

ANTISEMITISM

Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present

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INTRODUCTION

FROM 1941 TO 1945 THE NAZIS KILLED approximately 6 million Jews—two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe. Some 1.5 million of the murdered were children; almost 90 percent of Jewish children in German-occupied lands perished. Written into the history of Western civilization was an episode that would forever cast doubt on the Enlightenment conception of human goodness, rationality, and the progress of civilization. Historians and moralists continue to ponder why Germans felt driven to murder every Jew in their grasp and, in the process, to deliberately humiliate and abuse their defenseless victims. The Nazi leaders who ordered the Final Solution and many of their minions who sadistically clubbed, whipped, shot, starved, and worked Jews to death and systematically gassed them did so because they were gripped by a demonological antisemitism that saw Jews everywhere as the source of all evil, dangerous criminals who plotted to rule Germany and the world. Often their paranoia was expressed in pseudobiological terms: The Jews were racial inferiors, subhumans who defiled Aryan blood and corrupted European culture. Driven by this mythical image of the Jew, the Nazis regarded themselves as noble idealists engaged in the biological and spiritual purification of Europe.

Mythmaking was humanity's first way of thinking; it was the earliest attempt to explain the beginnings of the universe and human history, to make life comprehensible. Originating in sacred rites, ritual dances, and ceremonies, myths narrated the deeds of gods, who, in some remote past, had brought forth the world and human beings. Holding that human destiny was determined by the gods, Mesopotamians and Egyptians, the founders of the first civilizations, interpreted their experiences through myths. These myths gave Near Eastern peoples a framework with which to pattern their experiences into a meaningful order, make sense out of nature, justify inherited rules of conduct, and try to overcome the uncertainty of existence. It was the great achievement of the ancient Greeks to break with the mythopoeic outlook of

the Near East and to conceive a new way of viewing nature and human society, one that is the basis of the Western scientific and philosophical tradition. Rising above magic, miracles, mystery, authority, and custom, the Greeks discovered the procedures and invented the terminology that permit a rational understanding of the physical world and human experience. The Greeks forged the tools of rational thought, but mythical thinking has never been subdued. Myths, which appeal primarily to the emotions rather than to reason, have always exercised a powerful hold over human thought and behavior. The Nazi era demonstrated how quickly and completely people can surrender their capacity for logical and independent thinking and embrace mythical conceptions of history and race; it revealed that even in an age of sophisticated science, the human mind remains attracted to irrational beliefs and mythical imagery. On several levels September 11 demonstrated that fact anew.

In 1943 the Nazi researcher Helmut Schramm published *Jewish Ritual Murders: An Historical Inquiry*, which collected accounts of Christian children purported to be tortured and murdered by Jews as part of a religious ritual, a bizarre legend that had flourished in the Middle Ages and still endured into the twentieth century and helped make the Holocaust possible. Heinrich Himmler, Reichführer-SS and a principal organizer of the Final Solution, greeted the book enthusiastically. He ordered “a great many copies” to be distributed to fellow SS down to the rank of colonel and to *Einsatz-Kommandos* (company-sized murder-unit), above all those “busy with the Jewish question.” To stir up local populations against Jews, he demanded immediate investigations of ritual murder in those areas that still had Jews and the initiation of legal proceedings. “Experts in Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria will take up the whole ritual murder question, and we shall sensationalize them in our press.” So doing will “facilitate the evacuation [a euphemism for deportation and murder] of Jews from these countries.” In cooperation with the German foreign office, Himmler proposed “pure antisemitic clandestine broadcasts” to England and the United States, which should be spiced up with lurid images of and tales about Jews such as those Julius Streicher, editor of the notorious weekly *Der Stürmer*, published. Himmler ordered investigation of English police reports and court records for instances of missing children, “so that we can report in our broadcasts to England that in locale X a child is missing and is probably another case of Jewish ritual murder.” At the time Himmler’s forces were murdering hundreds of thousands of Jewish children. Himmler was so convinced of the universal resonance of the ritual murder accusation that he was confident “we could give anti-Semitism an incredible virulence world-

wide with the help of anti-Semitic propaganda in English and perhaps even in Russian by giving publicity to ritual murders.”¹

This canard of ritual murder, which true-believer Himmler circulated among his execution squads to strengthen morale, was one of several myths inherited from the Christian past that the Nazis employed to rouse hatred and mobilize public opinion against Jews. Over the centuries the cumulative effect of these myths was the dehumanization and demonization of the Jew. Thus in the Middle Ages Jews were seen as “children of the Devil,” “servants of Satan” conspiring to destroy Christian society; in Nazi mythology, a product of a secular world, the servants of Satan were transmuted into worldwide racial degenerates plotting to destroy Germany and rule the planet.

This book treats several of the myths that have made antisemitism so lethal in various periods from the Middle Ages to World War II: the Jews as deicides; the Jews as ritual murderers; the Jews as agents of Satan and international conspirators; and the Jews as greedy, materialistic, conniving Shylocks and unscrupulous financial manipulators. In addition to these historic myths, we also treat the new, maliciously manufactured myth of Holocaust denial, another groundless belief that is used to stir up Jew-hatred. Finally, we examine the antisemitism of the Nation of Islam, which has recycled and adapted antique antisemitic myths for their own ends and also manufactured a new one—the Jews as the principal force behind the slave trade.

Antisemitism has very little to do with the actual behavior of Jews or the strictures of their highly ethical religion—indeed, antisemites usually are totally ignorant of the rich tradition of rabbinical writings that discuss, often wisely and insightfully, biblical themes and Jewish laws—but is rooted in delusory perceptions that are accepted as authoritative and passed on and embellished from generation to generation. As such, antisemitism affords a striking example of the perennial appeal, power, and danger of mythical thinking—of elevating to the level of objective truth beliefs that have little or no basis in fact but provide all-encompassing, emotionally satisfying explanations of life and history. In the period from the late nineteenth century through World War II, the widespread belief in the myth of the world Jewish conspiracy demonstrates that even educated, intelligent people can be moved and unified by baseless myths that provide simple and gratifying explanations and resolutions for the complexities of the modern world. Democratic society is continually threatened by such an abandonment of reason and regression to mythical modes of thought and behavior.

It is a painful but inescapable truth that antisemitism, which seethes with hate, was spawned and nourished by Christianity, which reveres a Jewish

prophet who preached love and compassion. The New Testament and the writings of the Church Fathers often refer to Jews and Judaism contemptuously. Jews were depicted as an accursed people, children of the Devil collectively condemned by God to suffer for rejecting and killing Christ. This degrading image of the Jew was propagated over the centuries in numerous books, sermons, works of art, and folklore, and vestiges endure into the twenty-first century. Two thousand years of Christian anti-Judaism, which taught that Judaism was without value and that Jews were wicked, hardened Christians' hearts against Jews. Why should Christians feel compassion for a people cursed by God and fated to be victims for their unpardonable sin of rejecting Jesus? This mind-set, deeply embedded in the Christian outlook, helps to explain why so many people were receptive to anti-Jewish propaganda, were willing to participate in genocide, or were indifferent to Jewish suffering.

Typical of this uninterrupted flow of contempt for Jews is the Passion play performed by the villagers of Oberammergau in Bavaria roughly every ten years since 1634. In the Middle Ages and early modern times, after the performance of a Passion play, which was staged in many towns and villages, spectators, inflamed by the depiction of a frenzied Jewish mob taunting Jesus, often poured into the Jewish ghetto to kill, maim, and vandalize. For centuries Holy Week, when Passion plays were performed, was a time of fear for Jews. Since the Vatican's promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time) in 1965, the Oberammergau text has been gradually revised to moderate the message traditionally conveyed to the audience: The treacherous and bloodthirsty Jewish deicides are collectively and eternally guilty for the crucifixion. In 1860 a Scottish writer, after seeing the play, thoughtfully commented on the hatred this message fomented:

With strange emotions you gazed upon the executioners as upon the wild beasts when they tore his mantle into shreds, and cast lots for his vesture; and the Jewish race appeared hateful in your eyes, as you watched them gathering around the cross, looking upon the man they had crucified and railing at him, and taunting him with his powerlessness and his pain. Then for the first time you seemed to understand the significance of those ungovernable explosions that in the history of the middle ages one reads of, when sudden outbursts of hatred against the Hebrew race have taken place, and have been followed by cruelties and barbarities unrivalled in history. Just such a feeling seemed excited in this Oberammergau audience by this representation.²

Adolf Hitler, who saw a performance in 1934, told intimates during the war that "to save future generations. . . it is vital that the Passion Play be con-

tinued at Oberammergau; for never has the menace of Jewry been so convincingly portrayed as in this presentation of what happened in the times of the Romans.”³ And in the year 2000 a German author, after describing the Passion play as “the story of the man whose message set worlds in motion for two thousand years,” added reflectively and solemnly: “But this is also the story of a man whose followers, the Christians, brought unbelievable suffering into the world. Their religious zeal recoiled from no act of violence and left a bloody trail through the centuries. Millions of Jews—the people who shared the faith of Jesus—died in the twentieth century. They had to die because the church, and yes, the Passion Play for centuries sowed the seeds of anti-Semitism, of Jew-hating. The Nazis harvested a well-fertilized field.”⁴

To be sure, there is a crucial difference between Christian anti-Judaism, whose epicenter is the myth of deicide, and modern antisemitism, which is powered by nationalist and racist myths that castigate Jews as an alien and dangerous race threatening the survival of the nation.* During the nineteenth century, under the influence of the liberal ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, Jews in most European lands gained emancipation; that is, they could leave the ghettos, to which they had been legally confined, engage in trades and professions from which they had been barred, and vote and hold office like other citizens. The contributions of newly emancipated Jews to European intellectual, cultural, and commercial life was astonishing. But their very achievements often aroused resentment, and no matter how much Jews tried to assimilate, many of their countrymen, particularly those politically on the Right, continued to view Jews, even baptized ones who considered themselves Christians, as hateful people. And Christian clergy, as they had done for centuries, crudely denigrated and demeaned Jews to their parishioners in venomous language and images that perpetuated an ancient hatred. Walter Zwi Bacharach, who studied nineteenth-century German Catholic sermons, informs us:

One need only examine a list of the terms and epithets used by the preachers to understand how their audiences perceived the Jews: murderers, criminals,

* The distinction between anti-Judaism and antisemitism is of fundamental importance to historical understanding, even though the boundary dividing them is vague and fluctuating. One must avoid any kind of apologetic in the use of the term anti-Judaism that would separate the two phenomena as unconnected. Historically, one is the seedbed of the other or, as Gavin Ian Langmuir argues in a seminal essay, it is necessary to approach “Anti-Judaism as the Necessary Preparation for Anti-Semitism,” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 2 (1971): 385–89.

evil ones, sinners, enraged, inhuman, despicable, corrupt, desecrators, impudent, cunning serpents, poisonous, enemies of God. These words were not directed at individual Jews, but at the entire Jewish people: “They, once the preferred among all nations, have now become garbage, and in this miserable conditions they live to this very day.” “The sworn enemy of Christianity is the *entire Jewish people* and the evidence of their rejection by God may be found in the Scriptures.”⁵

In the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church opposed the emancipation of the Jews, insisting that they remain in ghettos, be prevented from interacting with Christians, and be denied equal rights. In its view, which dated back to St. Augustine in the fifth century, Jews should remain degraded until they renounced their anachronistic religion and embraced the saving truth of Christianity. The Jews immured since 1555 in the ghetto of Rome, which was ruled by the popes until the completion—under liberal, anticlerical auspices—of Italian unification in 1870, suffered oppression, humiliation—including, as in the Middle Ages, having to wear a yellow star of David on their clothing—and poverty, consequences of long-standing papal policy. After 1870 and until the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, papal pronouncements regarding Jews normally assumed that their proper status was ghetto subjugation and restrictions. In the 1840s Pope Pius IX had ended forced attendance at conversionist sermons in the Papal States. But forced conversions—of which Edgardo Mortara* was a terrible example—ended only after 1870, when Italian unification was completed and papal political power ended. To the eve of World War I, Vatican-controlled publications crudely supported the accusation that Jews ritually murdered Christians for their blood; this accusation itself represented a retreat from the condemnation of the ritual murder charge by several earlier popes. Moreover, in their struggle against the forces of modernity—secularism, liberalism, and socialism—which they identified with Jews, popes fostered anti-semitic movements in Europe; from behind the scenes Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) supported the virulently antisemitic Catholic Social Party in Austria and smiled on its leader, Karl Lueger, as he smiled on the French antisemitic volcano Édouard Drumont, the publicist who utilized largely Catholic sources and took pains to be sure that his work was free of theological errors.

* Edgardo Mortara was a Jewish child secretly baptized by a maid when he was ill and kidnapped in 1858 by the papal guard from his parents in Bologna. The boy was taken to a monastery and educated as a ward of Pius IX, then ordained a priest; all intercessions and protests by his family, Jewish organizations, and governments backed by strong public opinion were in vain.

Moreover, Catholic writers like the journalist writing in the Vatican daily *L'Osservatore Romano* in 1892 gloried in antisemitism. He explained that there was true and good antisemitism, which is “nothing other than Christianity, completed and perfected in Catholicism.” In contrast stood bad antisemitism, which, secular and political, is actually anti-Christian and nothing but a contrivance of the Jews to discredit good antisemitism. By such twists to blame the victim, the pogroms—widespread attacks on Jews that were organized, riotous, murderous, and sanctioned by the state—raging in Russia since 1880 were, according to the writer, designed to rouse public opinion in favor of the Jews, who were, in fact, “the true persecutors.”⁶

It is true, of course, that Nazi racism, which reviled and condemned Jews because of their genes, was incompatible with Christianity, which welcomes all people who embrace Jesus, regardless of race or ethnic background. Traditional Christian anti-Judaism saw Jews as religiously, not racially, inferior. Nevertheless, long-standing negative Christian attitudes toward Jews, particularly when embedded in denigrating myths, prepared people, including many clergy, to believe and endorse the pagan Nazi mythology and to remain apathetic to Jewish suffering. The Nazis' definition of the Jew as an alien Other embodying pure evil predated Nazism; it was a core and broadly held view of Christianity for centuries. James Carroll, a Catholic writer and former priest, underscores this symbiotic relationship between Christian and Nazi antisemitism:

Auschwitz is the climax of the story that begins at Golgotha [and] when seen in the links of causality, reveals that the hatred of Jews has been . . . a central action of Christian history, reaching to the core of Christian character. . . . Because the hatred of Jews had been made holy, it became lethal. . . . However modern Nazism was, it planted its roots in the soil of age-old Church attitudes and a nearly unbroken chain of Church-sponsored acts of Jew hatred. However pagan Nazism was, it drew its sustenance from groundwater poisoned by the Church's most solemnly held ideology—its *theology*.⁷

And David I. Kertzer, who examined Catholic publications from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, including some closely identified with the popes and upper echelons of the church hierarchy, assesses the close link between modern antisemitism and the church:

As modern anti-Semitic movements took shape at the end of the nineteenth century, the Church was a major player in them, constantly warning people of the rising “Jewish peril.” What, after all, were the major tenets of this modern anti-Semitic movement if not such warnings as these: Jews are trying to take

over the world; Jews have already spread their voracious tentacles around the nerve centers of Austria, Germany, France, Hungary, Poland, and Italy; Jews are rapacious and merciless, seeking at all costs to get their hands on all the world's gold, having no concern for the number of Christians they ruin in the process; Jews are unpatriotic, a foreign body ever threatening the well-being of the people among whom they live; special laws are needed to protect society, restricting the Jews' rights and isolating them. Every single one of these elements of modern anti-Semitism was not only embraced by the Church but also actively promulgated by official and unofficial Church organs.⁸

It is thus no exaggeration to say with the British historian Bernard Wasserstein that, once the Nazi regime was destroyed, "The most important antisemitic institution in Europe in 1945, one in which anti-Jewish doctrine was deeply embedded in profound historical foundations, was the Roman Catholic Church."⁹ This rendition of the papal posture with regard to the Jews and Judaism suggests that the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* in 1965 represents an extraordinary historical about-face.

For half a century after World War II, antisemitism was disreputable in many circles. In Western lands, academics, clergy, politicians, high government officials, business leaders, and other members of the elite, who had routinely voiced antisemitic sentiments prior to the Nazi era, no longer considered public expressions of Jew-hatred legitimate. Painfully aware of the threat antisemitism poses to democratic values, they were repulsed by classic antisemitic myths that the radical Right sought to perpetuate. They often spoke out forcefully against hate mongering and showed disdain for the extremists who maligned Jews and desecrated Jewish cemeteries and synagogues. Equally important, in recent decades, with the horror of the Holocaust searing Christian consciences, various churches have publicly condemned antisemitism as anti-Christian and eliminated denigrating references to Jews from their liturgies and religious education. Endorsing modern biblical scholarship, they have stressed Jesus' Jewishness and the spiritual heritage that Christians share with Jews—the Hebrew Bible, monotheism, and the prophetic teachings—the spiritual vitality of Judaism in the time of Jesus and after, and the decisive role of the Romans in Jesus' execution. Christian and Jewish groups work together on many levels to promote tolerance and interfaith understanding.*

* These are all hopeful signs, but antisemitism will not die easily. What labors under a strong taboo in public discourse may come forth in private conversation. Thus Billy Graham, the prominent evangelical Baptist minister who has been honored on numerous occasions by Jewish organizations for his defense of Jews and Judaism and the

In recent years, however, the exacerbation of the Arab-Israeli conflict has generated a resurgence of antisemitism in Europe, even among polite circles. The Israeli military campaign in the spring of 2002 in the West Bank in response to repeated suicide bombings that killed and mutilated hundreds of Israeli citizens resulted in a rash of antisemitic incidents in Europe. In several countries—Ukraine, Greece, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Britain, and France—cemeteries were vandalized, Holocaust memorials defaced, synagogues torched, buses transporting Jewish children stoned, and Jews beaten. Some 360 crimes against Jews and Jewish institutions were reported in France, where the violence was most extreme. It is likely that Muslim extremists were responsible for this violence, but antisemitic attitudes were not limited to people of Middle Eastern descent. In demonstrations held in many European cities in support of the Palestinians, Israelis were equated with Nazis, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon with Hitler, and the Israeli flag was burned. At times crowds shouted: “Death to the Jews!” In past decades the most virulent expressions of antisemitism were confined almost exclusively to the fringe groups of the extreme Right that idolized Hitler and revered the Nazi past. Now representatives of the Left—the Greens, trade unionists, socialists, and student organizations—actively participated in the demonstrations and denounced Israel in venomous language.

What is most distressing is the way the press and intellectuals, who previously glossed over the Israeli casualties of suicide bombers, were quick to condemn Israel, often sinking into the ordure of antisemitism. Thus a cartoon in the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* depicted a baby Jesus in the manger looking at an Israeli tank and saying, “Don’t tell me they want to kill me again.” The Vatican daily *L’Osservatore Romano* said that Israel was engaging in “aggression that turns into extermination.” Accepting as true the grotesque Palestinian fabrication that a massacre had taken place at Jenin, the press in several countries accused the Israeli army of engaging in genocide. A number of prominent intellectuals sympathetic to the Palestinian cause revealed their true feelings about Jews: Several British authors rejected Israel’s right to exist and José Saramago, a Nobel laureate in literature, felt it appropriate to “compare what is happening in the Palestinian territories with Auschwitz.” Increasingly, as

religious advisor to several presidents, privately uttered a series of ugly stereotypes about Jews in White House discussions with President Nixon in 1972. All allegations and suspicions were dismissed until the Nixon tapes were made public in 2002. As reported in the *New York Times*, March 17, 2002, 29, Graham said Jews were responsible for “pornography,” had a ruinous “stranglehold” on the United States, and that he hoped to “stand up” and “be able to do something” to correct things.

several commentators have observed, antisemitism is once more becoming intellectually and socially acceptable in Europe.¹⁰

In Muslim lands antisemitism is pervasive and vicious, routinely employing Christian and Nazi myths, which most westerners now regard as repulsive. It needs to be remembered that the Arabs imported German antisemitism in the 1930s and during World War II, a development that was extended when numerous Nazi war criminals and officials found refuge after 1945 in Arab states. Numbers of them were employed in information and propaganda offices and busily disseminated Nazi antisemitic materials, including the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, a work forged by antisemites at the beginning of the twentieth century that purports to show that Jews conspire to dominate the globe. One predictable strand of Arab Islamic antisemitism is Holocaust denial, which “started in Arab writings much earlier than in Europe”: “Did 6 million Jews die?” asked the Palestinian Authority’s appointee, Sheik Ikrimah Sabri, the mufti (a lay adviser on Muslim religious law) of Jerusalem; he answered in the accents of the neo-Nazi Holocaust denier Ernst Zündel: “Let’s desist from this fairy tale exploited by Israel to buy international backing and solidarity.”¹¹ Illogically, on the other hand, the same deniers can wax lyrical in praise of Hitler, lamenting that he did “not finish the job” and left the historic task to the Arabs.

The fountainhead of contemporary Jew-hatred in the Islamic world appears to be the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), who wrote, while in jail in the 1950s, a seminal essay, “Our Struggle with the Jews.” Those who murdered Egyptian president Anwar el-Sadat and those who brought the Ayatollah Khomeini to power in Iran are said to have been his disciples. According to Qutb, “The Jews have confronted Islam with enmity from the moment that the Islamic state was established in Medina [by Muhammad],” that in a “war of fourteen centuries” Islam suffered continuous “trials” and is now prey to “tribulations” and “machinations” by Jews as internal and external enemies. Jews seek the destruction of Islam, Qutb argues, both physically and “in creed.” Thus Qutb makes Jews responsible for the assassination of the third caliph in 656 and the consequent division and permanent weakening of Islam. Thus, too, he explains the occupation of Egypt by the British from 1882 and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. Moreover, in Qutb’s view, Jews are the creators of modernity—equated with Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and other “Jews”—that is destroying Islam. Jewish/Zionist conspirators, by nature evil and malevolent, enlist “lackeys”—Western-educated and Westernizing Muslims, or “Jewish-manufactured Muslims”—who subvert Islam as well as

the Muslims' fighting spirit. Muslims should always remember the teaching of the Koran that "the worst enemies of the Muslims are the Jews" and that "God has cursed them." Over the centuries God has sent "his servants" to punish the Jews, and thus he "brought Hitler to rule over them." Their plot to launch "a Crusader-Zionist war" will, likewise, cause Allah to punish them again by destroying Israel. The seeming continuity of contemporary Islamist conceptions of Jews with Muhammad's struggle against the Jews of Medina and with passages in the Koran, says Ronald Nettler, the editor and translator of Qutb's essay, renders those negative views "Islamically persuasive" in the Middle East and beyond, since they appear to be based on history and tradition.¹²

In the fall of 2001 a conference on racism sponsored by the United Nations in Durban, South Africa, was turned by Arab states into an antisemitic barrage. Among many other extreme antisemitic works, the *Protocols* was distributed wholesale at the conference, and anyone who raised objections on the grounds that the material was forged or fraudulent was shouted down. Elie Wiesel, the survivor of Auschwitz and Nobel peace laureate who was invited to participate in the conference, withdrew on the grounds that it had been turned into a "circus of calumny . . . a meeting of hatred characterized by wickedness" that would

go down in history as a moral catastrophe. . . . The fact that militant Palestinians hate Jews—that is known already. One need only hear the various Islamic leaders and read the books printed by the Palestinian Authority: They preach hatred and violence, not against Zionists but against Jews. Their slogan, naked and brutal and identical everywhere, was keenly felt and even heard in Durban: "Kill the Jews." What is painful is not that the Palestinians and the Arabs voiced their hatred, but the fact that so few delegates had the courage to combat them [or walk out, as the U.S. delegation did]. It is as if in a strange and frightening moment of collective catharsis, everyone removed their masks and revealed their true faces.¹³

The events of September 11, 2001, showed how far antisemitic myths have penetrated the Arab Islamic world. In their response to Osama bin Laden's and Al-Qaeda's crimes, radical Islamists have dredged up long-discredited Christian and European antisemitic myths. In particular, they make wide use of the *Protocols*. And cartoons reincarnate the bloodcurdling originals of Nazi propaganda, including those that appeared in Streicher's *Der Stürmer*. An article of October 14 in *The Jihad Times*, entitled "Zionists could be behind Attack on World Trade Center and Pentagon," demonstrates, "on the basis of

strong evidence,” how the whole cycle of events follows from the *Protocols*. Thus, this “300-member apex Zionist body” of Elders launched the attacks in retaliation for the condemnation at the UN Conference in Durban of Israel’s “religio-ethnic cleansing policy” against the Palestinians. Within two days of that conference the Elders of Zion ordered the Zionist-controlled Federal Bureau of Investigation and Israeli secret service to carry out the attacks. Meeting secretly in Europe, the organization of the Elders, “which has controlled world politics for long,” sought to distract attention from the anti-Israel resolutions at Durban and launch massive propaganda attacks scapegoating Muslims and Islam. According to undisclosed “reliable sources,” the Elders took several steps that reveal their secret hand: They prevented the prime minister of Israel from going on a scheduled visit to New York a day before the attacks, they issued a “secret directive” to four thousand Jews not to report for work on September 11 so that “not a single Israeli or American Jew working in the World Trade Center was reported killed or missing,” and they directed the “Zionist-controlled” media so that “in no time Muslims were portrayed as the real culprits.” September 11, “it is learnt,” is another step by the Elders of Zion in their quest for world dominance: By igniting a great crusading war between Muslims and Christians, “a big chunk of world population were doomed to perish, giving way to the Jews, a tiny minority in the world, to emerge as a major power on the world scene.” Also true to the *Protocols*’ template, the Elders of Zion, their agents, proxies, and sympathizers, operate secretly in the shadows, have no known headquarters but, with tentacles encircling the globe, are constantly but untraceably in communication with each other although only the three hundred are known to each other, and so on.¹⁴ In the same vein, Sheik Muhammad al-Gameia of Al-Azhar University in Cairo and, until he fled back to Egypt after September 11, *imam* (religious leader) of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, argued that “only the Jews” could contrive and concert so far-flung and intricate a terrorist conspiracy.¹⁵

All the elements of the anti-Jewish myths dealt with in this book reappear in Muslim sources, some of them endorsed by mainstream journalists, academics, clerics, and even heads of state. The president of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, in May 2001 greeted Pope John Paul II at the airport in Damascus, using the historic occasion not to declare his own hopes for mutual understanding among the world’s great faiths but to mount a vicious attack on the Jews. They have “tried,” he inveighed in the presence of the pope, “to kill the principles of all religions with the same mentality with which they betrayed Jesus Christ,” and in “the same way they tried to betray and kill the prophet

Muhammad.”*¹⁶ *Al-Abram*, Egypt’s leading government-sponsored daily, related in great detail how Jews use the blood of gentiles to make matzoh for Passover. Not to be outdone, another columnist informed readers that, to understand the true intentions of the Jews, one must consult the *Protocols*, in which the leaders of the international Jewish conspiracy acknowledge openly their “limitless ambitions, inexhaustible greed, merciless vengeance, and hatred beyond imagination. . . . Cunning, [the “Elders” allegedly declare] is our approach, mystery is our way.” Still another article in *Al-Abram* was dedicated to the subject of Jewish control of the world, a composite of the work of four investigative reporters. A great many Muslim newspapers took up the story that Jews piloted the planes into the World Trade Center, reporting this delusional tale as fact.¹⁷

Islam has not been subject to anything comparable to the transformative influence on the Western world of the Renaissance, Reformation, Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the democratic revolutions that spread from France and the United States at the end of the eighteenth century. Unlike the West, Islam has not embraced pluralism and toleration. Attempts at democracy have largely failed; tyranny, authoritarianism, and theocracy characterize the political regimes in the Islamic world. The following excerpt from “Islam and the ‘Interfaith’ Movement,” an anonymous editorial on the website sponsored by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of the government of Qatar, tells us much about Islamic fear of and hostility to modern democratic ideas of equality and tolerance:

One of the most dangerous ideological threats to Islam is the growing “Muslim-Christian-Jew” dialogue, or the “Interfaith” worship movement. . . . [T]he greatest danger of this movement is that it is part of a conscious strategy to erode the superiority of Islam as a religion, placing its followers on the same level as the Jews and Christians; leading the Muslims to accept the un-Islamic political concepts of equality, liberty, fraternity and secularism. Hence, the Muslim is led to support the ideological basis for the establishment of the secular nation-state. . . .

We, as Muslims, should see an instructive lesson in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, which has been initiated by the Jews. . . . This movement has served only the interest of the Jews. First of all, they have gotten the Vatican to drop the Catholic belief that the Jews were the Christ’s killers!

* Unfortunately, the pope, who on previous occasions had condemned antisemitism, did not, then or later, respond to this crude antisemitic jibe uttered in his presence.

Furthermore, they have been able to win the Christian world over to support the cause of Zionism, and to implicitly or explicitly recognize the creation of the Zionist state of Israel. These gains were made by the Jews because they have been able to determine the methodology and goals of this dialogue.¹⁸

No development comparable to the Second Vatican Council in the Roman Catholic Church or the deliberate efforts to break with an antisemitic past shown by some Protestant denominations, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is in the offing in the Islamic world. A principal source of anti-Jewish prejudice and hatred in the Middle East is the Arab Christians, few of whom have renounced—as required by the Second Vatican Council and parallel Protestant guidelines—the inherited teaching of contempt in favor of the new teaching of respect. Virtually all Middle Eastern liberal, critical, independent scholars and thinkers have been either assassinated, jailed, or exiled, or have fled to Europe or North America, where they flourish quite outside the traditional parameters of Islam.¹⁹

Rejecting modern secular and liberal values, Islamists, the fundamentalists' own term for themselves, have sought to restore an idealized medieval past in which the teachings—purged of all accretions and foreign influences—of a pure and undefiled Islam will again hold sway, turning a face of stone to modernity. Fortified by a narrow fundamentalist outlook and rejecting non-Muslims as “infidels,” Islamists are hostile to pluralist democracy and secularism; they have also demonstrated a fanatical mentality that sanctifies terrorism and demonizes the Jews. Islamism, according to the liberal Muslim scholar Khalid Durán, is a late-twentieth-century form of totalitarianism that follows in the wake of communism and fascism, and has been influenced by them in its methods of seeking domination; it is “a quest for power, an attempt to conquer the state.”²⁰ In a region afflicted by poverty and ineffective tyrannical regimes, antisemitism provides governments and elites with a useful safety valve, as Bernard Lewis astutely observes: “[R]esentment of Israel is the only grievance that can be freely and safely expressed in those Muslim countries where the media are either wholly owned or strictly overseen by the government. Indeed, Israel serves as a useful stand-in for complaints about economic privation and political repression under which most Muslim people live, and as a way of deflecting the resulting anger.”²¹

The perception of the Jews in the Islamic world is reminiscent of the days of Hitler and the Third Reich. Regrettably, leaders of European states, whose soil is drenched with innocent Jewish blood and whose culture is pervaded by

Judaeophobia, and the various churches, whose clergy for centuries had demonized the Jew, have remained silent. “Western elites,” observes the British journalist Andrew Sullivan, “have voiced no protests against the Hitler-like demonization of the Jew that is rampant in the Middle East.”²² It would be a worthy act of remembrance of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and, in some instances, of repentance, if the European Union and the churches issued official statements to be read on al-Jazeera, the Arab news channel, simply declaring that Jews do not and never have used Muslim or Christian blood for Passover matzohs or Purim pastries; that Muslim Arabs, not Jews, were responsible for the terrorist attacks of September 11; that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a notorious forgery; that the Holocaust was a cosmic tragedy not a Jewish hoax; and that the propagation of these nefarious antisemitic myths, regardless of the feelings aroused by the Arab-Israeli conflict, is both morally abhorrent and a grotesque distortion of history.

Among other things, the events of September 11 have demonstrated that an irrational and lethal antisemitism is quite alive. The demonization of the Jews, which made the Holocaust possible, shapes the perception of millions of people in Islamic lands. We might all feel like the writer Jonathan Rosen in his response to Muslim antisemitism accentuated by September 11: “I felt kidnapped by history. The past had come calling.”²³ This appropriation of European antisemitism by militant Muslims also poses a threat for Christians—that is, Americans and Europeans—the peoples purportedly linked with Jews in conspiratorial alliance and dedicated to Islam’s destruction. Thus Jews/Zionists, who “control everything,” are in league with the United States/Europe/“the West,” according to Sheik Muhammad al-Gameia, and disseminate “corruption, heresy, homosexuality, alcoholism, and drugs” as well as pornography²⁴; hence, as Osama bin Laden asserted in his recruiting videos, he is engaged in “the religious-cultural-historical struggle of Islam with the Judeo-Crusader conspiratorial alliance, which aims at defeating

* But there are hopeful signs. Catholic-Jewish relations have progressed sufficiently for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to state in 2001 that Christians have a special responsibility to denounce the conspiracy theories emanating from the Middle East, because they originated in antisemitic conceptions introduced by Christians. Its spokesman Eugene Fisher stated: “The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a classic Christian antisemitic text, and it is disconcerting to see Muslims getting sucked into it. Since it is ours in origin we feel some responsibility to alert the Muslim community to its spurious nature.” It is not known how this responsibility has been met. See Michael Paulson, “[American] Catholics See a Duty to Nip Attack Theories,” *Boston Globe*, Oct. 27, 2001, B1.

Islam and conquering its sacred lands.”²⁵ While Islamic spokesmen now propagate the myth of a world Jewish conspiracy, as invented by European antisemites, ironically it is the Muslim world that actually has spawned an international conspiracy, Al-Qaeda, a conspiracy that does indeed aspire to world domination. Nazi Germany and to some extent Stalinist Russia demonstrated the close link between demonological antisemitism and totalitarianism. The vicious Jew-hatred emanating openly and without challenge from within the Muslim world may portend a warning not only for Jews but also for Western civilization. It may be, as Professor Robert Wistrich argued in a lecture at Manhattan College on September 30, 2002, on “Muslim Antisemitism: A Clear and Present Danger,” that the conflict inaugurated by the attack on the World Trade Center is “a war of civilizations, that Islamism is a fundamentally totalitarian mode of thought, and that it is the third great challenge in the last seventy years to Western democracy, the first being German Nazism, the second Soviet communism, and now Islamism, which in many ways is a form of fascism no less than the previous two.”