposition

Racial and Biological – hatred based on concepts of racial and biological superiority/inferiority

Modern anti-Semitism: powered by nationalist and racist myths that castigate Jews as an alien and dangerous race threatening the survival of Germany .”

[*Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present*. M. Perry and F. Schweitzer]

Definitions

hatred, contempt, stereotyping and fear of Jews

Negative obsession with the Jews found in writings of pagan cultures, in Christianity, among anti-Christians, in the medieval period, in modernity, and in contemporary culture

“...in its origins and in its recent most horrible manifestations, is the hostility aroused by irrational thinking about ‘Jews.’ [*History, Religion, and Antisemitism*. G. Langmuir]

“...chimerical beliefs or fantasies about ‘Jews,’...irrational beliefs that attribute to all those symbolized as ‘Jews’ menacing characteristics or conduct that no Jews have been observed to possess or engage in: ritual crucifixion, ritual cannibalism, host desecration, and well-poisoning. [*History, Religion, and Antisemitism*, G. Langmuir]

“...attitudes and actions against Jews based on the belief that Jews are uniquely inferior, evil, or deserving condemnation by their very nature or by historical or supernatural dictates. [*Anti-Semitism: Cause and Effects*. P. Grosser and E. Halperin]

“...an obsessive hatred of Jews and Judaism, is one of the longest lasting social pathologies in history. Although the term itself originated only in the late 19th century, the phenomenon is rooted in antiquity even as its manifestations have assumed different forms. The one constant associated with Judeophobia is a negative assessment on the part of the dominant culture of ‘otherness.’ Jews have historically been viewed as the preeminent ‘other.’

There are both continuities and discontinuities between the various forms of antisemitism such as cultural, religious, antireligious, secular, political, economic, and racial Jew-hatred. [*Encyclopedia of Genocide*, Vol. 1 ed. Israel W. Charny]

“...in its overt form, is the belief that Jews are a pernicious influence in the entire structure of modern life and hence must be effectively removed. [*Essays on Anti-Semitism*. J. Marcus]

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“The word...was coined in 1879 in Germany, in an attempt to define anti-Jewish sentiment on a scientific basis. Unlike the traditional religiously and emotionally based hatred of Jews, anti-Semitism was to justify the rejection of the Jews as a different people, nation, and, later, race, that threatens the very existence of the national unity and the national state. [ADL, *Bearing Witness*]

Gradually anti-Semitism became a political ideology embraced by political parties and organizations that were determined to protest against the so-called ‘Jewish influence’ in political, social, economic, and cultural life.

“...is often referred to as ‘the longest hatred.’ Antisemitism had long been deeply rooted in Germany and other European countries, and grounded in the doctrine of Christianity. The image of the Jew as the murderer of Jesus and the fact that Jesus had rejected Christianity’s embrace led to widespread hatred and suspicion. Jews were also falsely accused as traitors. For example, in many theological texts, Jews have been associated with Judas, originally a disciple and later the betrayer of Jesus Christ.

Jews in Christendom were humiliated, banished from their places of residence, forced to wear identifying marks, and confined to separate residential quarters. They were portrayed as offspring of the Devil and maliciously accused of the ritual murder of Christian children. Persecutions increased during periods of religious and social tension such as the Crusades.

The French Revolution in 1789 seemed to mark a turning point in the lives of West European Jews. Although countries in Western Europe began to grant Jews economic and citizenship rights, anti-Semitism continued to rear its ugly head.” [ADL, *Bearing Witness*]

From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism

“The issue of Christian anti-Judaism profoundly influenced the spread of anti-Judaic sentiment. Scholars have noted the theological and psychological tensions between the two traditions. [Encyclopedia of Genocide, Vol. 1 ed. Israel W. Charny]

Richard Rubenstein: the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is one of **disconfirming otherness**; for one to be true the other was to be false.”

First Century

Situation

Commonalities: Roman Empire

occupation by an external force

desire to be free of Roman occupation, oppression, and suppression

perceived as political threats by Roman Empire

legal status: illegal; illegitimate; not legitimated as independent political or religious entities

Avenues to freedom:

collaboration - within the Empire;
coexistence - negotiating with the system
conflict - against the system
withdrawal – separation from Empire

Theological dimension to political threat on the part of the Romans: misanthropism

Perception of Romans: haters of humanity due to insistence of monotheistic that is exclusive in nature and practice

Exclusive monotheism believed to imperil human existence

Result: Development of fraternal rivalry in a time of exigency/survival

“The emergence of the new Christian religious societies generated new intergroup attitudes and intergroup politics. The new Christian societies reacted to each other, to Jewish society, and to the greater surrounding society of the empire; and the Roman and Jewish authorities reacted to the new Christian societies. [History, Religion, and Antisemitism. *G. Langmuir*]

“The Jewish authorities reacted strongly against Christians initially, but paid less and less attention to Christian thereafter. Since the overwhelming majority of Jews had not been attracted by the new Christian religiosity, the Jewish authorities did not feel particularly threatened by the relatively small schismatic movement. [History, Religion, and Antisemitism. *G. Langmuir*]

Differences: religious experience, specifically of Jesus as Messiah, as the Resurrected One

Some Jews: the herald of God's presence as Shalom, as the one announcing the inauguration of God's promised freedom

Other Jews: experienced him as the embodiment of God, the literal presence of God's kingdom; the incarnation of God

Not completely understood, but experienced as revelation: lives, crucified, resurrected, and spirit given to his followers

Others: theological notions of divine incarnation in any of these forms were outside boundary of Jewish theological worldviews

"markers" of Shalom missing: peace, wholeness that is transformative; that ushers in the fullness of the Covenant; that establishes God's reign/presence in its fullness

Over time: separate theological worldviews developed that led to separation

Necessary:

Jews who experienced Jesus as the Resurrected One, as the presence of God in the flesh, as the human being who was God en-fleshed, could not express this in traditional theological concepts and practices

"...could become anti-Jewish or anti-Judaic only if they accepted Christ rather than Moses as their most fundamental contact with their god and the primary symbol of their identity and refused to accept the authority of any Judaic religion, even though they might still symbolize themselves as Jews." [*History, Religion, and Antisemitism*, G. Langmuir]

Jews who did not experience Jesus as God en-fleshed could not incorporate a theological notion that has no place in their identity or practice as *Klal Yisrael*, or the People of God, as the Chosen People of the Covenant

Separation is traceable in Christian Scripture

"From the writings of Paul (ca. 50 C.E.) through the Synoptic Gospels and, finally to the Gospel of John (ca. 100 C.E.), one sees a growing estrangement between Judaism and the gentile majority." [Encyclopedia of Genocide, Vol. 1 ed. Israel W. Charny]

At issue for both communities: authenticity, fidelity to God

Problem: disconfirming beliefs; disconfirming otherness

"For Christians, Jews and Judaism remained crucially important. Although Jews posed no serious or enduring physical threat to the survival of Pauline Christianity, the very existence of Jewish religiosity and Judaic religions posed a fundamental problem for Christians and the new

Christian religions, for it was an internal problem, a birth trauma. [*History, Religion, and Antisemitism*, G. Langmuir]

“Christians could never escape their awareness of competing with Judaism...From the motives common to most sects, the adherents of the new Christian religions were necessarily anti-Judaic in the sense that they had to demonstrate the superiority of their Christian traditions to any Jewish religions. But their arguments were ambivalent precisely because their claim to legitimacy rested on their Judaic inheritance.

Ethical Issue: rivalry led to acrimony, vilification that found its way from discrimination to oppression to murder

This trajectory makes our course an imperative: how to acknowledge, confront, critically study as a **transformative act** for the sake of a different future, between Jews and Christians, between peoples around the globe

Is the reason that I teach the topic, participate in interfaith relations, research the history

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Christians should not keep the Jewish Sabbath but observe the newly designated Christian day of rest

The prophets of Israel were Christian before their time and, therefore, not truly a part of the Jewish religion

FREE WRITE AND SHARING OF PUBLIC WRITING

one ethical issue about which you urge Jews and Christians who are committed to interfaith relations in a post-Holocaust to dialogue (5 minutes)

Second Century

Beginning of the Patristic Period or the Period of the Church Fathers

“Events in the political sphere are viewed through a theological lens. This led to the increasing isolation and marginalizing of the Jews. [Encyclopedia of Genocide, Vol. 1 ed. Israel W. Charny]

For instance, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70 C.E.) was a military-political act by the Romans against the Jews (as well as the Christians, but were viewed as a Jewish sect)

From the vantage point of both Jews and Christians this military-political action **carried great religious significance**

a divine judgment on the House of Israel.

But their understanding of the causative factor for this judgment differed radically.

Judaism viewed it as punishment for straying from the **covenantal path**.

The **early Christian movement** began to contend that it was a punishment for **deicide**.

Cautionary Note: Must remember that it is not until the fourth century, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, that this negative teaching about Jews and Judaism became civil policy.”

Theological Development

A theological distinction that becomes very problematic in its later forms takes root: the Pauline distinction between **law (Judaism)**, which is defined as deadening, and **spirit (Christianity)**, which is seen as giving life,

Problematic:

Judaism carries within itself a theological dynamic – promise and judgment
Unity of two movements as one reality is understood from within the covenantal relationship

Not separated, one from the other; not bifurcated but always interpreted in light of each other as inextricably and integrally interrelated

Christianity is in a period of theological dissonance about its identity

Is informed by this dynamic theological motif due to its roots in Judaism, but has lost its compass for understanding it, i.e., its place within the covenantal relationship as *Klal Yisrael*

Is it still a covenantal partner with God? If yes, how and why - especially in relationship to the continuity of Judaism and its covenantal claims?

Is also in the **formative, not summative, stage** of its Christology, or ability to state theologically who is Jesus of Nazareth the Christ
Time of inner dispute, internal uncertainty, of “faith seeking understanding”

No clear, definitive declaration of the nature of Jesus of Nazareth the Christ as fully human and fully divine
Time of great debate within Christianity or between Christianities concerning a clear theological profession
Not pretty – violent at times

At issue: the humanity of Christ

Christians better able to ascribe divinity, than humanity, to Christ

Not until 4th century with the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.) is there a definitive profession

For some Christians, resolution of this theological identity and of Christian identity is, unfortunately, found in the “**dynamic of projection**”
Project on to the other that which eludes your understanding, which provokes fear and uncertainty, which seems to contradict your claims about yourself and your identity

Echoes in St. Tertullian's Latin anti-Jewish polemic, *Adversos Judaeos* (refutation of the Jews)

St. Justin in conversation with a rabbi: “the tribulations were justly imposed upon you, for you have murdered the Just One.”

Seeds of later theological view of the relationship between Christianity and Jews and Judaism:

Jews murder, are a criminal people; violate the sanctity of life

Jews have murdered the “Just One” – of the prophetic lineage; One sent by God; some connection to ideas of Messiah; resonant with self-critique in Tanakh, especially the Books of the Prophets or the *Nevi'im*

Not yet decide, but definitely of One with connection to God

Bishop Melito of Sardis (late second century): converted the crucifixion into the archstereotype of the criminal Jew; his preaching provoked massive attacks on Jews
“God has been murdered; the King of Israel has been slain by an Israelite hand”

Third Century

St. Hippolytus: “All that the Jews had done had been pardonable, but now they will be left in despair because they killed the Son of their Benefactor.”

St. Cyprian: “Now the peoplehood of the Jews has been canceled”

Theological Anti-Judaism is reflected in these two quotes.

The **murder charge continues** – Jews as a criminal people who violate the sanctity of life; who do not honor, but transgress, the code of conduct given by God; by which humanity is to live

Murder charge is made more specific: Murder of a son; filicide

Murder charge is intensified: not just any son, but the son of their Benefactor
Benefactor: sponsor, patron, supporter, backer
Within Judaism: God

Calls to mind again the biblical charge that the Jews are guilty of killing the prophets sent to them by God

Prophets: sent by God with God's word of judgment and mercy; the central biblical relational dynamic that bonds humanity and divinity together, that connects the Creator and creation, one to the other

When bifurcated, when misinterpreted, the Covenant of Promise and Judgement; of Judgement and Mercy is read in a collapse way:
word of judgment only for Jews and word of mercy only for Christians

Cyprian and Hippolytus give voice to three elements in early Christian anti-Judaism:

turn the Jewish Bible against the Jews

Instead of self-corrective as understood by the Jews which supported an honest introspection of fidelity and infidelity to the Covenant and renewal of the covenantal relationship, the infidelity led to murder of the Benefactor's son

the Jews are “to be left in despair”

the criminality of the murder and the moral bankruptcy it represents in the killing of the son of the Benefactor calls for a judgment that equals the crime

the second branch of the covenantal dynamic is beyond the reach of the Jews; mercy cannot be theirs

peoplehood is rendered null and void

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the crime of the Jewish people is so great that it annuls, repeals, rescinds the very identity of the Jewish people: to be *Klal Yisrael* the Chosen People of God, a light to the nations sent to bring all peoples to the Covenant

Without appeal, without reconsideration, the Jews are placed **outside the norms of human relationship**

Second and third centuries provide the seeds of theological self-understanding that set the stage for the emergence of a **Christian Theology of Supersessionism** and the **Teaching of Contempt**.

Fourth Century *Adversos Judaeos* – The Teaching of Contempt

“The teaching of contempt is embodied in the *adversos judaeos* (refutation of Judaism) tradition. [Encyclopedia of Genocide, Vol. 1 ed. Israel W. Charny]

Political Situation

325 C.E. Constantine recognizes Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire
Early Christian teachings become civil policy, therefore, **early Christian teachings about Jews and Judaism become civil policy**

Another way of saying this: **religious conformity became government policy as well as Church doctrine**; symbiotic relationship existed

The Church demanded the conversion of the Jews because it insisted that Christianity be the only true religion

and, therefore,

The power of the State was used to make Jews outcasts when they refused to give up their faith

Consequence: were **denied citizenship and rights**

The Emperor Constantine the Great

Instituted several legislative measures concerning the Jews and all other religions excepting Christianity

Non-Christians were forbidden to own slaves or to circumcise their slaves

Conversion of Christians to Judaism or other religions was outlawed

Congregations for Jewish religious services were restricted but had elevated status over pagan traditions

Supported the separation of the date of Easter from the Jewish Passover
Letter after the First Council of Nicaea: “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”

Theological Situation

Certain themes continue:

St. Eusebius of Caesarea (325 C.E.)

Jews viewed as **rivals**; distinguished between **Hebrews** (seen as **primitive Christians**) and **Jews (less enlightened)**; the **patriarchs** are considered to be part of the former group

By implication:

Who are the Jews? Those who murdered the Son of the Benefactor

What is the “OT”? foretelling of the coming of the Messiah, who is Jesus

Calamities befall the Jewish nation due to **their role in the death of Jesus**

“from that time seditions and wars and mischevious plots followed each other in quick succession, and never ceased in the city and in all of Judea until finally the siege of Vespasian overwhelmed them. Thus the divine vengeance overtook the Jews for the crimes which they dared to commit against Christ.”

St. Hilary of Poitiers

Jews viewed as **perpetually perverse**

Approach to interpretation of Jewish history as presented in the “OT”: take things Jewish, i.e., events in Jewish history, and they become the privileged source of divine repudiation

New themes emerge:

St Ephraem

The synagogue is a “**harlot**”; Christian must not participate or even observe
Impugning the moral character of Jewish worship as well as inauthenticity of Jewish scripture

Beginning of **sexualizing Jews and Judaism** in a negative light
“harlot”: women outside social norms; condemned in scripture;
sexuality run amok and able to undermine observant male

Not yet in league with the Devil or Satan, but are not pure, whole, spiritual, honorable

Parallel treatment of women

As women, the female, and the female body symbolize all that God and God's people are NOT and are the “Devil's Gateway,” Judaism is feminized and symbolized by the unredeemed and unredeemable harlot

Repeated accusation that **Satan dwells among Jews as a partner**

Concern: **Christians who were being proselytized by Jews** and whom Ephraem feared were slipping back into the religion of Judaism

Therefore portrayed Jews as enemies of Christianity, like Satan, to emphasize the contrast between the two enemies, namely, that Christianity was godly and true and Judaism was Satanic and false

St. Jerome (374-419)

View of Jews: “**serpents**”; their image is found in **Judas**; their psalms and prayers are the “**braying of donkeys**”

Develops ideas of Eusebius, Hilary, and Ephraem as well as sees for future theological claims

Serpents: loathsome, cunning, deadly, full of poison
: opposes God and causes expulsion from Eden

Judas: betrays the son of the Benefactor
for money
betrays friendship
Cannot be trusted
Is not loyal
Appears as part of the company of disciples, but is not

“braying of donkeys”: noise, bothersome, devoid of content

Beginning of the Teaching of Contempt

Gregory of Nyssa

View of Jews: no clear ranking, but very detailed

Acts: slayers of the Lord; murderers of the prophets, slanderers, scoffers, Stoners

Characteristics: enemies of God, haters of God, adversaries of grace, enemies of their father's faith, wicked men, men of darkened minds, haters of godness, sinners

Company: advocates of the devil, brood of vipers, leaven of the Pharisees, congregation of demons

Opposition: to the Lord, prophets, God, grace, goodness, their fathers

St. John Chrysostom (culled from eight sermons in Antioch, *Adversos Judaeos, Against the Jews or Against the Judaizers* 386-387)

View of Jews:

Are lustful, rapacious, greedy, and perfidious bandits...inveterate murderers, destroyers, men possessed by the devil...debauchers and drunkards...manners of the pig and the lusty goat...know only one thing, to satisfy their gullets, get drunk, to kill and maim one another...impure and impious(1:4)

Have surpassed the ferocity of wild beasts, for they murder their offspring and immolate them to the devil (1:6)

How dare Christians have the slightest converse with Jews?...Most miserable of all men. (4:1)

View of synagogue:

assembly of criminals, den of thieves, cavern of devils, abyss of perdition (1:2; 6:6)

a place of shame and ridicule (1:3) ...as are also souls of the Jews (1:4, 6)

domicile of the Devil (1:6)

worship the devil; rites are criminal and impure; religion is a disease (3:1)

a theater and a house of prostitution...a cavern of brigands (5:5)

Response of God

Flee their assemblies, flee their houses, and far from venerating the synagogue because of the books it contains, hold it in hatred and aversion for the same reason (1:5)

God hates the Jews and always hated the Jews (6:4, 1:7)

On Judgment day he will say to Judaisers, Depart from Me, for you have had intercourse with my murderers. It is the duty of Christians to hate the Jews: He who can never love Christ enough will never have done fighting against those [Jews] who hate him. (7:1)

I [Chrysostom] hate the Jews...because they outrage the Law.

His objective was to **dissuade Christians from reverting to Judaism** by emphasizing what he saw as the wickedness of the Jews and their religion

But before I draw up my battle line against the Jews, I will gladly talk to those who are members of our own body, those who seem to belong to our ranks although they observe the Jewish rites and make every effort to defend them. Because they do this, as I see it, they deserve a stronger condemnation than any Jew." (2:4)

St. Augustine (*The City of God* in Book 18, Chapter 46)

"The Jews who slew him [Jesus], and would not believe in Him, because it behoved Him to die and rise again, were yet more miserably wasted by the Romans, and utterly rooted out of their kingdom, where aliens had already ruled over them, and were dispersed through the lands (so that indeed there is no place where they are not), and are thus by their own Scriptures a testimony to us that we have not forged the prophecies about Christ."

According to Augustine, the **survival and scattering of the Jews** was willed by God for them **to give testimony** everywhere that the prophecies that Christian interpret as proving that Jesus is the Messiah are **no Christian invention**, being **preserved** also by what he calls the **Church's enemies**, the Jews

Thus the survival and scattering of the Jews fulfills the prophecy: "My God hath shown me concerning mine enemies, that Thou shalt not slay them, let they should at last forget Thy law: disperse them in Thy might."

Based on the writings of the Church Fathers (St. Justin, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Augustine, *inter alia*) this tradition stresses several themes:

the **guilt** of the Jewish people for deicide;
Christ Killers and Rejected by God

the assertion that the Hebrew Bible, designated the *Old Testament*, is a **preparation** for what Christians termed the *New Testament* and, therefore, contains references to **the coming of Jesus**;

that Jewish teachers are **blind guides**.

Neither this tradition nor Christianity, however, officially called for the extermination of the Jews. But the **reason for this restraint** is deplorable.

For example, St. Augustine observed that the Jews should be spared in order that all could see what happens to those who reject the messiahship of Jesus. The Jews are condemned to **eternal reprobation**, a **visible sign of God's displeasure.**"

Role of Jews seen as divinely ordained

However, by the end of the fourth century, Jews had been stamped with one of the most damaging myths they would face:

They had become **Christ-killers, blamed for the death of Jesus**

While the actual crucifixion of Jesus was carried out by the Romans, responsibility for the death of Jesus was placed on the Jews

After the ecumenical council, **Nicaea**, the Christian Church **formulates its policy** towards Jews:

The Jews must continue to exist **for the sake of Christianity** in seclusion and humiliation

Summary of fourth century *adversos judaeos*

Full development in Fourth Century Jews are portrayed as children of the Devil who do not love God (Jesus).

Jews bear collective and eternal guilt for the death of Jesus: 'His blood be on us and on our children!' (Matthew 27:24)

Even granting the fact that the term 'the Jews' was quite probably applied to all those the writer viewed as opponents, it soon was **applied specifically to actual Jews**

Jews were accused of being unable to properly read their own scriptures, and killing their own prophets."

FREE WRITE FOR PUBLIC SHARING

The Medieval Period (6th century – 1450 C.E.) Sixth Century

Political Situation

Religious Minorities Harshly Treated in the Middle Ages

All religious nonconformists were harshly treated by ruling authorities

Heresy: holding an opinion contrary to Church doctrines
: crime punishable by death

Jews: seen as a threat to established religion
: as the most conspicuous non-conforming group, they were attacked
Ruthless leaders convinced their largely uneducated followers that
all non-believers must be killed
Sometimes the leaders of the Church led the persecutions
At other times, the popes and bishops protected the Jews

New Laws Set Jews Apart

The Justinian Code, compiled by scholars for Emperor Justinian I, (527-565 C.E.)
Excluded Jews from giving evidence in lawsuits in which Christians took part

Forbid the reading of the Bible in Hebrew, only Greek or Latin were allowed

Forbade marriage between Christians and Jews

outlawed the conversion of Christians to Judaism in 533 C.E.

Theological Situation

“The anti-Judaism of medieval Christianity associated Jews with those figures whom society most **feared and despised**: witches, sorcerers, murderers, well-poisoners, and the Devil. [Encyclopedia of Genocide, Vol. 1 ed. Israel W. Charny]

Jews are seen as allies of the Devil, the anti-Christ
Demonic, wicked, unbeliever, doomed

Jews seen as not just ‘wrong’ but inherently evil
Satanic, Perverse, Greedy

The **association with the Devil** also received expression in the arts
For example, Michelangelo’s statue of Moses in the Sistine Chapel:
Mistranslating the biblical expression ‘rays’ of light as ‘horns’ of light
emanating from Moses’s head, the artist captured the sentiment of popular
culture in imagining Jews as devils. [Encyclopedia of Genocide, Vol. 1 ed.
Israel W. Charny]

Pope Gregory I: spoke out against antisemitism, but for the sake of conversion of Jews
Words

**Session 2: Christianity's Original Sin: anti-Judaism
(150 CE – 1789)**

“For it is necessary to gather those who are at odds with the Christian religion, the unity of faith, by meekness, by kindness, by admonishing, by persuading, lest these...should be repelled by threats and terror. They ought, therefore, to come together to hear from you the Word of God in a kindly frame of mind, rather than stricken with dread or a harshness that goes beyond due limits.”

Censure of Virgil, Bishop of Arles, and Theodore, bishop of Marseilles
Baptized Jews by force; are to desist

Admonition to Paschasius, bishop of Naples (November 602)
Jews are not to be disturbed in the celebration of their religious festivals

“Those who, with sincere intent, desire to lead people outside the Christian religion to the correct faith, ought to make the effort by means of what is pleasant, not with what is harsh, lest opposition drive afar the mind of men whom reasoning...could have attracted. Those who act otherwise...demonstrate that they are concerned with their own enterprises, rather than with those of God!”

FREE WRITE FOR PUBLIC SHARING: What is your assessment of Pope Gregory I's intention when he seeks to moderate Christian behavior towards Jews? (5 min)

Tenth Century

Function of Judaism – solidify Christian identity through policies

Expropriation of Jewish property as a visible, tangible sign of God's displeasure, judgment, and repudiation

Function of Jews: solidify Christian identity by blaming others for the death of Jesus

Good Friday custom: symbolic blow to local Jew from Church official

Jews and Judaism function as a **negative verification/confirmation** of Christian faith by being and symbolizing all Christianity and Christians **are not**

Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

1007: Pope Alexander VIII

“The Jews of France, victims of persecution, are taken under papal protection

ushered in the **Crusades**

A series of campaigns whose purpose was ostensibly to free the Holy City of Jerusalem from the hold of the infidels, for example, Muslims.

First Crusade: Pope Urban II preached the first crusade on 27 November 1095; the marchers began their murderous activity in May, 1096

In a 7 month period from Jan to July 1096, murdered approximately ten thousand Jews – approximately one-third of the Jewish population of Germany and Northern France

Persecutions of this period caused many Jews to leave Western Europe for the relative safety of Central and Eastern Europe

1120 and Pope Calixtus II: *Sicut Judaeis* (the Constitution for the Jews)

The official position of the papacy regarding Jews throughout the Middle Ages and later; reaffirmed by many popes through the 15th century

Intended to protect Jews who suffered during the First Crusade

Forbade, on the pain of excommunication:

Christians from coercing Jews to convert

Christians from harming Jews

Christians from taking Jewish property

Christians from disturbing the celebration of Jewish festivals

Christians from interfering with Jewish cemeteries

1146: St. Bernard of Clairvaux

“Is it not a far better triumph for the Church to convince and convert the Jews than to put them all to the sword? Has that prayer which the Church offers for the Jews...been instituted in vain?”

Pope Eugenius III preached the **Second Crusade**

Many Jews elected to die for the sanctification of God's name (*al Kiddush Hashem*) rather than be forcibly baptized; martyred for their faith

Ritual Murderers/Blood Libel

Closely associated with subsequent Crusades was the charge of **ritual murder**.

First recorded in Norwich, England

Superstitious priest and insane monk charged that the murder of a Christian boy was part of a Jewish plot to kill Christians

Boy was probably was killed by an outlaw but myth persisted

Canard: Jews **murdered a Christian boy** 'in mockery of the Passion of the Savior.'

closely associated notion that the event had been **planned far in advance** by a meeting of rabbis.

Jews were alleged to use the blood of Christ both to bake their *matza* (unleavened bread) and to add to the Passover wine

Theological implication: the practice was viewed as profanation of Christian Eucharist

Thirteenth Century

1215: Fourth Lateran Council stamped the Jews as a people apart
Decreed that Jews must wear special clothes and marks to distinguish them from Christians

Introduces the Jewish Badge

A time of:

expulsion from England
severe persecution in western France and burning Talmud in Paris
murder of over 100,000 Jews in Germany and Austria

Desecration of the Communion Host

Unfounded charge

At issue: **profound crisis of faith** within Christianity
Teaching of transubstantiation under question: real presence?

Verification of truth of real presence by Jews
If even Jews know its truth, Christians should

Anti-Christ is witness to real presence of Christ in the eucharist

Pope Gregory X “Against the Blood Libel”

“And most falsely do these Christians claim that the Jews have secretly and furtively carried away these children and killed them, and that the Jews offer sacrifice from the heart and blood of these children, since their law in this matter precisely and expressly forbids Jews to sacrifice, eat, or drink the blood, or eat the flesh of animals having claws...nevertheless very many Jews are often seized and detained unjustly because of this.

We decree, therefore, that Christians needs not to be obeyed against Jews in a case or situation of this type, and we order that Jews seized under such a silly pretext be freed from imprisonment, and that they shall not be arrested henceforth on such a miserable pretext...”

Fourteenth Century

Black Death/Bubonic Plague (1347-1350)

Approximately 1/3 of Europe's population dies of the disease

Response of populace to the disease:

God's punishment for their sins or work of demons

Result: intense scapegoating in Western Europe

Rumor: plague caused by Jews who poisoned well and food

Action: two years of violent attacks against Jews across Europe

Tens of thousands of Jews killed by their neighbors despite the fact that many Jews also died of the plague

According to some: the worst massacres of Jews in Europe before Hitler's rise to power

Fifteenth Century

1419: Pope Martin V

“Whereas the Jews are made in the image of God and a remnant of them will one day be saved, and whereas they have besought our protection: following in the footsteps of our predecessors we command that

They not be molested in their synagogues

Their laws, rights, and customs be not assailed

They be not baptized by force, constrained to observe Christian festivals,
nor to wear new badges

They be not hindered in their business relations with Christians.

England

Geoffrey Chaucer and “The Prioress’s Tale” of the Canterbury Tales

Wrote of a devout little Christian child who was murdered by Jews affronted at his singing a hymn as he passed through the Jewry, or Jewish quarter, of a city in Asia

Ironic representation of Chaucer’s sentiments that the Prioress is seen as a hypocrite whose cruelty and bigotry belies her pious prose?

Germany

Franciscan John of Capistrano

“Scourge of the Jews” Inquisitor

Incites persecution and expulsion of Jews from cities in Germany

Vienna Edict (1421)

Persecution of Jews in Vienna and its environs

Confiscation of their possessions

Conversion of Jewish children

270 Jews burned at the stake

Council of Basel

Established the concept of physical separation of Jews in cities - ghetto

Decree:

Jews must live in separate quarters from Christians

Only exception: reasons of business

Curfew at night

Ghetto is to be surrounded by high walls with gates

Guarded by Christian sentries

Locked at night and during Christian holidays

Irony: served as protection and survival of Jews

Not allowed to attend universities

Required to attend sermons in Christian churches

Result: the ghettos froze the way of life for the Jews because they were segregated and not permitted to mix freely

Established schools and synagogues

Developed a life separate from the rest of the community

Spain: Golden Age and Inquisition

Unlike Jews in other parts of Western Europe, the Jews of Spain enjoyed a Golden Age of political influence and religious tolerance from the 11th to the 14th century

1411-1412 Preaching of Dominican Friar Vincente Ferrer

Oppressive legislation against Jews as an outcome of Ferrer's preaching

1413-1414 Disputation of Tortosa

Most important and longest of the Christian-Jewish disputations

Consequence: mass conversions and intensified persecutions

1480: Inquisition established

1483: Torquemada appointed Inquisitor General of Spanish Inquisition

1490-1491: Blood Libel in town of La Guardia

Alleged child victim became revered as a saint

1492 signaled a wave of intense emotional excitement that followed the Spanish conquest of Granada

Result of intense nationalism: both Jews and Muslims expelled from Spain

Rationale: unification of Spain had been aided by the Catholic Church

Catholic Church, through the inquisition, insisted on religious conformity

Loyalty to the country became equated with absolute commitment to Christianity

Result: the Church-led Inquisition burned thousands of Jews at the stake for their religious belief

Treatment of Jews throughout the Medieval Period

Burned at the stake or otherwise slaughtered

Forced conversion or death

Marginalized and without legal protection

Marked

**Session 2: Christianity's Original Sin: anti-Judaism
(150 CE – 1789)**

By the end of the Middle Ages, fear and superstition had created a deep rift between Jews and Christians

European peoples began to think of themselves as belonging to a nation

Jews were thought of as outsiders

Not legally allowed in England until the middle of the 17th century

Not legally allowed in France until the 18th century with the French Revolution

FREE WRITE AND PUBLIC SHARING: How do you understand the link between nationalism and antisemitism?

Sixteenth Century

1516: Ghetto established in Vienna

1531: Inquisition established in Portugal

Expulsions between 1535 and 1593

Tunisia; Kingdoms of Naples and Prague; Genoa, Italy; Bavaria; Papal States
(Italy)

Protestant Reformation

Split Christianity into different branches

Did little to reduce antisemitism

Martin Luther

The response of Martin Luther to Judaism and the Jews reveals the **structural tension between Judaism and Christianity**. [Encyclopedia of Genocide, Vol. 1 ed. Israel W. Charny]

At first Luther was sympathetic to the Jews.

After it became clear that the Jews were not going to convert, the founder of the Reformation wrote *On the Jews and Their Lies*, a **vicious diatribe**.

Called for, among other things, **burning, prohibition of their religion, and expulsion from the Christian polity**

Synagogue/Schools/Homes/Prayer books

“First their synagogue or school is to be set on fire and what won’t burn is to be heaped over with dirt and dumped on, so that no one can see a stone or chunk of it forever...Second, their houses are to be torn down and destroyed in the same way...Third, they are to have all their prayer books and Talmudics taken from them...

Rabbis

Fourth, their rabbis are to be forbidden henceforth to teach, on penalty of life and limb...On penalty of life and limb, they are forbidden publicly to praise God, to thank [God], to pray [to God], to teach [of God] among us and ours...And furthermore, they shall be forbidden to utter the name of God in our hearing; no value shall be accorded the Jewish mouth by us Christians, so that he may utter the name of God in our hearing, but whoever hears it from a Jew shall report him to the authorities or throw pig droppings on him...

Jews

Fifth, the Jews are to be deprived of walkways and streets...Sixth, they are to be forbidden lending for interest, and all of the cash and holdings of silver and gold are to be taken from them and put to one side for safe keeping...Seventh, the young, strong Jews and Jewesses are to have flail, axe, and spade put into their hands.”

1555: Pope Paul IV (during the Reformation)

Decreed that all Jews

must be segregated into their own quarters (ghettos)
were forbidden to leave their homes at night
were banned from all but the most strenuous occupations
had to wear a distinctive badge – a yellow hat

could not own property outside the ghetto
not allowed to study in higher education institutions or become lawyers,
pharmacists, painters, politicians, notaries, or architects
doctors could only treat Jewish patients
forced to pay an annual stipend to pay the salaries of the Catholic officials
who supervised the Ghetto Finance Administration and the Jewish
Community Organization
forced to pay a stipend for Christian missionaries who proselytized to the
Jews
Forced to pay a yearly sum to the Cloister of the Converted

The state helped with welfare work, but gave no money toward education or
caring for the sick

Jews not allowed in Guilds or to work in most trades

The association of Jews with **economic affairs** led to unfortunate events

Jews were forbidden to own land, but could and did dwell in cities where they
dealt with money matters.

The emergence of Jews as **tax farmers**, that is, those who collected taxes
from peasants who worked on the land owned by nobility, earned them the
opprobrium of both groups.

Money lending was forbidden to Christians because it “endangered Christian
souls”

Jewish souls were deemed “lost” so it was left to them to provide this
necessary service in the expanding commercial life of Europe

In times of **economic uncertainty**, dislike of the Jew as tax collector and money lender
was **coupled with religious differences** to make Jewish communities the targets of
attack

Seventeenth Century

1614: Vincent Fettmilch, anti-Jewish guild leader in Frankfurt, Germany, attacks the Jews of the town and forces them to leave

1624: Ghetto established in Ferrara, Italy

1648: **Decade of Pogroms in Poland**

Up to one half million Jews slaughtered and 300 communities destroyed
Initiated by Bogdan Chmielnicki, leader of the Cossacks and peasant uprising against Polish rule in the Ukraine

1650: Jews of Tunisia confined to special quarters

1655-1656: massacre of Jews during the wars of Poland against Sweden and Russia

1670: Expulsion from Vienna; Blood Libel charge at Metz, France

Eighteenth Century

Enlightenment

Shift from the Age of Faith to the Age of reason

Some improvements: with the growth of sciences, some greater tolerance, a more industrial society, and the growth of banking and trade

French Revolution

Western Jews no longer accorded second-class citizenship

1791: emancipation decree in France accords Jews full citizenship

However, was given 'for the betterment of the Jews'

Expectation: **Jews would convert if given the opportunity**

Jews allowed out of ghettos

Problem: many Jews from the ghettos were not able to take their place in the outside world

Knew little about the world outside the ghetto walls

Spoke their own language, Yiddish, and not the language of their country people

1711: Johann Andres Eisenmenger writes, "Judaism Unmasked"

The work denounces Judaism

Had a formative influence on modern antisemitic polemics

1712: blood libel charge in Sandomierz, Poland after which Jews of the town are expelled

1715: Pope Pius VI issues a severe "Edict Concerning Jews"

Renews all former restrictions against them

1791: Pale of Settlements

25 provinces of Czarist Russia established

Jews permitted permanent residence

Jews forbidden to settle elsewhere in Russia

Secularization of Antisemitism

The identity of Jews with evil was so pervasive that even after the role of the Church weakened after the Enlightenment, the secularization of antisemitism was ready

European 'liberals' demanded that Jews sever themselves from their roots and their traditions

Voltaire: 'The Jews were the enemies of mankind.' (misanthrope)

A new foundation for prejudice was laid which changed the history of antisemitism

**Session 2: Christianity's Original Sin: anti-Judaism
(150 CE – 1789)**

Pseudo-scientific reasons were used to prove the differences between Jews and non-Jews and to set them apart again in European society

Religious teachings of Christianity became discredited by the 18th century's stress on reason

BUT

Christianity's negative teachings about Jews and Judaism remained in force

For example, Voltaire: despised Judaism both for giving rise to Christianity and for what he perceived as its retrograde superstitious ways