



## Zionophobia: Anti-Semitism & the Catholic Church: Jews Indicted for Death of Christ; Judged as Cursed; Attacked During Crusades; Accused of Conspiracies

### E. Anti-Semitism and the Catholic Church:

1. In this example we will note how anti-Semitism emerged from the false doctrine of *Theotokos*, the fraudulent and heretical notion that Mary is the mother of God.
2. This colossal error became the basis for one of the most evil and enduring expressions of anti-Semitism. A summary of this problem is provided for us again by:

Lewis, Bernard. *Semites and Anti-Semites*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1999), 100:

The basic themes of anti-Judaism were established at the very beginning of the Christian Era. The first, and by far the gravest, charge in the indictment was deicide. Jews had rejected Christ. They had not only rejected him, but they had killed him, and since Christ was God, they had killed God.

3. This is demonstrably ludicrous. If the Jews had killed God then they were responsible of murdering a Person that had eternal life—an impossibility. Consequently, to indict the Jews for the death of God assigns to them supernatural powers over the God the Christian worships. This leaves Christians in the odd position of accusing those who are superior to God of murdering Him while they continue worshipping a dead man whose alleged deity has been terminated. For Christians to continue to worship Jesus as God is rendered pointless and reduces it to the level of a cult. This is crazy and so were those who dreamed it up.

Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, 100-102:

Modern scholarship and modern morality have both shed some doubt on the ancient and cherished theory of Jewish guilt for the death of Christ. The Romans were after all the unchallenged rulers of Judaea, and crucifixion was a Roman, never a Jewish, form of capital punishment.

But such considerations were far from the minds of the early Christians and most of all their successors. For almost two thousand years the story of the betrayal, trial, and death of Christ has been imprinted on Christian minds from childhood, through prayer and preaching, through pictures and statuary, through literature and music, through all the rich complexities of Christian civilization. It was not until 1962, after almost two millennia, that the Second Vatican Council, convened and deeply influenced by Pope John XXIII, considered a resolution exonerating the Jews from the charge of deicide. (p. 100)

Though the crucifixion was seen as necessary for the fulfillment of God's plan for human redemption, those who were held responsible for it had nevertheless, in Christian perspective, committed a monstrous crime, and they, their compatriots, their coreligionists, and all their descendants in perpetuity were sometimes perceived as subject to a divine curse. No less a person than John Chrysostom, in the fourth century, spoke of the synagogue as "the temple of demons ... the cavern of devils ... a gulf and abyss of perdition," while Augustine explained how those who had once been God's chosen people had now become the sons of Satan. (pp. 100-101)

This curse was interpreted in many forms, the most important being the dispersion and oppression to which the Jews were subject. Those who distrusted and oppressed them were therefore doing God's work.

During the Dark Ages, Jews in Europe enjoyed a relative tranquility. But the Crusades brought a new Christian militancy, and while this was directed primarily against the Muslims, the Crusaders found their first victims in their Jewish neighbors. This new hostility was aggravated by the relentless attack mounted by the Franciscan and Dominican orders against both Judaism and the Jews. (p. 101)



From crusading times onward the Satanic element begins to dominate anti-Jewish polemic. Jews are now seen as children of the devil, whose assigned task was to combat Christianity and injure Christians. By the twelfth century they are accused of poisoning wells, ill-treating the consecrated Host (a somewhat pointless procedure for those who do not believe in it), and of murdering Christian children to use their blood for ritual purposes. The blood libel, as it is known, had originally been used by pagans against the early Christians. It was now used by Christians against Jews, with equal lack of justification, and with far more deadly effect. From time to time, these fantasies were denounced by popes and bishops, but they seem to have been widely accepted and disseminated by a lower clergy, who sometimes managed to convince their superiors. (pp. 101-102)

4. Bad hermeneutics produced poor theology which resulted in heretical applications. Catholic dogma that viewed Mary as the mother of God and emphasis on the literal blood of Christ having cleansing properties motivated the kinds of conclusions Lewis documents.
5. The Jews were always easily available suspects to receive blame for the “death of Christ” or the “murder of children” or what have you. In fact the First Crusade was concocted by French Catholics and supported by Pope Urban II. The Muslims were the announced opponents but the Jews were the first people they attacked.
6. The Crusades, of which there were eight, were dreamed up by Catholic Europe with the backing of Rome with the intent of taking back the “Holy Land” from the Muslims and while they were at it they took swipes at the Jews as well.
7. The erroneous motivation for these wars was the notion that the church had been granted favor by God and it had therefore superseded other religions as the rightful ruler of Jerusalem and the various “holy sites” in its environs.
8. There is nothing “holy” about any of these sites. They are tourist attractions at best and objects of idolatry at worst.
9. Lewis next examines the problems faced by the Jews once they were gradually allowed into mainstream society. Once done the Jews, stifled by ostracism and even servitude were energized by freedom and many became quite successful.
10. Jews had been barred from most professions but they were allowed to manage money since Christian teachings allegedly barred them from lending money at interest to others. This is true on an individual level but not on a business level.
11. Nevertheless, many Jews went into various areas of banking and finance and became very successful. Consequently, this became the source of yet other assaults accusing them of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world and to enslave Christians.

#### Lewis, Semites and Anti-Semites, 104-105:

For a small but by no means insignificant number of European writers, the success of the Jews could never have been won in fair competition, and could only be explained by the medieval stories of a dark and devious plot of the children of Satan, able to call on the powers of Hell at will, and seeking, as French-Catholic writer Louis Bonald put it in 1806, “to reduce all Christians until they are nothing more than their slaves.” Such a conspiracy, and such a purpose, obviously required central direction, and in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a number of different ideas were advanced on the nature of “the secret Jewish government.” (p. 104)



To support these and other charges against the Jews some sort of evidence was needed. The Jews were known to be a highly literary people, who practiced a very bookish religion. In their religious books, written in strange languages and locked in the secrecy of an unknown script, the evil truth might be found. For Christians, it was difficult to attack the Old Testament, since the Church had made it part of the canon. Hostile attention was therefore focused on those religious books which were distinctively Jewish, namely the rabbinic collections, and especially the most famous and important of them, the Talmud. This is the name given to two great collections of rabbinic law, exegesis, and debate, both compiled during the early centuries of the Christian era, one in Babylonia, the other in the Roman province of Palestine. They are regarded by Orthodox Jews as containing an authoritative formulation of *Halakha*, that is, the rabbinic law that regulates Jewish life and worship. Already in the Middle Ages, Dominican inquisitors staged public burnings of rabbinic writings, and notably of the great codices of the Talmud. The most famous was the burning in Paris in June 1242. Despite the efforts of some Christian scholars, including churchmen, to defend the Talmud, the practice was continued in other Catholic countries, and as late as September 1553 the Talmud and other books were burned by official order, in Rome, Venice, Cremona, and elsewhere in Italy.

A new phase began with Johann Eisenmenger's 'laiz' en-meng' er\ famous *Judaism Revealed* in 1711. Eisenmenger was a professor of Oriental languages, and appears to have devoted some study to the Talmud. (p. 105)

“Some study” is indeed true. If fact, he was very deceitful in how he learned the Hebrew language. Details of his efforts are the subject of an article in:

Jackson, Samuel Macauley (ed.). *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952), 4:101:

**JOHANN EISENMENGER:** A German Orientalist who studied at Heidelberg, where his knowledge of Hebrew attracted the attention of Prince Karl Ludwig, who granted him a traveling stipend enabling him to visit England and Holland. The conversion of three Christians to Judaism while he was at Amsterdam made him decide to collect all available anti-Jewish data for a work which should prove a warning to Christians, and at the same time shame the Jews. Returning from his travels he continued his studies for nineteen years, first at Heidelberg and later at Frankfurt-on-the-Main, availing himself of the services of Jews who little suspected the purpose for which they were engaged as his tutors. In 1700 he published his *Entdecktes Judenthum (Judaism Revealed)*, styling it “a truthful and authentic account of the horrible manner in which the obdurate Jews blaspheme and dishonor the most Holy Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; insult the holy mother of Christ, the New Testament, the Evangelists and Apostles; mockingly traduce the Christian Religion, and disdain and curse all Christianity to the utmost: where also are shown many other things and great errors of Jewish religion and theology hitherto either not at all or only partially known to the Christians, as well as numerous ridiculous and merry fables and follies.” Prince Johann Wilhelm approved of Eisenmenger's book, and appointed him professor of Oriental languages at Heidelberg. (*Judaism Revealed*) did not meet with the success which its author had hoped since it could no more be called a faithful representation of Judaism than an indiscriminate collection of everything superstitious and repulsive within Christian literature could be termed characteristic of Christianity. During recent decades August Rohling and others have used the work in anti-Semitic propaganda, and a reprint of the portions most available for that purpose has been made by F. X. Schieferl (Dresden, 1893).

Lewis provides some specific examples of the “repulsive” accusations Eisenmenger accused the Jews:

**Lewis, Semites and Anti-Semites, 105:**

The result of his (Eisenmenger's) efforts was a massive two-volume work, in which by careful selection, occasional invention, and sweeping misinterpretation, due sometimes to ignorance and sometimes to malice, he presents the Talmud as a corpus of anti-Christian and indeed antihuman doctrines. The title of the book (*Judaism Revealed*) indicates its author's purpose. In the course of his book he resumes and attempts to confirm all the lies which had already by his time become standard in the anti-Semitic armory—the poisoning of wells, the Black Death, the ritual murder of children, and the rest.



Eisenmenger's book, though disproved again and again by both Christian and Jewish scholars, became a classic of anti-Semitic accusations until the present day. The use of the adjective talmudical, in a variety of negative senses, became one of the characteristics of anti-Semitic writing, and to the present time, its use to denounce the actions or utterances of Israeli leaders is a generally reliable indication that the user is inspired by anti-Semitic prejudice and not merely by concern about the Middle East. (p. 105)

Eisenmenger's book served as the basis of one of the major classics of nineteenth-century anti-Semitic literature, *Der Talmudjude (The Talmud Jew)*, by the Canon August Rohling, professor at the Imperial University of Prague. The numerous misrepresentations and falsifications in this book were at once challenged and disproved, not only by Jewish but also by Christian scholars, and in 1885 Canon Rohling denounced in print as a liar, a faker, and an ignoramus, was forced to bring a libel action from which he withdrew in circumstances so scandalous that he was obliged to resign from his university chair. This in no way impeded, and perhaps encouraged, the enormous success of the book. Three French translations, by three different translators, were published in 1889. Many other editions and translations followed, especially during the Hitler years. (p. 106)

Canon Rohling's book, which was at first endorsed in Rome by the semi-official Vatican journal *Civiltà Cattolica*, devotes great attention to the theme of ritual murder, and makes it one of his main charges against the Jews. (pp. 106-107)