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Miscellanea

Luther's Later Attitude Toward the Jews, 1536—1546

By RALPH MOELLERING

(Conclusion)

III

In 1536 Elector John Frederick of Saxony issued an edict calling for the expulsion of the Jews. No longer were they permitted to establish residence undisturbed or negotiate trade without interference. Guarantees of security were withdrawn, and the privilege of safe passage was abrogated. There was a sudden outburst of persecution, apparently without provocation. What role, if any, Luther played in the proceedings is unknown.¹ At any rate, the oppression became so severe that it excited disapprobation in and outside of Saxony. Capito wrote to Luther from Strassburg commending the Jew who had agreed to undertake a defense of his people. What obstacles Josel von Rosheim encountered, or what success he attained, has not been definitely determined, but the persecution gradually subsided until it broke out with renewed fury in 1543.²

With reference to the condition in Saxony Josel von Rosheim asked Luther to intercede for the Jews and arrange an audience for him with the Elector. Toward the end of 1537 Luther wrote his reply, in which he expressed a desire to mediate in behalf of the Jews if only they would not take advantage of his geniality and do things which were intolerable among Christians. He still believes that they should be accorded friendly treatment, but his intentions should not be misconstrued. His purpose is to bring them to their Messiah, not to strengthen them in their error.³ The Jews in their arrogance refuse to accept a despised, crucified Jew as their Lord. The Christians, in turn, will not be duped into becoming apologists for the Jews. Let them consider their captivity and their prolonged dispersion among the Gentiles. Let them be persuaded of the futility of their Messianic hopes. For the sake of the Crucified Jew, Luther will be solicitous of the welfare of all Jews, on the condition that his kindness does not sustain them in their obduracy.⁴ More careless in his table talk, he remarked at this time: "What use is there in showing favor to these villains, who only work mischief to the people in gear and body and strive to win many Christians to their superstitions."⁵

¹ Cf. Kolde, *Martin Luther*, II, p. 610.

² Cf. Burkhardt, *Die Judenverfolgungen im Kurfuerstentum Sachsen von 1536 an*, pp. 593—594.

³ Cf. Enders, *Luthers Briefwechsel*, 11, 241.

⁴ The letter can be found in S. L. A., XX, No. 49, or in E. A., LV, p. 186.

⁵ Quoted by Mackinnon, *Luther and the Reformation*, IV, p. 196.

Already in his preface to the Book of Genesis (1532) Luther had reproached "die Sabbater." Among those who were requiring circumcision and demanding the observance of the Sabbath he detected outcroppings of the sixteenth century Judaizers. A good friend, Count Schlick at Falkenau, complained to Luther about the inroads into Christian ranks being made by the Sabbatarians and requested that he deal with them in a special writing. Accordingly, in March, 1538, there appeared a *Brief wider die Sabbater an einen guten Freund*.⁶

Luther is anxious to reassure Christians who are upset over Jewish propaganda which maintained that the Messiah had not yet come and that therefore the Jewish Law must remain binding permanently. He shows that the Jews, scattered outside of Jerusalem, have been unable to offer the sacrifices and fulfill all the stipulations of the Mosaic Law. Why are they punished in this way? Some of their rabbis blame the calf worship of their forefathers. The promised Messiah is denied to them on account of their sins. But Luther cites Jer. 31:31-34, which speaks of a New Covenant for Israel and Judah. Previous sins will be overlooked. Surely God would not punish the Jews so long for an ancient sin. Their sin must be one which persists up to the present moment, namely, their obstinate refusal to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah.

In the sixteenth century, Luther finds the Jews dispersed aimlessly. Formerly it was different. There was providential purpose in the Egyptian bondage, the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and the Babylonian Captivity. Their duration and location were specified. Immediate assurances of deliverance were provided. There is no correlation between the Old Testament chastisements and the "roemische Elende," under which they are suffering now. Luther hopes that some sensible Jews will perceive these contradictions and renounce their religion. If not, he has at least helped to strengthen the faith of Christians who were exposed to the erroneous teachings of the Sabbatarians.

In the second part of this writing, Luther takes up points of disagreement in Old Testament interpretation. There is considerable repetition of ideas expressed earlier. The Jews cannot be real Jews so long as they remain outside the Holy Land. How can they explain satisfactorily the continuation of this adverse situation for 1,500 years? If they can succeed in re-establishing their laws *in toto* in Palestine, Luther will be convinced and become a Jew, too. The restoration of their ancient glory is impossible, as it is for Egypt or Babylonia.

Circumcision is not part of the Law of Moses. It was introduced earlier by Abraham. Converts to the Jewish religion were not always obliged to submit to this peculiar rite. When Jonah preached at Nineveh, he demanded only the repentance of the

⁶ S. L. A., XX:1828—1861, No. 50; E. A., XXXI, pp. 417—449.

inhabitants, not their circumcision. Job and the Persian kings Darius and Cyrus, who worshiped Jehovah, were not bound by the Ceremonial Law. Why should Gentiles today observe them? The New Covenant was designed to replace the Old. Under the reign of Messiah what has been discarded as outmoded is not to be renovated.

It does not follow that the Ten Commandments are to be withdrawn. Written in the heart of man, they have universal implications for all time, but, as they are drawn up in the Book of Exodus, there are parts which apply only to the Jews. The Sabbath command in its essentials is binding on all men everywhere, but not the "trappings" that Moses adds. Insistence on the seventh day is the temporal adornment which was terminated when the Messiah arrived. Besides, the Jews have been wrong in laying the stress on the celebration of the festival rather than on the "sanctifying" of the Sabbath.⁷ Part of the Fourth Commandment ("in order that you may live long in the land") is likewise not applicable to present conditions. The bill of divorcement provided for by Moses is another custom which we cannot retain. The Jews do not fully understand their own laws.

Luther regrets that he cannot devote more space to refuting their ridiculous arguments. What of the fact that he has been unable to convert many Jews? No one should marvel or be disappointed — neither did all the prophets. Once more he concludes that the only sin which adequately explains God's neglect of His people through the centuries is their unwillingness to recognize their Savior. Now, by their own fault, they are a forsaken nation.

In June, 1539, the letter was translated into Latin by Justus Jonas, with the intention of making it available to educated Jews in Italy and the Netherlands. Judging by its content, we find that it had both a polemical and a missionary purpose. Luther hoped it might be his last writing on the Jewish question.⁸

In the years that followed, Luther became more pessimistic about the possibility of winning more than a few Jews for evangelical Christianity. In a sermon delivered on May 4, 1538, he had said that it was vain to expect that Jews would accept the divinity of Christ, subscribe to a Trinitarian formula in defining God, or believe in the virginity of Mary.⁹ He relates the anecdote about the Jew who ordered in his will that a picture of a cat and a mouse be drawn on his grave to show that as little as the two animals can get along together, so little can a Jew harmonize his religion with

⁷ In a writing of 1539 Luther has occasion to discuss the different dates on which Christians and Jews celebrate Easter: "If the Jews laugh at us, thinking that we do this in ignorance, we laugh back still more because they keep their Easter so stiffly and so vainly, not knowing that Christ fulfilled it all 1,500 years ago, abolished it, and destroyed it." Hol. Ed., V, p. 186.

⁸ "Nichts mehr weder von den Juden noch wider die Juden zu schreiben." E. A., XXXII, p. 100.

⁹ E. A., XLVI, p. 319.

that of the Christian.¹⁰ At the court of the emperor Sigismund there was said to have lived a Jew who submitted to Baptism under pressure, but when it came to the test—two fires were lit in front of him, one Christian and the other Jewish, and suddenly he had to make a choice between the two—he took the fire of the Jews.¹¹ During this same period occur the accusations of a secret alliance between Jewry and the Turks.

Echoes of Luther's sentiments concerning the Jews have been recorded in his *Tischreden*.¹² He is angry at the emperor, who granted them an asylum in his domains.¹³ When Christian books are put into their hands, they turn around and use them as weapons against the donors.¹⁴ To be reminded of Christ's resurrection arouses their ire to an exceptional degree.¹⁵ Arguments which he has found particularly effective against Judaism are outlined by Luther for his listeners.¹⁶ The Jews are living under the delusion that they are capable of fulfilling their Law. The horrible destruction of Jerusalem is an unmistakable evidence of how God's wrath descended upon His people. Almost all of them will suffer for renouncing Christ before Pilate with the words: "We have no king but Caesar."

Luther could not stomach their pride, which he illustrated by reading aloud several of their prayers in which they called upon God as though they were exclusively His people and damned all others. They understand nothing of God's grace and justifying faith.¹⁷ Despite all their boasting about superiority of race they are no longer able to determine even from which tribe they have descended. The privileges they have enjoyed have not been accorded to any other nation. Most of the Old Testament saints were their ancestors, but they are like children who have despised their parents. Their punishment is terrifying to behold. God forbid that Christians become guilty of the same neglect and spurn His mercies! This fate of the Jews should be an awe-inspiring warning to Gentiles who are tempted to think lightly of God's blessings. Should His patience with us be exhausted, we, too, need not expect to avert disaster.

Present-day Jews believe that when the Messiah comes, He

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, XXXII, p. 298.

¹¹ Cf. Lewin, *Luthers Stellung zu den Juden*, p. 76.

¹² Not only were some of these sayings spoken carelessly, but they represent the hasty jottings of students or guests who may have reproduced them later from memory. Intended to reach the ears of only a limited circle of intimate friends, his conversation at the table is informal and often seems almost rabid. For that reason the digest given above does not present a strictly logical coherence.

¹³ S. L. A., XXII:74, No. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, No. 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Nos. 14—15. Cf. *Wider die Sabbater*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Nos. 16—19.

will not replace the Law, but will re-instate it.¹⁸ Their chief stumbling block is what they consider the irrationality of Christian doctrines. They are not willing to take their reason captive.¹⁹ A refreshing exception to the rule was a certain Jew who confessed that his father, a diligent rabbi, had read much about the Messiah and anxiously awaited His arrival until he finally gave up all hope. After all, he concluded, if the Messiah has failed to appear after fifteen hundred years, the Christians must be right. Jesus must be the Promissd One.²⁰ In view of the circumstances under which Luther probably spoke, it would be precarious to decide whether the illustration is factual or merely wishful thinking.

As late as 1539 we find ample evidence to show that Luther was in no sense blinded by a vicious hatred of the Jews.²¹ When in 1542 the Jews had been driven out of Bohemia and most of the empire, Luther pitied the poor people, but complained because they still refused to see the light and repent. In a book sent to him by Count Schlick he read a polemic directed against his *Brief wider die Sabbater*.²² During this time he heard more accounts of Jewish magic. He recalled more vividly all the evil experiences he had with the Jews. Stories came to him about Jewish doctors who killed their Christian patients and about the murder of Christian children. He had been led to believe that the Jews practiced an unnatural lewdness in marriage. Their children were trained from the first to hate Christians.

Luther became exasperated over the behavior of the Jews and almost abandoned hope that they would mend their ways. The purpose of his writing from now on was primarily to answer the calumnies of the Jews and to suggest what could be done to root out this menace to the Christian faith. He felt bound to warn his fellow Germans about the lies propagated by the Jews. *Von den Juden und ihren Luegen*²³ was completed by January 17, 1543, and translated into Latin by Jonas two months later.

The first boast of the Jews in claiming superiority over Christians, Luther begins, is when they tell us they are descended from the seed of Abraham and are therefore of a noble blood. But

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Nos. 21—24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 21.

²¹ A literal interpretation of the *Tischreden* might seem to prove the contrary. One day Luther is reported to have said (*Ibid.*, No. 36) that if he were the ruler of the land, he would assemble all the Jews in one place and demand that they prove that Christ was a bastard and Mary a prostitute. If they could do so, he would send them a thousand Gulden. If not, he would tear their tongues out of the back of their necks. Similar threats were uttered in his later published writings. One cannot escape the feeling that Luther would have regretted these outbursts of emotion in more sober moments, for they are out of keeping with his normal attitude.

²² Cf. W. A., XXXII:100 ff.; W. A., L, pp. 312—337.

²³ S. L. A., XX:1860—2029, No. 51; E. A., XXXII, pp. 100—276; W. A., LIII, pp. 412—553.

even Abraham might have been damned if he had not been called by God out of an idolatrous environment. Ishmael as well as Isaac could boast that he was a son of Abraham. If we judge by standards of birth, Esau should have been far nobler than Jacob, but he became evil and forfeited the rights of primogeniture. We are all descendants of Noah. The Gentiles claim the firstborn son Japheth as their forefather and could boast about that. In the final analysis we all have a common father in Adam. What is important is to remember that every race has been conceived in sin.²⁴ Christians should take heed lest they become infected by such a sinful racial pride. Before the Jews can expect God to be gracious to them, they must eliminate from their schools and hearts all this preposterous blustering about blood and noble descent. Distinctions between people are made not on the basis of "Blut und Fleisch," but in consideration of how they receive God's Word.

The second boast of the Jews against Christians is their unique practice of circumcision. Luther admits that it was a useful rite commanded by God, but it was only an outward sign — no certain criterion of acceptability before God. The Jews made of it an *opus legis*, while Moses insisted that it was only a symbol of the conversion of the heart.²⁵ Furthermore, circumcision was not always restricted to the Israelites. Abraham's entire household, including his servants, were circumcised. We are not told that Job, Naaman, the heathen converts of Daniel, or the Pharaoh of Joseph's time were circumcised at all. Yet they were adherents of Jehovah. Luther makes a comparison between Jewish insistence on outward conformity to the Law and the Roman teaching that the mere reception of the Sacraments accords benefits. It is an idle question to ask why the Lord required circumcision for the Jews, since Christ's sacrifice has set us free from the Ceremonial Law. Let Christians be duly grateful.²⁶

A third boast of the Jews concerns the Law which their God has transmitted to them. Through direct communication on Mount Sinai the Lord revealed His special will. How often they have rebelled against it! To have God's Word is not enough. The devil has that much, too. It must be understood and practiced. What hypocrisy scrupulously to perform every detail of the Ceremonial Law and ignore what is really vital — the Moral Law! To make this clear to the Jews is as futile as preaching the Gospel to a hog. Luther ends this section with solemn warnings against being misled by the perverted ideas of the Jews. He then proceeds to answer

²⁴ Luther has in mind Ps. 51:7.

²⁵ Cf. Deut. 10:16. Luther also quotes against the Jews: Lev. 25:41; Jer. 4:4; 6:10; 9:25-26. He constantly hammers away at their "laesterlichen, schaedlichen, falschen, verlogenen Ruhm und Hochmut."

²⁶ Luther digresses from his theme now and then to insert remarks like these: "Jews love the Book of Esther because they still desire the destruction of the Gentiles. . . . Carrying on a dispute with the Jews is like talking to a hunk of wood or a stone. . . . Now that the Jews can no longer kill the Prophets, they distort their prophecies. . . ."

their rodomontade about coming from the Land of Canaan, where God gave them Jerusalem and the magnificent Temple. Moses told them that they did not deserve to possess the Land and that if they did not keep God's commandments, they would be driven out. And that is exactly what happened. The curse has been fulfilled. Israel stands rejected, a living symbol of what it means to provoke the wrath of Almighty God.²⁷

In the second major division of this writing, Luther wants to confute the argument that the Messiah has not yet appeared. If all the angels at once became visible to the Jews in Jerusalem and proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, it would not be sufficient evidence to persuade them. Luther would be more amazed at their blindness if he had not had similar experiences with the papists. He cannot be blamed if the Jews do not accept Christ after he has made the facts so simple for them. The New Testament lacks appeal for the Jews; so he will meet them on their own ground and base his arguments on the Old Testament. In the blessing Jacob pronounces on Judah the promise is made that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). For Luther this passage proves that Messiah must come at the time of Herod, before Judah completely loses her independence. But to persuade a Jew that this is the correct meaning is like trying to demonstrate to an irrational man that God created heaven and earth.

The Jews brazenly violate their own consciences when they say that fulfillment will be delayed until there is a widespread repentance among their people. Other Jewish interpretations refer Shiloh to a city, to the anointing of Saul, the reign of Jeroboam, or the coming of Nebuchadnezzar. All are equally stupid. Another misinterpretation would make Shiloh the son of Judah who will kill all the heathen. Someone else has changed *donec* (until) to *quia* (because) — Judah will retain the rule *because* Messiah will come. Another rabbi posited the theory that when the city of Shiloh is demolished, David, the Messiah, will come. Others suggest that Messiah came when Jerusalem was destroyed and is secretly residing at Rome among the beggars, doing penance for the Jews until the time is appropriate for him to disclose his identity. Lyra, Raymundus, and Burgensis worked diligently to expose the fallacies in all these conjectures, but to no avail.²⁸

²⁷ Luther frequently reiterates what he has written many times before: (1) The Jews are too proud; (2) They fail to grasp the real meaning of the Bible.

²⁸ Luther relates the incident of three Jews coming to Wittenberg in an attempt to win him for Judaism, because Hebrew was taught there. He was generous enough to give them a "Fuerbitte an die Geleitsleute," only to discover later that they called Christ a *Thola*. Penitently he has reached this conclusion: "Darum will ich mit keinem Juden mehr zu tun haben, sie sind, wie St. Paulus sagt, dem Zorn uebergeben, je mehr man ihnen helfen will, je haerter und aerger sie werden; lass sie fallen."

Another saying which proves that the Messiah has come is found in the last words of David, when he professes faith in "an everlasting Covenant" ordered by God. (2 Sam. 23:1-5.) Through the prophet Nathan he was promised a Descendant whose Kingdom would be "established forever." (2 Sam. 7:12-16.) The descriptions of the coming King do not fit Solomon. The fall of Israel and the Babylonian captivity do not make them invalid. No earthly kingdom since the reign of David has the characteristics enumerated. Only a spiritual interpretation, finding fulfillment in the Kingdom of Christ, will be satisfactory. Like the devil, the Jews know these facts, but sin against their own better knowledge. For them to take pride in being God's Chosen People corresponds to the devil boasting about his angelic creation, although in reality he is God's worst enemy.

According to Jeremiah 33, when the Branch of Righteousness grows up, the people will dispense with the rule of kings and the service of priests. The Levites will participate in the eternal reign of the Son of David. . . . And Jeremiah wrote when the houses of Israel and Judah had been destroyed. Whom could he have in mind but Christ? God's Word cannot lie. The solution is that the Messiah has already come.

"The Desire of all nations," spoken of by the Prophet Haggai (2:7), is understood by the Jews as the gold and silver of the heathen as their rightful inheritance, while it is actually another reference to the Messiah. Here is another example of "Juden Begierde." In this connection, Luther severely castigates their practice of usury. They covet the property of their non-Jewish neighbors, believing that when their Messiah comes, he will divide all the world's wealth among them. Christians should beware of Jewish money lending and double dealing. If they achieve their aim, they will make the "cursed heathen" their servants. They are schooled in hatred against the *Gojim* by their parents and rabbis. Incurably avaricious, they will be exterminated unless God performs a miracle.

Their evil impulses are dictated by the devil. History discloses the crimes of which they are guilty — how they have poisoned wells and stolen innocent children. If anyone doubts the reliability of these reports, he is advised to read Burgensis and Lyra or look into their own writings. If the Jews do anything good, it is not out of love, but because they want to domicile with Christians in order to take full advantage of their magnanimity. They control the purse strings. The situation has become so deplorable that the Jews are "unsere Herrn in unsern eigenen Landen."

Worse than thieves, they manage to escape punishment. It is part of their policy to let the "cursed heathen" work while they feed as parasites on what they can extort from the earnings of others. Their Talmud and rabbis tell them it is not a sin to murder a Gentile as it would be to kill a brother Jew. Nor is it wrong to break an oath made to a Gentile. They would like to rule the world, and so they "geizen, wuchern, stehlen, und morden, wo sie

koennen."²⁹ . . . There is more true wisdom expounded in the fables of Aesop, in Cato, and in several of the comedies of Terence, than in all the books of the rabbis.

The "more glorious" temple predicted by Haggai cannot apply to the external structure at Jerusalem. What was more splendid about a Temple desecrated by merchants who used it as a market-place for their wares—a Temple frequented by high priests and Sadducees who denied the resurrection and the doctrines of heaven and hell? Likewise the peace of which the Prophet speaks is not concord among the nations, but the comforting assurance of membership in the eternal Kingdom of the Messiah.

For a final source of proof to reinforce his contention that the Messiah has come Luther turns to the mystical vision of Daniel involving the "seventy weeks" (Dan. 9:24 ff.). His own explanation makes each week equivalent to seven years—a total of four hundred and ninety years—so that the seventy weeks ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. It follows, then, that Messiah must have come before that time. Again, the only historical figure who meets the textual specifications is Christ. The Jews might have accepted the Galilean if He had appeared in regal splendor, but they took offense at His poverty and lowliness. One would think that the dispersion of the Jews would have humbled them, but it had the opposite effect. Blinded by false delusions at the time of Trajan, they followed an impostor as Messiah (Benchohar).³⁰ Those who will be wise are foolish in their own conceits.

Luther expostulates against the "asinine" interpretations of the seventy weeks offered by Jewish exegetes. In all he enumerates and discusses ten "lies" of the Jews in connection with the Daniel passage. He has done everything within his power to overcome their perversity, but it is not possible to convert the devil and his satellites. It is enough to counteract and expose their falsehoods. His responsibility has been discharged. They are condemned by their own folly. For Christians they are a warning illustration of how easily people can fall into the snare of Satan.

Jewish lies are too numerous to be refuted in one writing.

"To sum up, they eat, they drink, they sleep, they awake, they stand, they walk, they dress or undress, they fast, they bathe, they pray, they praise, and everything they do in their life is besmirched with abominable, rabbinical expositions and distorted beliefs."

The third major section of Luther's disquisition is concerned with retorting to the lies of the Jews against "the Person of our dear Lord Jesus Christ." When someone loses an argument on

²⁹ "Ich rede nicht zu viel, sondern viel zu wenig, denn ich sehe ihre Schriften: sie fluchen uns Goyim und wuenschen uns in ihren Schulen und Gebeten alles Unglueck, sie rauben uns unser Geld und Gut durch Wucher, und wo sie koennen, beweisen sie uns alle boese Tuecke."

³⁰ Luther mentions that Rabbi Akiba called him the fulfillment of Balaam's prophecy, Num. 24:17 ("Star of Jacob"). Later, Talmudists changed his name to Kozab (false).

logical grounds, he is apt to resort to disparaging remarks about the character of his opponent. So the Jews. They malignantly call Christ a magician and a sorcerer. Some simple-minded Christians think that when the Jews say *Jesu* in their prayers, they are speaking of Jesus. In a similar way, when Jews say "Schod wil kom" (i. e., Teufel komm), they misunderstand it to mean "Seid willkommen."

One would naturally expect the Jews to be proud of Mother Mary, who was a descendant of Abraham, but they even scorn their own flesh and blood.³¹ They have waxed obscene in their vituperative attacks on the mother of Christ. And Luther suspects that the Jews are guilty of more than he can prove. With malicious hearts they dare to approach God in prayer and ask that they be permitted to return to Jerusalem, that Messiah be sent, that all heathen be annihilated, and all the confiscated booty be surrendered into their hands.³²

Luther challenges the Jews to prove that Christ was a false Teacher. How is he to explain their denial of the greatest Representative of their own race? The curses for disobedience outlined in Deuteronomy have come upon them: "The Lord shall smite thee with madness and blindness and astonishment of heart" (Deut. 28:28). The wrath of God is more evident in the fate of the Jews than in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Like "thirsty bloodhounds" these murderers have committed crimes against the Gentiles. They have stolen Christian children and secretly made use of their blood. Their animosity toward Christians is a far cry from what Jeremiah commanded when they were enslaved by the Babylonians—to pray for their captors. Anyway, Luther says, it is a lie when Jews complain that they are captives among the Gentiles.

The reverse is rather true. They are free to come and go as they please, but are as injurious as a plague to the land in which they dwell. Luther recalls that they have been repeatedly driven out of France. Recently they were expelled from Spain and only "this year" from Bohemia. In reality the Jews hold the Christians as captives in their own country. Their scheme is to let the Gentiles do all the productive work while they loaf around and leisurely extract the profits by practicing usury. The Jews have returned evil for good. They have been treated generously as guests in

³¹ Luther often drifts into a satire on "the noble blood and circumcised people that can do no wrong."

³² The Jews desire that God "solle uns Heiden durch ihren Messiam alle todtschlagen und vertilgen, damit sie aller Welt Land, Gueter, und Herrschaft kriegten. Und hier gehen die Wetter ueber uns mit Fluchen, Laestern, Speien, dass nicht zu sagen ist, wuenschen uns, dass Schwert und Kriege, Angst und alles Unglueck ueber uns verfluchten Gojim komme. Solch Fluchen treiben sie alle Sonnabend oeffentlich in ihren Schulen, und taeglich in ihren Haeusern, lehren, treiben, und gewoehnen ihre Kinder dazu von Jugend auf, dass sie ja sollen bitter, giftig, und boese Feinde der Christen bleiben."

a society to which they are alien. Their reaction to sympathy and to tolerance has been ingratitude and the usurpation of economic power.

What are the Christians to do with this iniquitous and depraved race of Jews? Responsibility rests with those who are aware of the Jewish danger. To ignore their taunts and maledictions would be a sin of omission. What Luther prefers to label a "scharfe Barmherzigkeit"³³ must be put into operation. He now continues with a definite program of concrete action:

1. "Fire should be put to their synagogues and schools; all parts which do not burn should be covered and hidden with earth to prevent any human being ever setting eyes upon one single stone or any of the cinders. This shall be done in the name of our Lord and in glorification of all Christianity, to show God that we are good Christians and that we have never knowingly tolerated nor approved the public falsehoods, the maledictions and blasphemy of His Son and of His Flock, whilst our Lord will forgive us what we have tolerated in our ignorance (I myself knew it not). But now that our eyes have opened, it would be just as great a sin were we to protect a Jewish house where the name of Jesus Christ is blasphemed, profaned and where we are violated and cheated as if we were to commit these sins ourselves;

2. "Their dwellings should be destroyed in like manner, inasmuch as they practice the same wantonness there as in their synagogues. Instead, they may be lodged in garrets or barns, similarly to the gypsies. This will show them that they are not the masters in our country, as they boast, but that they are foreigners and our prisoners;

3. "To confiscate all their prayer-books and Talmuds in which such idolatry, malediction and blasphemy are taught;

4. "to categorically forbid their rabbis to continue their teaching;

5. "Jews should not be granted the privilege of safe-conduct and the right to use the highways. They have no business in the country and should rather stay at home. . . . If our sovereigns and potentates do not emit the necessary laws to deny Jews the right to use the highways, it may occur one fine day that a valiant guard of men at horse assemble against the Jews, because this book will have taught them the true nature of the Jew, how he should be treated and that he does not deserve protection;

6. "Their usury should be forbidden; all ready money, gold and silver jewelry should be confiscated, for all their possessions have been stolen from us by their usury;

7. "Young and healthy Jews and Jewesses should be equipped with flails, axes, mattock, spades, distaffs and spindles and should be compelled to earn their living by the sweat of their brows. It is intolerable that they should make us work and toil to enable them, the so-called Chosen People, to sit at the fireside in idleness.

³³ Luther advocates what appears to be the strange paradox of a severe justice because he has not abandoned hope that a few will yet be aroused from their complacency and be won for Christ. (Lewin questions Luther's sincerity.)

"If, however, we have cause to fear that they will personally injure us, our wives and our families, our domestics or our cattle, then let us account with them or all they have extorted from us with their usury and let us expel them from our country forever. . . ." ³⁴

These drastic measures are not to be executed in a spirit of malice, but the Jewish instruments for launching assaults on the Christian faith must be eradicated. The evil must be obliterated at its source. If Moses were alive, he would be in the vanguard, tearing down Jewish schools and homes. The money which the Jews have accumulated by taking excessive interest on loans should be confiscated and set aside in a special fund to provide for those impoverished Jews who are sincere converts so that they can support their families and the old and crippled.

Some say that the Jews need to be spared out of the self-interest of their protectors because they know how to control money. Luther doubts that any blessing rests on wealth which was derived from cheating and "robbing" the people. And even if the Jews did earn their money honestly, it gives them no right to blaspheme Christ and wish evil upon their Gentile neighbors. Luther's conscience prodded him into doing something about the prevailing "menace." ³⁵

Luther did not encourage private vengeance. The "*Pfarrherrn*" and "*Prediger*" were not to incite the people to violence. There were to be no pogroms—no malevolent Jew baiting. But the "*Obrigkeit*" was to administer firm and speedy "justice." Friendly treatment has had an adverse effect on the Jew. It has made him adamant in his unbelief, and his arrogance has become more unbearable. A harsh castigation is unavoidable if he is to be jarred loose from a false sense of security that is harming his own welfare. His ultimate well-being will not be enhanced by silence and indecision on the part of Christians. God will hold us to account if we do not prevent the Jews from blaspheming His holy name.

As the misdeeds of his enemies loom up in his mind again and again, they appear more and more impious to Luther. His diatribe against the Jews reaches extravagant proportions until he seems to lose all restraint and boils over with vitriolic fury. "As he proceeds from one theme to another, the work grows into a perfect hurricane of invective, a blazing volcano of hatred (?) . . . which blasts their character and their history, and exhausts even his fertile vocabulary of denunciation." ³⁶ Even his most caustic obloquies against the papists and the Anabaptists appear mild by comparison. Mercy to the Jews will be rewarded on Judgment Day

³⁴ Cf. W. A., LIII, p. 522ff. Translation by M. Sasse, *Martin Luther and the Jews*, pp. 10—12.

³⁵ "Ich will hiermit mein Gewissen gereinigt und entschuldigt haben, als der ich's treulich habe angezeigt und gewarnt."

³⁶ MacKinnon, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 198ff.

with the flames of hellfire. Whoever maintains social intercourse with these young devils and poisonous serpents should be condemned. For emphasis, Luther repeats once more what his critics would like to call "an incredible program of savagery and barbarism." He has only disgust for those corrupt princes who have accepted Jewish bribes. Again, he suspects that the Jews do even worse than he can prove.

One of the pernicious lies propagated by the Jews is that they alone believe in One God and all others are polytheists. If they can prove their assertion, Luther says, we will all agree to be circumcised and become Jews. Christians, too, endorse the proclamation of Moses: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is One Lord" (Deut. 6:4). The Jews cannot comprehend the Christian teaching that the Trinity does not obviate the Unity of God.

These pretenders have long ceased to be God's people. They do not believe in God's Word, and God does not hear their prayers. Luther declares that he did not find it pleasant to write this book. He shudders when he contemplates the wrath of God exhibited in the punishment of Israel. With St. Paul he is willing to say: "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved" (Num. 10:1). When he sees the Jews being plunged into eternal damnation, he is moved to intercede for them with the prayer: "O God, heavenly Father, turn Thy wrath away from them, let it be enough, and let it come to an end, for the sake of Thy dear Son. Amen."

One dim gleam of hope remains. The magistrates should exercise a severe justice so that some may come to their senses and still be saved. Moses once found it necessary to kill three thousand of them in the wilderness so that the whole congregation would not become contaminated and have to be exterminated. The only defense Luther can muster in support of the Jews is the consideration that they are possessed by demons and scarcely cognizant any more of their turpitude and malfeasance.

The fourth and final section of the book contrasts the Messianic conceptions of Jews and Christians. Luther poses the questions: What are both people searching for? Why is the Jewish ideal unsatisfactory and unacceptable?

The Jews have misconstrued their own prophecies as pointing toward a realm of external prosperity. Their Messiah is to be another David who will restore the ancient glory of Israel, one who will subdue the heathen, and one who will establish his kingdom with worldly pomp and splendor. The appeal is basically mundane and self-centered. The Jews do not feel that they need a Messiah who is a divine Mediator. God should be flattered if they, such holy and circumcised people, condescend to pray at all. Luther would rather be a sow than a man if he were offered nothing better than the Jewish Messiah. Death, the worst plague of man, would still remain to haunt us. The sow can be content with food and sleep — with the appeasement of carnal appetites — for it knows

nothing about the fall of man, of good or evil; it fears no death or hell, no devil or God.³⁷

Removed *toto coelo* in His nature and mission from Jewish aspirations is the conception of the Incarnate Son of God. The Christian Messiah came to make feasible a spiritual reconciliation between a God immutably just and men intrinsically wicked. Our Messiah is "the Resurrection and the Life." His propitiatory sacrifice was the essential achievement, which permits us to rejoice despite persecution and temporal adversity. He distributes His power, not by means of the sword, but by preaching and teaching which instill faith in us. We are admitted into His Kingdom solely out of grace. Unlike the Jews, Christians concede that they have nothing to boast about in respect to their own merits.

To bolster his argument, Luther points to the miraculous growth of the Early Church. Large numbers of people accepted a Savior, lowly, despised, and rejected by His own blood kin. The whole course of history was controlled by God's predetermined designs for humanity. "Alles ist geschen des Messia willen." Christ is the perfect Fulfillment of the Old Testament. The Christian Church is the New Jerusalem. Jews and Turks are blinded to these obvious facts. "God have mercy upon them, as He has had upon us."

Luther concludes by informing his readers that the immediate provocation for this treatise was the distribution of an insidious booklet in which a Jew matches his arguments in conversation with an imaginary Christian. Luther is confident that he has demolished his arguments. His purpose has been to dissuade Christians who might have been tempted to become Jews — to warn them against Jewish perfidy and venality. In the last sentence, however, he cannot but pray: "Christ, our dear Lord, mercifully convert them. . . ."

Less than two months later *Vom Schem Hamphoras*,³⁸ a second writing on the Jewish problem, had been completed. Luther's aim was virtually the same as in the former work. He is less concerned than ever with changing the "*stock-stein-teufel-hart*" Jews. Even Moses would find them untractable. But he is anxious to impress

³⁷ Luther explains the difference between the Old and New Covenant more lucidly in his *Preface to the Prophet Ezekiel* (1545): "The Jews hold fast to the name of Israel and claim that they alone are Israel and we are Gentiles; and this is true so far as the first part of the prophecy and the Old Covenant of Moses are concerned, though this is long since fulfilled. But according to the second part of the prophecy and the New Covenant, they are no longer Israel; for all things are to be new, and Israel, too, must become new, and they alone are the true Israel who have accepted the New Covenant. . . . The Jews, however, want to have a Messiah according to the Old Covenant, and pay no heed to this New Covenant. So they miss both covenants. . . . Therefore the Scriptures are sealed against them . . . the Jews do themselves wrong and injury when . . . they desire not the new Kingdom. . . ." Hol. Ed., Vol. VI, pp. 414—418.

³⁸ S. L. A., XX:2028—2109, No. 52; E. A., XXXII, pp. 276—358; W. A., LIII, pp. 573—648.

his warnings on Christians who are exposed to Jewish falsehoods by supplying further information on the subject.

The first half of the brochure consists of a German translation of the eleventh chapter of *Victoria adversus impios Hebraeos* by Porchotus de Salvaticus, which reports the miracles and life of Christ according to Jewish legends. With biting sarcasm, Luther spotlights the contradictions, objugates the mockeries, and ridicules the superstitions contained in it. In addition to the usual authorities, he makes reference to Jerome, Eusebius, and Sebastian Muenster.

The Jews are not convinced by Christ's miracles because they believe they were performed with the help of Beelzebub. A Jewish legend relates that the name *Schem Hamphoras* was written on stone in the Temple. Whoever gained access to this secret would be capable of doing anything. A man of illegitimate birth, Jesus of Nazareth, made the discovery and persuaded a group of credulous Galileans that He was not a bastard, but the Promised One. These men were the disciples of the Gospel stories. By pronouncing the magic name, this impostor succeeded in healing the lame and restoring the sight of the blind. His captors had difficulty in hanging Jesus because the tree would always collapse. Judas double-crossed his Master by learning the same secret, and contravened during His endeavor to ascend into heaven.

Luther avers that this book is so blasphemous that it not only mocks God the Creator, His Son Jesus Christ, and all Christians, but it even makes fools out of the Jews who subscribe to such nonsense, and it insults the intelligence of the Evil Spirit. Who can deny that people who believe such far-fetched tales have been rightfully rejected? How ludicrous to give credence to a legend which contradicts known historical facts!³⁰ But blind allegiance to rabbinical lore is demanded of every good Jew. In case anyone objects to Luther's severity with the Jews, he assures them that he would fain do otherwise, but they are irretrievable. They have another god called "der leidige Teufel und boese Geist."

Luther regrets that he must write as he does: "I do it out of passion for my faith and to the honor of Thy divine majesty." No Christian can derive a sadistic satisfaction from observing the plight of the Jews. "It is too gruesome, terrifying, and inordinate." Nevertheless, we need not question the justice of God. Luther reprimands the princes and lords who have been lax in discharging their responsibilities and continue to offer shelter to the Jews.

Luther takes up the proper use of the divine name. The *Tetragrammaton* was to denote Jehovah in His exclusive covenant relation with Israel, and the name came to be considered so sacred that a Jew was forbidden to pronounce it with his lips. There is

³⁰ E. g., Helena is pictured as the queen of Israel at that time, when, as a matter of historical fact, Palestine was administered by the Romans.

nothing in its meaning or derivation, Luther decides, to warrant such a man-made prohibition. The Jews honor the form of a name and ignore its significance. Time and again they have dishonored God's precious Word. "It is the anger of God come over them as they have deserved."

The second half of the brochure is entitled *Vom Geschlecht Christi, Matthaeus 1*, and suggests ways of harmonizing the alleged contradictions between the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. Jews have employed these "discrepancies" to flout Christians. If they cannot find direct statements in their own books to the effect that Mary is David's descendant, they will not believe it. Luther's solution would have Luke's account supply the legal descent for Christ through Joseph, and Matthew's, the natural descent through Mary.⁴⁰

Besides diffusely extending arguments found in *Von den Juden und ihren Luegen*, Luther introduces several new approaches. He compares the Jewish dispersion to the wanderings of Cain, who was marked with a curse. He argues that it would be unreasonable for revelation to cease with the Old Testament canon. It was to be expected that when Messiah arrived, He would augment man's knowledge of his Maker. In Deut. 18:15 Moses promises that a greater Prophet will someday arrive. Moses is speaking of the office rather than the person. No prophet ever superseded Moses. Only Christ can be meant, since His message alone excelled that of the great Lawgiver. He was the "Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4). He offered a New Covenant in keeping with the requirements of Jer. 31:31. Contrary to all the rabbis and Talmudists this stands as a clear and indisputable text. The Jews misunderstand Christ's declaration that He did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them. He did not intend to endorse the Ceremonial Law for New Testament Christians. The New Covenant is to be written not on stones, but on hearts. The Jews can no longer be saved by believing the Old Testament, since the Messiah has now come.⁴¹

Luther's condemnation of the Jews has not extended to their language. Christians may learn Hebrew from them, just as they learn our languages. But as they reject our religion, so we reject theirs. Luther encourages more Hebrew scholarship among Christians so that the unadulterated text may be assured. He will "have nothing more to do with the Jews . . . or write against them. . . ."

⁴⁰ Joseph and Mary had the same grandfather. Luther identifies Matthan with Matthat. He did not presume to offer his explanations as the final word on the problem, but invited someone to produce a better solution. Much relevant material uncovered on the subject since Luther's day has not made his position untenable. Cf. A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, pp. 259—262.

⁴¹ The remaining paragraphs are concerned with an exegetical discourse on the Hebrew word *Alma* and the virginity of Mary. Luther offers a hundred gulden to whoever finds that *Alma* was ever used for *Frau* in the Old Testament. . . .

May God bestow His grace upon anyone who wants to convert them so that they (yet a few) with us confess and praise God the Father, our Creator, together with our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit in eternity. Amen."

Jewish scholars are inclined to omit mention of the prayers which comprise the closing paragraph in each writing or to minimize their significance by impugning Luther's motives. Lewin does not think that he intended them seriously, but that he added them as "rhetorical flourishes."

Luther's later writings on the Jews were never so favorably received as the writing of 1523. His foes made capital of his violent proposals. John Cochlaeus, in his 1549 commentary on Martin Luther, calls his tract on the Jews "die erbittertsten Invektiven."⁴² The Swiss reformer Bullinger wrote to Bucer on December 8, 1543, complaining about the vile language of the celebrated Doctor. Such an *impurissime* writing as *Schem Hamphoras* was not becoming a Christian theologian. If Reuchlin were still living, he would characterize Luther as the reincarnation of Hochstraten and Pfefferkorn.⁴³

If Luther's colleagues were out of harmony with his views, they refrained from saying so. Osiander seems to have written a letter questioning the justice of Luther's position, but then retracted in fear of incurring his anger.⁴⁴ Melancthon sent a copy of the first "Judentraktat" to Philip of Hesse on January 17, 1543, and the Landgrave expressed his appreciation. Soon he issued a "Judenordnung" directing all Jews to hear the Word of God and allow their books to be inspected so that portions offensive to Christians could be burned. Blasphemy, usury, trade coalitions, and money exchange were forbidden. A circle of Luther's friends claimed that his writings on the Jews were the incentive for the prince of Silesia and the Markgraf of Brandenburg to drive them out of their borders. On May 6, 1543, the decree of 1536 was put into full operation in Electoral Saxony.⁴⁵ Luther became somewhat pessimistic when he learned that the young Counts of Mans-

⁴² What his Catholic biographers neglect to mention is the contempt heaped upon the Jews by their own leaders. John Eck, for example, revived all the medieval tales about the Jews, even slandering the Old Testament heroes, held in sacred memory by the Church. "It is a great mistake that we Christians leave the Jews so much freedom and grant them protection and security." Cf. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol. IV, pp. 546-547. Additional quotations can be found in Fritsch, *Handbuch der Judenfrage*, pp. 427-428.

⁴³ Cf. Lewin, *op. cit.*, p. 98: "Gottes gerechtem Urteil ueberlassen wir, dass im hohen Alter ein solcher Theologe in Schrift und Tat solche Masslosigkeiten begeht. Denn hiernach werden die Spaeteren urteilen, Luther sei ein Mensch gewesen, und zwar ein Mensch, unterworfen strafflichen Leidenschaften." Some modern commentators would concur with this judgment.

⁴⁴ Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, p. 345.

⁴⁵ Cf. Burkhardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 595 ff. The mandate against the Jews was mollified again after Luther's death.

feld—in his home community—had disregarded his advice and were favoring the Jews.

A number of Jews attempted to answer Luther's charges. Josel von Rosheim pleaded with the city council at Strassburg to prohibit the circulation of *Von den Juden und ihren Luegen*. He was successful. His greatest triumph for the Jews, though, was the assurance of Emperor Charles V that by 1546 the safety and rights of his people would be fully guaranteed.

In June, 1543, there appeared another pamphlet by Luther entitled *Ueber die Gottheit Christi auf Grund der letzten Worte Davids*.⁴⁶ Curiously enough, he writes in an altogether different mood and style. In a calm and scholarly fashion he strives to demonstrate from 2 Sam. 23:1-7 and several other Old Testament passages⁴⁷ the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity against other heretics besides the Jews. His exegesis is dominated exclusively by his Christological convictions.

Luther's scattered references to the Jews in the remaining years of his life exhibit no new viewpoint. He approved the fact that at Berlin Buchholz had preached sharply against them.⁴⁸ With the utmost indignation he learned that at Eisleben two Jewish youths could dare to insult the preacher without being punished.⁴⁹ Toward the end of January, 1546, he entered the duchy of Mansfeld to settle a quarrel in the princely family. In a letter to his wife on February 1 he complained that there were some fifty Jewish residents in Eisleben. "When chief matters are settled, I must devote myself to driving out the Jews. Count Albert is hostile to them, and has given them their deserts, but no one else has. God willing I will help Count Albert from the pulpit."⁵⁰ In a letter of February 7 he expresses his belief that all the devils of hell must have been let loose in Eisleben. He has been told that the widow of the Count of Mansfeld has been posing as a protectress of the Jews. In the sermons preached at Eisleben, Luther reiterated his attacks on the Jews, their lies and blasphemies.⁵¹ In the concluding remarks of a sermon delivered on Sunday, February 14, he inserted a *Vermahnung wider die Juden*.⁵² Luther tells his listeners that they should first treat them in a Christian manner and afford ample opportunity for them to become believers. "If they want to turn over to us and cease from their blasphemy and what they have done to us . . . then we will gladly forgive them,

⁴⁶ Holsten, *Martin Luther, Schriften wider Juden und Tuerken*, pp. 308-403; E. A., XXXVII, pp. 1-104; W. A., LIV, pp. 28-100.

⁴⁷ Gen. 4:1 and 1 Chron. 18:17.

⁴⁸ Enders, *op. cit.*, 16, 192.

⁴⁹ Reu, *Luther and the Jews*, p. 610.

⁵⁰ Translation by Smith, P., *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther*, p. 419.

⁵¹ Cf. E. A., XVI, pp. 215, 243f.

⁵² Part of a sermon on Matt. 11:25-30; E. A., LXV, pp. 185ff.; S. L. A., XII:1284ff.

but where they do not (do this), we will also not tolerate or endure them among us." Luther repeats what he believes to be the main Jewish activities against Christians. His love of God and his appreciation of Christ's work are his motives in opposing the Jews. . . . Four days later he died. The Jewish community at Eisleben remained unmolested.

Luther's hostility to the Jews, in the long run, did not have the adverse effect on the Protestant missionary endeavor that might have been expected. There were numerous proselytes in the Lutheran and Reformed churches, among them Immanuel Tremellius of Ferrara, who took part in the compilation of the Heidelberg Catechism.

In the seventeenth century, Ezra Edzard of Hamburg (1629 to 1708) showed a burning zeal for the conversion of the Jews and from his own wealth established a considerable fund for that purpose. Similar funds seem to have been started in other cities. Among the Pietists, Spener declared it the duty of the government to take care of the conversion of the Jews. At the same time the Moravian Samuel Lieberkuehn labored thirty years among the Jews. In 1728 an *Institutum Judaicum* was founded at Halle, which lasted until 1792, sending out missionaries to the Jews. Inaugurated by Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn, a reform movement spread among the Jews, and large numbers turned to Christianity, especially in Berlin.⁵³ In Odessa, in 1879, a Hebrew translation of Luther's Small Catechism appeared. The foreword calls upon the *Bene Yisrael* to read the book and follow the Lutheran doctrine.⁵⁴

Conclusions and Summary

1. The decisive factor in determining Luther's attitude toward the Jews was religious conflict. He was primarily concerned with the answer which people gave to the question: "What think ye of Christ?" What disturbed him most was that the Jews had rejected the promised Messiah. As was the case with the papists and the Turks, he judged the Jews to be inveterate enemies of Biblical Christianity. Rabbinical exegesis was to be placed on the same level as popery. Luther could only explain Jewish blindness to the fulfillment of prophecy as the result of a process of self-hardening and self-condemnation. God's righteous judgment is disclosed in ceaseless persecution and unrest. Any government that ignores this judgment and pampers Jews is acting contrary to the punitive justice of God. Attacks against Christ and Scripture infuriated Luther. All his writings were intended to refute and

⁵³ Between 1816 and 1843 there were 3,984 Jews of the cultured class baptized in the eight old Prussian provinces. Cf. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. VI, p. 178.

⁵⁴ Cf. Newman, *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements*, pp. 627-628, who attributes this event to the precedent established in 1533, when Urban Regius directed a Hebrew epistle to the Jews of Braunschweig discussing several portions of Luther's works and calling upon them to accept Christianity.

stop this blasphemy. The urge to exalt Christ and defend the Christian faith prompted Luther to write what he did. The severe treatment which he recommended was not due to a fanatical hatred. Patience and persuasion had not proved effective. Even the ultimate welfare of the Jews would best be served by using violent measures. The highest delight that Luther could offer anyone was to learn to know his Savior Jesus.

2. It is a superficial and untenable interpretation which holds that Luther was little interested in the Jews at first, then became a philo-Semite, and finally ended up as one of the worst anti-Semites. From 1515 to 1546, from his first writings to his last, there was no fundamental change in his position. He was ever ready and willing to welcome Jews who embraced Christianity. The difference between the "earlier" and the "later" Luther was a result of disappointment and a matter of degree. Whereas in 1523 he earnestly sought the salvation of many Jews, by 1546 his optimism had been crushed, and he was contented with expecting the conversion of only a few.

3. It would seem that there was an irreconcilable and inevitable conflict between Luther's effort to convert the Jews and the adamant determination of the Jews to cling to their traditions and realize their own aspirations. Luther met with experiences similar to those of his predecessors and successors. Reluctantly he had to admit that the gulf between the synagog and the Church remained unbridgeable.

4. It was by no stretch of the imagination a race-and-blood theory that moved Luther to write as he did. He had words of praise for the Jewish patriarchs, prophets, and kings. He does not dispute the Jewish claim that they *were* the chosen people of God. He *does* object when they flaunt their heritage before the Gentiles. Racial superiority, haughtiness, and self-glorification were precisely the ideas which Luther condemned among the Jews. But his criticism was not limited to one people. The Greeks and the Romans are chided for the same reason.⁵⁵ No one was more outspoken than Luther in rebuking the Germans for their sins and shortcomings. It is correct to conclude that the racial anti-Semitism of the Nazis was utterly foreign to Luther.

5. Luther's attitude was undoubtedly colored by traditional superstitions which pictured the Jew as a poisoner and kidnapper of Christian children. These conceptions were affirmed by the leading intellectuals of the day, and it seems impossible categorically to deny that any of the accusations brought against the Jews had a basis in fact.⁵⁶

6. Luther's personal contacts with Jews left unfavorable im-

⁵⁵ Cf. S. L. A., XX:1865, 11; E. A., XXXII, p. 103.

⁵⁶ Trachtenberg admits that some Jews practiced magic (*op. cit.*, p. 76). It seems unbelievable that Christians could have been so prejudiced and blinded by hatred that every charge raised was a fabrication.

pressions and tended to confirm his suspicions. It should be recorded as noteworthy that Luther turned against the Jews after he had overcome his naïveté—after further study and firsthand experience.

7. Luther evidently believed that the Jews were inimical to the social welfare of the German people. As an energetic worker he resented what he believed to be the laziness of the Jewish people, who scorned manual labor and practiced usury, which he regarded as tantamount to robbery.

8. Luther's advice on how to deal with the Jews must be understood in relation to the existing political setup. Saxony, as well as the other German principalities, recognized only one legal religion within its borders. It seemed like shameless audacity to Luther when the Jews dared to circulate propaganda in opposition to Christianity. Blasphemy in a Christian state, he felt, should be punished by law. Therefore he lists his suggestions and expects them to be implemented by the authorized magistrates.

9. Modern anti-Semitism is usually guided by altogether different motives than those which stirred Luther. Racial antagonism or economic jealousy are fundamental causes.

10. Luther would have been rigidly opposed to toleration of diverse beliefs based upon the modern assumption that "one religion is as good as another" or that "there are elements of value in every creed."

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