

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 133

שלום

## Christianity and Judaism

How one faith became two

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**MARKED OUT** The Jewish identity badge required by the Nazis (*far left*) revived centuries-old practices that had forced distinctive dress on Jews in the Middle Ages (*near left*); see p. 12.

it. Mainstream Judaism today, which is called “rabbinic” Judaism (see p. 11), derives from the practices and rituals that became central after the fall of the Second Temple.

### EIGHT NIGHTS OF LIGHTS

Hanukkah, one of the Jewish festivals most familiar to gentiles, celebrates a rededication of the Second Temple. The Seleucid Empire (Greek-speaking Syrians) confiscated the temple around 170 BC and built an altar to Zeus. In 165 Jewish priest and military leader Judah Maccabee defeated the Seleucids and regained the temple. The traditional story holds that only one day’s worth of kosher oil for the temple menorah was found, but it burned miraculously for eight days until new oil was prepared.

### AND WHAT’S IN A NUMBER?

“AD” stands for the Latin phrase *anno domini*, “in the year of our Lord.” This numbering came into use in the sixth century, developed by monk Dionysius Exiguus to replace calendars inherited from the Roman Empire. Some eight centuries later, the idea of counting down the years before the birth of Christ became common; they were called *ante Christum*, “before Christ” (BC). The Hebrew calendar marks time unaffected by the birth of Christ. Its current version has been in use since the Middle Ages, based on traditional rabbinic calculations of how much time has elapsed since the creation of the world. The Jewish New Year beginning at Rosh Hashanah 2020 is *anno mundi* (“year of the world”) 5781.

### OTHER STREAMS

Karaite Judaism differs from rabbinic Judaism in the ways it practices biblical interpretation, in its calendar, and in other customs. Karaites believe that counting Jews is forbidden by Genesis 32:12, but there are thought to be between 30,000 and 50,000 Karaites, mostly in the Middle East. Samaritans still exist as well: while Samaritanism differs from Judaism in some significant ways (such as exalting Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem), its language and rituals are recognizably related.

**THE PRAYING JEW** Marc Chagall (see p. 38) was among many Jewish artists who incorporated religious themes into their work.

# Did you know?

CONTEXT TO ILLUMINATE JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY’S COMPLEX HISTORY TOGETHER



### WHAT’S IN A NAME?

In much of this issue, you will see mention of “Second Temple” Judaism. The First Temple was Solomon’s, built during his reign and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. The Second Temple, built in 516 BC after the exile, stood until AD 70 when the Romans destroyed



**SEEKING THE INFINITE GOD** Above: One surprising intersection of Jewish and Christian thought arose around *kabbalah* mysticism (see p. 21).

**SEPARATE RULES FOR THE JEWS**

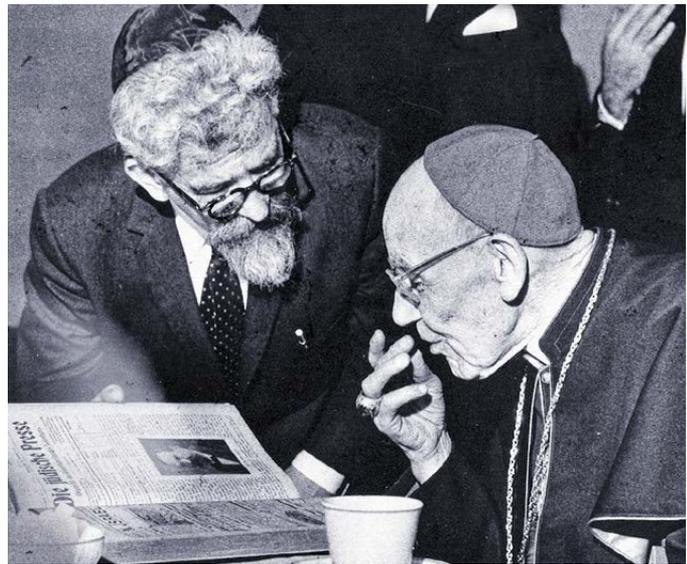
Countless European medieval councils and rulers passed and pronounced regulations governing Jewish behavior. One of the more famous, Charlemagne's *Capitulary for the Jews* (814), regulated Jewish moneylending:

Let no Jew presume to take in pledge or for any debt any of the goods of the Church in gold, silver, or other form, from any Christian. But if he presume to do so, which God forbid, let all his goods be seized and let his right hand be cut off. . . . Concerning the oath of the Jews against the Christians. Place sorrel twice around his body from head to feet; he ought to stand when he takes his oath, and he should have in his right hand the five books of Moses according to his law, and if he cannot have them in Hebrew he shall have them in Latin. "May the God who gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai help me, and may the leprosy of Naamon the Syrian come upon me as it came upon him, and may the earth swallow me as it swallowed Dathan and Abiron, I have not committed evil against you in this cause."

**FREUD, EINSTEIN . . . AND SEINFELD?**

The term "secular Jew" is often used to refer to people who are Jewish by birth but not religiously observant. Many have become famous as scientists,

**BRIDGING DIVIDES** Below: The document *Nostra Aetate* from the Second Vatican Council in 1965 was a major milestone in Christian-Jewish relations (see p. 30). Here Jewish advisor to the council Abraham Heschel meets with Cardinal Augustin Bea.



writers, artists, and entertainers, including Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, Albert Einstein, Karl Marx, Robert Oppenheimer, Boris Pasternak, Irving Berlin, Ayn Rand, Stan Lee, Billy Joel, Stanley Kubrick, Niels Bohr, and Jerry Seinfeld. ☐

*The Capitulary was translated by Roy Cave and Herbert Coulson and modernized by Jerome Arkenberg, and is courtesy of the Internet Medieval Sourcebook.*



**SWASTIKA AND CROSS** German churchgoers pose with a banner reading "Vote for List 1, German Christians" in 1933; List 1 was comprised of Nazi candidates (see p. 24).

ILLUSTRATION: DEPICTION OF KABBALISTIC ESOTERICISM—PRIVATE COLLECTION FOTOGRAFIA GILARDI / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES  
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# Letters to the editor

Readers respond to *Christian History*



## DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT

Your daily Christian history bulletins are really well done and very encouraging. At a time when Christians are so under siege, I find it very helpful to read the stories of those who have lived so well to Christ. Thanks to all at CHI for telling the stories that matter.

—Richard Merlander, Hoolehua, HI

Sign up to receive our daily email at our website!

## FRIENDS ACROSS TIME

The “friendship” issue just arrived, and I finally forced myself to put it down so I could get my day’s tasks accomplished! What a great topic, what a great issue. Thank you for your faithfulness in producing excellent work. . . . One of the reasons I so enjoyed teaching church history was that I was able to introduce my students to many of my “friends” from the past. . . . [I assigned students to select] someone out of history, get to know that person from writings, allow a “relationship” to grow, and eventually introduce him/her to the class. It reflected the communion of saints, transcending time. Students loved it. I also was delighted to see the article from my friend, Michael Haykin. . . . What a great contribution to the community of faith, and fostering our process toward maturity. —Irv Brendlinger, Happy Valley, OR

## FELLOW SOLDIERS

I’m not sure Michael Bird’s idea that friends of Paul acted as co-authors for the epistles is without conjecture. Paul never identifies them as such. He refers to friends as fellow soldiers, etc. but never as co-authors. To “envisage” such sharing of ideas takes imaginative visualization beyond what the text supports. —Doug Van Hoff, Kankakee, IL

*Dr. Bird responded: “Paul’s letters frequently include cosenders and therefore coauthors (see 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; Col 1:1; Philm 1). Paul often speaks in the first person singular ‘I’ but also in the first person plural ‘we.’ . . . Further, having different inputs from different colleagues might also explain some of the stylistic differences between the letters as a comparison of Galatians, 2 Corinthians, and Colossians shows.”*

## COUNTING BAPTISTS IS TOUGH

I appreciate your fine series of *Christian History*, but as a Baptist historian I am concerned about your facts

in [CH 126]. . . . I did not find any reliable statistics on membership. In spite of inflated figures (p. 12), I found in my work, *The Twelve Baptist Tribes in the USA*, only 28 million Baptists in 95,000 churches with a listing of 52 distinct Baptist bodies. . . . You list Union University as founded in 1823 and Belmont University as founded in 1890. Union began in 1875 and Belmont in 1951. Both schools have appropriated the dates of two earlier schools that existed on their campuses for the earlier dates. —Albert W. Wardin, Nashville, TN

*Thanks for the corrections on Union and Belmont. On membership, we contacted Dr. Flowers, who responded: “The reported number of black Baptists might be low because there are so many independent black Baptist churches. But then again, denominations can exaggerate numbers. If you add up the black Baptist conventions, it comes to 13 to 14 million and then you have to account for independent and SBC/ABC churches. . . . Pew states that 40 percent of black Americans are Baptist, putting it more like 16 million. . . . But counting Baptists is tough.”*

## MEET THE STAFF: KAYLENA RADCLIFF

*How long have you been at CHI and what is your role?*

I started in 2013 as a customer service representative before taking on the proofreading, editing, and writing roles I have today. As editorial coordinator, I coordinate



remote team members and help manage each issue from start to finish. I also write curricula for the animated Torchlighters series.

*What is your favorite part of the job?*

Reading every fascinating article that crosses my desk! It’s like taking a brand new history course every issue, and I love it!

*What do you most wish readers knew?*

Just how incredible the CH team is. Most of them have been here since long before I started, and their dedication and love shows even though they’re all over the country and often working on multiple projects at a time. And every three months, they produce a high-quality, accurate, and beautiful magazine.

*What do you do in your spare time?*

Keep my two young children alive, primarily! I’m heavily involved in our church as the wife of the assistant pastor, and I write fantasy novels. As you might imagine, I drink a lot of coffee. ☕

# TIMELY NEW WORKS ON CRUCIAL ISSUES

## ◆ **A TIME TO DIE: *Monks on the Threshold of Eternal Life***

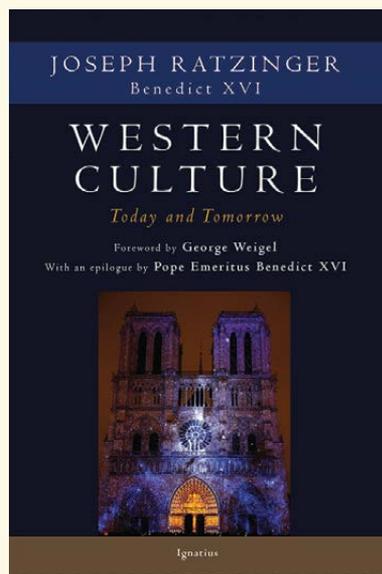
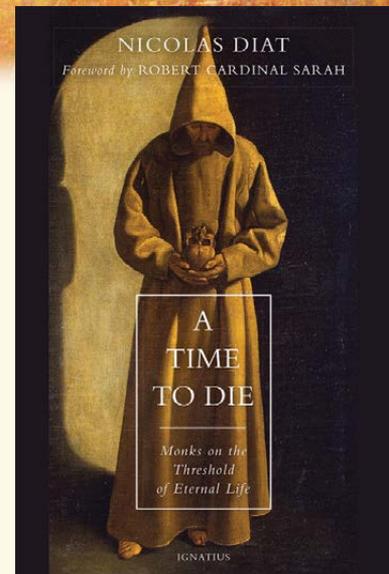
Nicolas Diat

Behind monastery walls, men of God spend their lives preparing for the passage of death. Best-selling French author Nicolas Diat set out to discover what their deaths can reveal about the greatest mystery faced by everyone—the end of life.

How to die well? To answer questions on preparing for death, Diat traveled to eight European monasteries including Solesmes Abbey and the Grande Chartreuse. His extraordinary interviews reveal that monks have the same fears and sorrows as everyone else. What is exemplary about them is their humility and simplicity. When death approaches, they are like happy children who wait with impatience to open a gift. They have complete confidence in the mercy of God. **TTDP** . . . Sewn Softcover, \$17.95

“I am infinitely thankful to Nicolas Diat for having brought us for a moment before the mystery of death, and I recommend to all the reading of this wonderful book.”

— **Cardinal Robert Sarah**, from the Foreword



## ◆ **WESTERN CULTURE TODAY AND TOMORROW**

**Addressing Fundamental Issues** — Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)

Well known for his important scholarly contributions to theology and biblical commentary, Ratzinger has also written penetrating observations of our times, revealing here his keen insights about the social and political challenges confronting modern Western societies.

He reminds us that Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome were the foundation stones upon which Western civilization was built. Their invaluable contributions form the basis for the Western understanding of human dignity and human rights. This book also includes the new essay by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on the clerical sex abuse crisis, which traces the moral disorder to the collapse of faith both inside and outside the Church. **WCTTP** . . . Sewn Softcover, \$16.95

“Benedict XVI has long been an acute analyst of the ills that beset the West. His prescription is to rediscover the human dignity implicit in its Christian roots while absorbing the best achievements of the Enlightenment. This book gets the big questions of the 21st century exactly right.”

— **George Weigel**, Author, *The Fragility of Order*

## ◆ **THE FRAGILITY OF ORDER** — George Weigel **Now in paperback!**

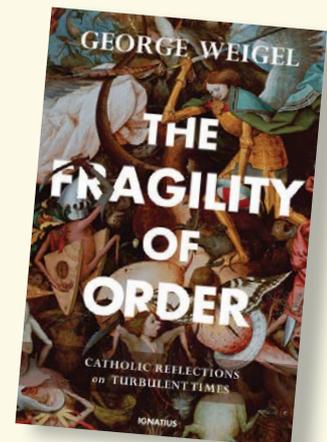
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— **Mary Eberstadt**, Senior Research Fellow, Faith and Reason Institute



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# Editor's note



**THIS IS THE SECOND** editor's letter I have written you for this issue of *Christian History* on Christian-Jewish relations. Let me explain why.

I began the first letter, as I usually do, around the time articles began to come in. I wanted to tell you an engaging story about how this issue came to be, and give you a preview of some of the stories and people you would meet on the coming pages. *Christian History* readers have long requested such an issue; shortly after 9/11, *CH* published an issue on Christian-Muslim relations, and turning the same sort of spotlight on the historical relationship of Christians and Jews was long overdue.

And so I talked about how my husband Edwin and I got cast in a local production of *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare. Quite unexpectedly we played two of the leading roles, the noblewoman Portia and her husband, Bassanio—who causes his best friend, Antonio, to become indebted to Jewish moneylender Shylock. I explained how wonderful it was to deliver one of Shakespeare's greatest speeches, "The quality of mercy is not strained. . . ." But, I noted, it was also a difficult speech, because I had to deliver it to a resistant Shylock. Shylock is undoubtedly the play's antagonist, and he is terribly unmerciful, demanding a pound of Antonio's flesh. He argues, however, that it is partly Christians who made him so:

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

Harsh words, but they were only the beginning. We had recruited a strong lineup of authors—both Jewish and gentile—and looked forward to exploring the topic. But as articles arrived and I began to edit them, I was confronted with the hardest story *Christian History*

has ever had to tell. It is a story I had known little about, and it is not a pleasant one.

First I learned how, over the years since Christianity became the faith of the Roman Empire, Christians had confined Jews to certain occupations, accused them of horrible murders, imprisoned them in ghettos, made them wear distinctive clothing, burned them at the stake, killed them in the Crusades, and ultimately collaborated in the Holocaust. But that was not the hardest part. We have needed before to tell those kinds of stories, though perhaps not quite so many all together.

More troubling to me was that Christians had justified these atrocities in part through claims which I myself, unquestioningly, held as basic Christian doctrine—that the church replaced Israel, that the New Testament completed the Old, and that I could adopt Old Testament metaphors and promises without any regard for the people to whom they had originally been made. Some of the articles shook me to the core. Eventually, confronted with the interview that ends our issue, I wept. I remain convinced that the Old Testament prophesies the coming of Christ. But I will be forever changed by what I have read in these pages.

So I wrote you a new letter about my struggles. And I will end it by saying that two things still haunt me. One is Romans 11:17–18, where Paul reminds those of us who are gentiles that we are ultimately branches grafted into God's olive tree. The other is Portia's words, Shakespeare's words, my words, turned away from Shylock back onto my own head:

Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy,

And that same prayer doth teach us  
all to render  
The deeds of mercy.



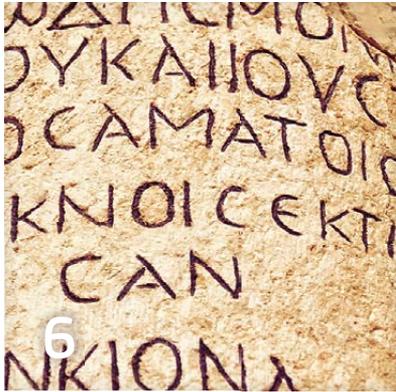
Jennifer Woodruff Tait  
Managing editor

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Don't miss our next issue, which will explore the stories of Christians in science who have contributed to human flourishing.

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# Faith divided

HOW ONE FAITH BECAME TWO—AND HOW THEIR CONFLICT BEGAN

**Eliza Rosenberg**

*“His blood be upon us and upon our children!” (Matt. 27:35)*

WHEN THE AUTHOR OF MATTHEW committed those words to parchment two millennia ago, he had no idea how they would be grossly misused. The phrase was a standard Aramaic formula, an oath meaning “I commit myself to this decision.” Most legal battles or serious conflicts heard it uttered more than once. Yet less than a century later, Melito of Sardis (d. 180) wrote in an Easter sermon for baptismal candidates that every Jew was personally guilty of Christ’s death: “The Sovereign has been insulted. . . . God has been murdered; the King of Israel has been put to death by an Israelite right hand.”

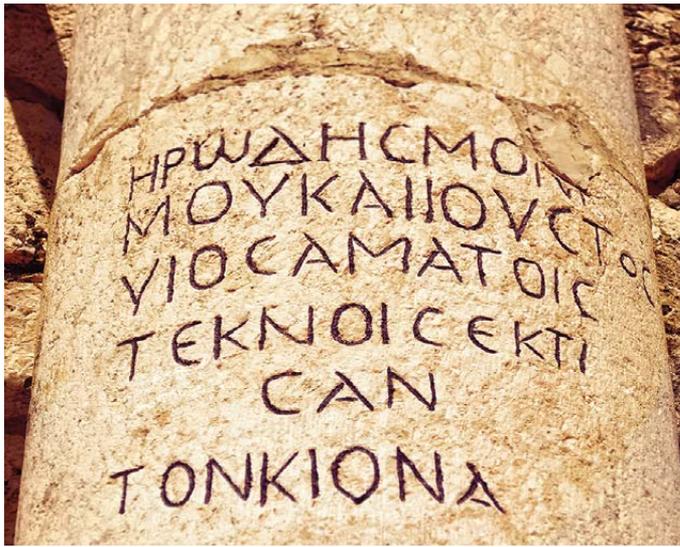
Popes, patriarchs, and pastors echoed Melito’s words through the ages, as did lay Christians from learned princes to illiterate paupers. Within only a few generations of apostolic memory, followers of Jesus severed his Jewishness from him—even though he had preached the authority of Jewish Scriptures and the observance of Jewish law, commissioned Jewish followers and apostles, and died at the hand of pagan authorities.

**PAINFUL HISTORY** The destruction of the Second Temple has intrigued artists for centuries; this 19th-c. painting is by Italian artist Francesco Hayez.

## PAGAN BACKGROUNDS

Jew-hating was not a Christian invention. Jews lived alongside non-Jewish neighbors for many centuries before Christianity. Wars, mostly about who controlled land and resources, sprang up, as did peace, which prevailed but was rarely recorded. Political, military, and economic alliances were ever-shifting. The vast majority of Jews had significant acquaintances with non-Jews—friendly, hostile, or merely practical. Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians found Jews and their ways strange, but rarely stranger than they found one another’s or than Jews found theirs.

As small Jewish enclaves settled in the *diaspora*, places outside their ancestral homeland, and separated from the security and traditions of the larger community, they nevertheless maintained a unique imprint that intrigued their neighbors. They proclaimed that



only one God existed and that, moreover, he should be worshiped because of his righteousness (*tzedakah*), loving kindness (*chesed*), and wisdom (*hokmah*), rather than simply because of his power.

People familiar with Egyptian and Greek modes of education might have been intrigued by synagogues where, instead of offering sacrifices, rabbis read and expounded canonical Scriptures—a unique religious practice in the ancient Mediterranean. In addition most Jewish communities had charitable schemes to keep members from destitution and enslavement. Greeks and Romans had no true equivalent; the presumption that contributions would come anonymously from all nondestitute members, as opposed to wealthy donors seeking public recognition, was new to them.

Some chose to convert. We do not know how many, but Philo of Alexandria, Josephus, and the Mishnah (see p. 11) speak about gentile converts to Judaism as a matter of course. Jews named these people who lacked Jewish ancestry but practiced the Jewish faith “God-fearers.” The New Testament records debate over whether these people should be considered Jews or gentiles, as well as whether gentiles who wanted to become Jesus-followers needed to become Jewish.

### MASSACRES AND DESECRATIONS

But outside interest in Judaism could be sinister as well as friendly. The first independently recorded pogrom—an organized massacre of Jews, tolerated or even approved by authorities—took place in the Greco-Egyptian metropolis of Alexandria in 38 BC. A significant Jewish community had lived peacefully alongside other residents for centuries; only 200 years earlier, a complete Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint, had been produced there. The pogrom resulted in significant loss of life, as well as destruction of property and civil disorder. Authorities eventually intervened.

**IN OUR OWN TONGUE** A Jewish synagogue inscription in Greek (*above left*) and a portion of the Temple Scroll in Hebrew from the Dead Sea Scrolls (*above right*) speak to the variety of Jewish life in the Greco-Roman world.

Though shocking, the Alexandria pogrom was not unprecedented. The idea of a ruler persecuting diaspora Jews in his kingdom and of a massive threat to Jewish minority communities resonated as far back as the book of Esther centuries before, which recorded the effort of Haman, a wicked Persian official, to kill every Jewish man, woman, and child in the kingdom. The queen, Esther, and her uncle and guardian, Mordecai, were able to intercede before King Ahasuerus only because they had long hidden their Jewish identity.

One of the best examples of such hostile outside interest occurred in the second century BC, when conquering Seleucid Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV desecrated the Jerusalem temple in a shocking departure from normal practice (most pagan conquerors wanted to keep the gods of conquered territories on their side, not offend them).

The books of First through Fourth Maccabees report that Antiochus and other Seleucid rulers banned circumcision, forced Jews to eat pork, and favored Jews who abandoned their own traditions and practices for Greek culture and language. Maccabees highlights faithful Jewish men and women, old and young alike, who chose to die rather than capitulate to the Seleucids’ demands, and eventually overthrew them. They lived on in the memory of communities wary of systematic persecution.

The Maccabees proved better fighters than rulers. Their successors, the Hasmoneans, publicly converted to Judaism so their Roman backers could be seen installing “local” rulers, but Jewish subjects saw through this facade. The Sadducees offered their stalwart support, however, and in return, received control



**DEBATING TRADITIONS** A millenium and a half later, the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493) would imagine 1st-c. sects as stereotypical medieval Jews.

of the Jerusalem temple. Many factions opposed the Sadducees, including Essenes, Zealots, and Pharisees. Most Jews did not belong to any of these schools; but the Pharisees, who proclaimed the resurrection of the dead and the spirit over the letter of the Law, held the most mainstream position by far. In such an environment, religious teachers from outside the establishment, like John the Baptist and Jesus, were common. They gained followers, disciples, opponents, admirers, and critics.

#### GRAFTED IN

The Gospels record interactions between these groups: such religious discussions, not always on the friendliest terms, were not surprising in the first-century world. However, most of the New Testament gives little sense of being about a religion outside Judaism. The word “Christian” appears only three times (Acts 11:26, 26:28,

and 1 Peter 4:16), and Paul writes of gentile Jesus-believers as being “grafted” onto the Jewish olive tree, probably alluding to a metaphor for Torah. He speaks of only the one tree, ever-growing and true. If it is able to be supplanted, so is every tree that might be put in its place.

Yet by the time Pliny the Younger encountered the novel phenomenon of Christianity as the governor of eastern Turkey in the 110s, he seemed to have no idea that it had any substantive connection to Judaism. The disconnect reflects a complicated untangling hardly complete by Pliny’s time. Well into the fifth century, it could be difficult to tell whether a religious congregation in the eastern Roman Empire was a Christian church (Greek *ekklesia*, “assembly”) or a Jewish synagogue (Greek *synagogue*, “gathering-together”). The celebrated preacher John Chrysostom, hostile to Jews and frustrated that many of his congregants were not (see p. 16), with exasperation finally told would-be worshipers simply to ask which faith the congregation followed.

Some Jews clearly did persecute Jesus-followers during the earliest period, but the majority did not. And while some Christian leaders and believers hated

## Pictures of Jews in the New Testament

**MARK:** Mark assumes that its audience is largely Jewish and refers frequently to Jewish religious observances (Sabbath; hand-washing; Passover observance; dietary laws; the Jerusalem temple) without explanation. Mark does not depict any particular ill-will between Jews who follow Jesus and Jews who do not. The word *loudaioi* is used for “Jews” in the religious sense (although most are also Judean in the geographic sense).

**MATTHEW:** Matthew also repeatedly refers to Jewish practices without stopping to explain them. What Matthew *does* explain is how various incidents in Jesus’s life accord with Jewish Scripture. Readers are also expected to be familiar with Jewish modes of interpretation and

theological reasoning. However, some common verses used by Christian anti-Semites are cherry-picked from Matthew.

**LUKE-ACTS:** Luke seems to presume a predominantly gentile audience and rarely alludes to Jewish practices without explaining them. In fact Luke is among our richest sources of information about Jewish observance in first-century Roman Palestine! Luke implies a higher degree of tension within Jewish communities around Jesus, and Acts depicts hostility and occasionally even violence.

**JOHN:** John does not use the religiously restricted range of *loudaioi* found in the synoptic Gospels, but instead applies it as most people used Greek ethnic

terms: for all the people of a region or associated with that area, or political representatives or rulers. John uses it not only for Jews in the religious sense, but also for specific subgroups, Judeans as opposed to Samaritans and the Herodian monarchy.

**PAUL:** Paul declares himself “the apostle to the gentiles.” He sees Jewish law as God-given and expects that Jews, whether Jesus-followers or not, should continue to observe it. However, he is opposed to gentiles following most of it, reasoning that Jesus’s sacrifice was necessary precisely because Jewish law was not for everyone and would not enable gentiles to be incorporated into the “tree of life.”  
—Eliza Rosenberg

**ANCIENT MEMORIES** This relief of the temple's destruction (*right*) dates from the 1st c.; these Capernaum synagogue ruins (*below*) from the 4th c.

Judaism, most did not—if they even encountered it. Most Christians in the northern and western Roman Empire rarely did. After Constantine's conversion some Christian lawmakers and laypeople took the next step toward legal sanctions and in-person persecution of Jews. They were distinctly in the minority, but they laid the foundation for much hostility to come.

### THE TEMPLE FALLS

In AD 70 the Roman army destroyed the Second Temple, along with much of the city, after a four-year-long Jewish revolt against Roman rule in the province of Judea. Such drastic action came as a shock: Romans, like the Seleucids before them, typically respected the religious sites of conquered territories, not wanting to anger gods who held power in that place.

The destruction of Jerusalem's temple was especially devastating because it was the only place where Jews could offer sacrifices (synagogues were for prayer and study). And Romans understood sacrifice; it was the centerpiece of ancient Mediterranean worship. But the God of Israel, from the Roman view, was strangely singular in his demands.

Jewish and gentile Jesus-followers, and Jews who were not Jesus-followers, all felt the loss of the temple acutely. Acts and the letters of Paul indicate that Jesus-followers in Israel participated in temple worship; they also make it clear that even gentile Christians living elsewhere considered it important to make regular financial contributions to its operation. Both Jews and Christians needed to make a theological response to the temple's loss, especially because temple sacrifices were sacrifices of atonement. Eventually Jews articulated the idea that good works and humble devotion are better than sacrifice and that God had allowed the temple to fall because he no longer encouraged sacrifice. Christians posited that Jesus's death was the perfect atoning sacrifice and none further was needed.

This theological distinction between Jews and Christians might have been less important in another



historical setting. But after the Jewish War (66–70), progressively more disastrous uprisings followed: the Kitos War of 115–117 and the Bar Kochba revolt 20 years later. After each conflict Rome leveled punitive taxes and other restrictions on Jews, regardless of whether they had supported the revolts (many had not). Non-Jewish Christians now had reason to avoid calling attention to their relationship with this potentially seditious sect, while non-Christian Jews had increasing incentive to distance themselves from another suspect religious group.

And Roman rulers were stepping up demands that people prove Roman allegiance by offering incense or libations to deified emperors. Most “deviants” could placate authorities without violating their own religious precepts. Jews could not, but were usually exempted because their refusal to sacrifice was seen as a hallowed ancestral practice rather than a dangerous innovation.



**PRAYER AND STUDY** Jewish worshippers read from a Torah scroll in a synagogue at Jerusalem's Western Wall today.

Some Christians resented this exemption. Furthermore martyrdoms of Jews tended to be geographically confined to Judea and concentrated around political unrest there, diminishing by the late 100s. Martyrdoms of Christians, in contrast, were geographically widespread, varied, and came in unpredictable waves.

Over the course of the third century, Jews in the empire faced routine financial and some civic disadvantages but—if they were seen to “behave”—were largely ignored by an empire that had bigger fish to fry and more efficient scapegoats to target. During this same period, most Christian prospects turned on a dime. They could go about their ordinary business until, suddenly, a new provincial administrator decided they were the problem, or a natural disaster left the community looking for someone to blame, or a business associate developed a grudge. What happened next was rarely good. Martyrs, as Augustine noted, were much easier to admire than to emulate.

### “AGAINST THE JEWS”

Even in cities with major Jewish communities, pagans made up the vast majority of an average Christian's non-Christian acquaintances and an average Jew's non-Jewish ones. But they could not ignore each other entirely. Anti-Jewish theologies began to develop in Christianity before Constantine, although they do not seem to have been widespread. Jews were not universally upstanding about their religious differences with Christians either, but the course of history would not leave the two on an equal footing.

While racially and politically based anti-Semitism would not emerge until much later, two major categories of Christian anti-Judaism arose. The first category might be called simple hostility, reflected in

the *adversus Ioudaeos* literature that began in the second century: argumentative texts putatively addressed to Jews but actually meant to unify Christians by establishing a common enemy, such as Justin Martyr's “Dialogue with Trypho” and Tertullian's and later Chrysostom's *Against the Jews*. These texts used the Greco-Roman rhetorical technique of identifying an opponent and then arguing against a caricature of the opponent's view. Literature of this type often slandered its targets as vulgar, womanish, servile, and otherwise lacking in character according to the customs of the Greco-Roman elite.

The second, more insidious element of early Christian anti-Judaism was supercessionism, the idea that the Gospels, the new covenant, and Christians respectively replaced Torah, the Mosaic covenant, and the Jewish people—this despite Paul's reiterations of the goodness and eternal validity of God's covenant with Israel and his explicit proclamation that “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26). Many declared that because Jesus is God's anointed (Greek *christos*; Hebrew *messiach*), God's capacity to anoint had been exhausted, with the implication that, because Messianic promises applied to Jesus, they were of no further use.

As Christianity became favored and then official, a few Christians proved willing to use their newfound status and resources to persecute heretics, pagans, and occasionally Jews. In 388 a mob led by local clergy and their bishop destroyed a synagogue at Callinicum (in modern Syria). Emperor Theodosius commanded that the bishop should help rebuild the synagogue—to which Ambrose, bishop of Milan, responded in anger: “Shall the patrimony, which by the favor of Christ has been gained for Christians, be transferred to the treasuries of unbelievers? . . . It is the burning of a synagogue, a home of unbelief, a house of impiety, a receptacle of folly, which God Himself has condemned.”

Ambrose did not explicitly blame Jews for the death of Christ in his letter, though he did argue from Jeremiah 7:14 that God had rejected the Jews and had forbidden anyone from praying for them. But in the centuries to come, such rhetoric would take a deadlier turn. ☒

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# People of Torah

## Rabbinic Judaism 101

**R**abbinic Judaism is the mainstream form of Judaism today, preserving the tradition of the Pharisees. After the Second Temple fell in AD 70, leaders called **rabbis** codified the traditions known as **oral Torah** into writing and passed on the tradition that Moses had received not only as written but also as oral Torah at Mount Sinai.

The term **rabbi** primarily means a teacher of **Torah**. Rabbis study the **Talmud** as well as Jewish law and worship and may also take courses in modern pastoral subjects such as counseling and preaching. They often lead congregational worship, but their primary roles are as teachers and experts in the law.

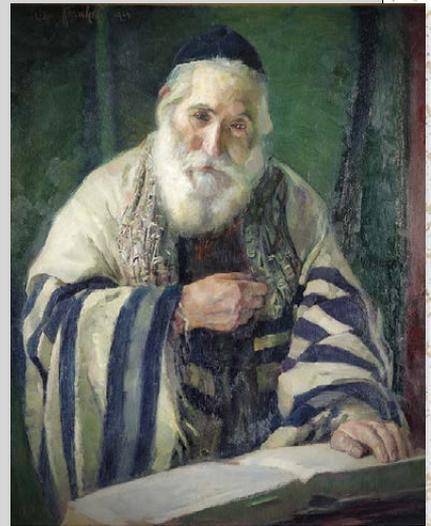
The first five books of Moses are known collectively as **Torah**, or **Pentateuch**. This is referred to as “**written Torah**.” The term can also be used more broadly to refer to Jewish writing and tradition, called “**oral Torah**.” Making a rule or practice stricter than what is explicitly in Torah is often called “building a fence around Torah,” based on Deuteronomy 22:8, to avoid the possibility of transgressing God’s commands.

The entire group of Jewish sacred writings is called the **Tanakh**, often referred to in English as the Hebrew Bible or Hebrew Scriptures. While the content is essentially equivalent to the Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Protestant Old Testament, the books are divided differently; Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, and the 12 Minor Prophets make up one book each, and the books appear in a different order. The **Masoretic Text**, which dates from c. 800 to 1100, is considered the authoritative text of the Tanakh.

Two major collections of oral Torah into writing exist: the **Mishnah**, collected in the late second century by Judah ha-Nasi, and the **Gemara**, a record of commentaries and debates on the Mishnah. Together they are called the **Talmud**. There are two versions, the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud.

Rabbis and others interpret the sacred writings through a kind of interpretation called **midrash**. It focuses mainly on a close examination of the text in light of the tradition of interpretation by previous rabbis. **Haggadah** is midrashic commentary on Torah that takes the form of storytelling. Much midrash is in this form. Some midrash is **halakha**, the set of religious laws that explain what counts as carrying out God’s commandments. At the core of halakha are **mitzvot**, biblical commandments of behavior—there are traditionally considered to be 613 commandments in Torah. Halakha also includes commentary and discussion on

**BERE'SHITH BARA' 'ELOHIM** In *Rabbi Reading the Torah* (1924), Austrian painter Otto Herschel pictures a traditional rabbi in prayer and study.



these commandments. One of the best-known examples of halakha is the set of Jewish dietary laws known as **kashrut**; food conforming to these laws is called **kosher**.

The **synagogue** is the primary place of Jewish worship, reading of the Tanakh, study, and prayer. Normal public worship and some other activities require the presence of a **minyan**, or quorum of 10; in traditional Judaism this must be 10 men, but in Reform and Conservative Judaism women may be counted.

Today Jewish people fall into three major geographical divisions. **Ashkenazi** Jews descend from those who migrated first to the Holy Roman Empire (modern Germany) and then to Eastern Europe. (**Yiddish**, their traditional language, combines Germanic and Hebrew influences.) **Sephardic** Jews descend from those who migrated to Spain and Portugal. **Mizrahi** Jews are considered to be those from the Middle East, although the exact application of the term is controversial.

Four major divisions of belief and practice exist within rabbinic Judaism. **Orthodox** Jews are the most traditional branch, believing that Torah and Talmud have been faithfully transmitted and should be observed strictly. One well-known subdivision is **Hasidic** Judaism, which arose in the 1700s in Poland and spread to the United States. It combines ecstatic kabbalah teachings (see p. 21), Orthodox practices, and Eastern European cultural customs.

**Reform** Judaism developed in the early to mid-nineteenth century with an emphasis on ethical principles and on God’s continuing revelation, similar to that found in Protestant liberalism of the time. **Conservative** Judaism developed after Reform to create a middle ground; its adherents maintain generally traditional practices but are also open to adaptation. **Reconstructionist** Judaism is a branch of the Conservative movement that broke away in the mid-twentieth century. It values traditional practices as expressions of Jewish culture.—*Editors*



# Gentile tales

HOW A LIMITED PROTECTION OF JEWS EVOLVED INTO PERSECUTION

*Miri Rubin*

**IN THE PROVINCE OF JUDEA** in the eastern parts of the Roman Empire two millennia ago, the followers of Jesus sought to define themselves as against the Jewish world within which their movement had been born. Christians adopted the books and prophecies, rituals and traditions of Judaism and inverted them: the Passover meal became the first Eucharist and baptism was likened to a new, bloodless circumcision. They claimed to replace sacrifices at the temple with spiritual ones. Jewish patriarchs and matriarchs, prophets and kings were all interpreted anew to offer models for a Christian world.

To what Christians now called the Old Testament they added the Gospels that tell the life of Jesus, as well as works about exemplary Christians: saints and martyrs, and that Hebrew woman who responded to God's call: Miriam, Mary, Mother of God. Here developed the idea of supersession—that the new covenant replaced the old, that Judaism had been right for its time, but that the coming of grace rendered it obsolete.

Polemical exchanges on all these subjects were conducted, first mostly in Greek in the eastern Mediterranean within a still-pagan empire (see pp. 6–10, "Faith divided"). Christians argued that Jews read the Bible

**FIERY END** The *Nuremberg Chronicle*, a 15th-c. history, shows Jews being burned at the stake on suspicion of causing the Black Death.

according to the flesh, in a low manner that missed the core message; while Christians understood it according to the spirit, in a true and inspired manner. By the fifth century, Christianity had triumphed, becoming the official creed of the Roman Empire. In this position of power, law and theology now had to answer a pressing question: how should a Christian polity treat Jews?

## ANSWERS FROM AUGUSTINE

Augustine (354–430), bishop of Hippo in North Africa, emerged as the leading intellectual answering this question. He approached it from a deeply historical perspective: looking back to the Jewish origins of Christianity and forward to an apocalyptic future when the Jews would convert at the end of time. Contemporary Jews were a necessary part of Christian heritage: essential to Christian life, though in error. Augustine considered them "book-carriers," librarians of sorts, to Christians, because their books were essential to Christian flourishing. They also proved useful

witnesses to the truth, he thought; their miserable state in the present offered a true sign of their failure to recognize Jesus and a punishment for a certain complicity—just short of guilt—in Jesus’s redeeming death.

The answer Augustine arrived at set the agenda for imperial legislation of the period and laid down principles for Jewish life in a Christian empire: Jews could not rule or exercise authority over Christians; but neither were they to be killed and abused. They were a vulnerable remnant, a teaching prop for the triumph of Christianity.

The centuries that followed saw the reach of Latin Christianity across Europe alongside Greek and Syriac Christianities in the eastern Mediterranean and Asia. Eventually dynastic kingdoms replaced the once powerful Roman Empire, and in them Roman law and Christian theology together defined the position of Jews. This varied vastly from region to region, with large Jewish populations in the Mediterranean—Spain, Italy, and southern France of today. By 1000 numerous communities existed in some northern European cities, where local rulers invited Jews to settle under their protection.

Why invite Jews to settle? How were Jews useful to Christian polities? In a society whose wealth depended on land and agricultural produce, rulers used bureaucracies for the collection of tolls and taxes, for minting distinctive coins, and for reliable diplomatic service. To aid this rulers and their Jewish constituents struck up a mutually beneficial arrangement—the members of this cohesive group provided links to other European communities through kinship and business, and in exchange Jewish communities placed their trust in the ruler who had offered protection.

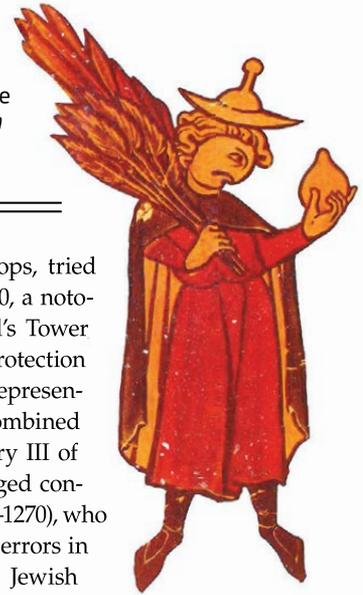
The identification of Jews solely with financial services was yet to be born. When bishops in the Rhineland sought to develop wine-making around 1000, they invited Jews from Italy to do so; when William the Conqueror established rule in England, he too brought over Jews from Normandy to supervise coinage and later offer loans. Roman law’s maxim that the Jews belonged to the royal “purse”—or treasury—made Jews servants of power and desirable dependents.

### MASSACRE AT YORK

This use of Jews as props for government became a widespread practice. But rulers could not always protect their Jews, and the rulers themselves proved intermittently voracious and capricious. In 1096, for example, troops of armed men marched to the Holy Land from France through the Holy Roman Empire on what was later called the First Crusade. They attacked and killed hundreds of Jews in the Rhineland cities, even



**HORRIBLE STORY** The *Chronicle* also depicts (above) the fictitious ritual circumcision and murder of Simon of Trent by Jews, shown with the same beaked noses and *Judenhutten* (Jewish hats) seen in this detail from a medieval calendar (right).

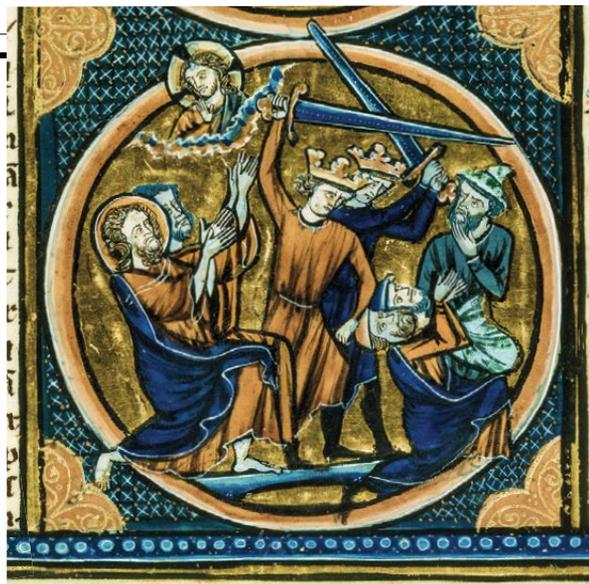
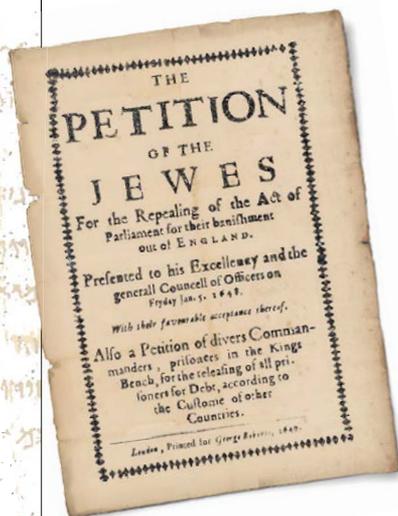


though their lords, the local bishops, tried to protect them. In England in 1190, a notorious massacre of Jews at Clifford’s Tower in York occurred despite the protection that the local sheriff, the king’s representative, offered. And some kings combined protection and pressure: like Henry III of England (1207–1272), who encouraged conversion, or Louis IX of France (1214–1270), who staged a public disputation on the errors in the Talmud in 1240, at which the Jewish representative was bound to be the loser.

Various agents within Christendom also discussed Jews, imagining them anew as part of their drives to reform and purify Christian life. By 1200 a clear physical stereotype had emerged in representing male Jews: a pointed hat denoting eastern foreign-ness, a crooked nose, swarthy to make them ugly, and a foolish or conniving expression to show they lacked true reason and spirit.

Alongside the established church, groups of enthusiasts also arose at this time, revival movements criticizing power and wealth (see pp. 17–20). These movements called urban Christians to value poverty and simplicity and to identify with Christ’s life, especially his suffering on the cross. Such friars also targeted the Jews. New art forms emerged, like that of the Tuscan painters Duccio and Giotto around 1300, whose Crucifixion scenes depict ugly and angry Jews.

Jews lived and even prospered in the cities where religious culture steeped with such imagery prevailed, but violence became occasional and endemic. When in 1347 the Black Death hit Europe and killed



**“OF THE JEWES”** Far left: This 17th-c. petition to readmit expelled Jews to England was written by two Baptists (see p. 31).

**HAVE MERCY** Left: A 13th-c. French Bible depicts Crusaders killing Jews.

some 40 to 60 percent of its population—especially in urban areas—the citizens of hundreds of towns and cities fell upon their Jewish neighbors, blaming them for poisoning the wells and causing the worst epidemic Europe had ever known. Even Pope Clement VI could not turn the tide by pointing out that Jews were dying too and should not be blamed. Angry mobs destroyed hundreds of communities in Germany, Iberia, and France. Many Jews migrated eastward, where they hoped for greater safety.

Most Jews lived far less eventful lives than the plague generations. They flourished and achieved,

Between 1400 and 1500, all the main cities of the Holy Roman Empire expelled them, forcing moves to small towns and villages where they made a living in livestock trade and peddling. These dramatic expulsions refigured Jewish life as the *shtetl* (Yiddish for small town) experience, as Jews adjusted to communities outside the metropolitan centers.

In Iberia, where revivalist preaching fanned the demands of urban competitors, a violent wave of massacres took place in 1391. Some 100,000 Jews converted to Christianity, but a new form of Jew-hate now developed: a hatred of these “New Christians,” the

## “Grave offence”: The birth of the ghetto

On March 29, 1516, the Senate of the Venetian Republic approved a special residence zone for Jews on the fortress-like Ghetto Nuovo island. All Jews living in Venice were required to move almost immediately: “No god-fearing subject of our state would have wished them . . . to disperse throughout the city, sharing houses with Christians and going wherever they choose by day and night, perpetrating . . . misdemeanors and detestable and abominable acts . . . with grave offence to the Majesty of God and uncommon notoriety on the part of this well-ordered Republic.” This created Venice’s compulsory Jewish quarter, which gave its name to such quarters everywhere as “the Ghetto.”

This drastic segregation in Venice dated back to 1314 when Jews were allowed to lend to Venetians; in 1385, the Venetian Senate made a charter, the *Condotta*, that allowed them to carry out

financial dealings in Venice itself. These reasonably friendly relations began to sour toward the end of the fourteenth century. By the end of the fifteenth, new laws kept Jews from openly practicing Judaism; intermarrying; and operating schools of games, crafts, doctrine, singing, or playing instruments. The laws also required Jews to wear a yellow badge on their clothing and a distinctive yellow hat.

When Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal in the 1490s, a flood of refugees flowed eastward. Venice responded with the first “Marrano” law. *Marranos* (also called *conversos*) were Jewish converts to Christianity; any who secretly remained Jews faced expulsion from Venice if found out.

During the War of the League of Cambrai, 1508–1517, Venice accepted Jewish refugees and depended on Jewish financial aid. But Jews often became the

victims of scapegoating during defeats. Tragically the worst episodes occurred during Lent and Easter. Finally the Ghetto was founded. It closed from sunset to sunrise. Guards and patrol boats, paid for by the Jews, enforced regulations. No synagogues were allowed until 1548. Its initial population in 1516 was about 700; by 1650, around 5,000.

Venetian Jews remained in the Ghetto until Napoléon’s conquest of Venice in 1797. When Mussolini took over in 1922, Jews were relatively unthreatened, and many were active in the Fascist Party; Mussolini’s closest advisor until the early 1930s was his mistress, Venetian Jew Margherita Sarfatti. This changed when Italy became Hitler’s ally. In the waning days of World War II, Nazis deported 247 Venetian Jews; only eight returned.—Paul E. Michelson, distinguished professor of history at Huntington University



Jews who had converted, but who could not be trusted. They were suspected of being false Christians, insidiously inhabiting Christian spaces, and mingling with Christian bodies. Iberian rulers introduced the Inquisition to pry into converts' lives and expelled the remaining Jews from the kingdom of Spain in 1492.

Spanish monarchs also legislated to protect “purity of blood” and so barred New Christians and their descendants—called *conversos*—from leadership in state, church, and religious orders. Even in their absence, Jews remained alive in the Christian imagination of those advising kings and preaching in town squares. So *conversos* often left for more tolerant regions: the Low Countries, the Ottoman Empire, and the reaches of the growing Spanish and Portuguese Empires.

### THE “OTHER”

Why were Jews suspect even after they had converted to Christianity? Negative associations from the dawn of Christianity—of Jews with matter rather than spirit, with flesh rather than soul, with the lowly rather than the sublime, with the denial of Christianity’s core truths—all persisted deep within European intellectual and ethical traditions. Defining Christian faith in relationship to Jews became ingrained in traditions of debate and moral distinction of European intellectuals—but also part of the devotional routine of parishioners, those most likely to be the Jews’ neighbors.

And so in the sixteenth century, when Europe’s division over religion shattered the ambition of a universal Christian church, Catholics hurled the accusation of “Judaizing” at Protestants for their emphasis on a more literal reading of Scripture. Martin Luther moved from seeing Jews as victims of a corrupt Catholic establishment to imagining them as vicious demonic servants of the anti-Christ (see p. 28, “Jews, lies, and Nazis”). *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare (written between 1596 and 1599) used powerful and by now widely accepted tropes of



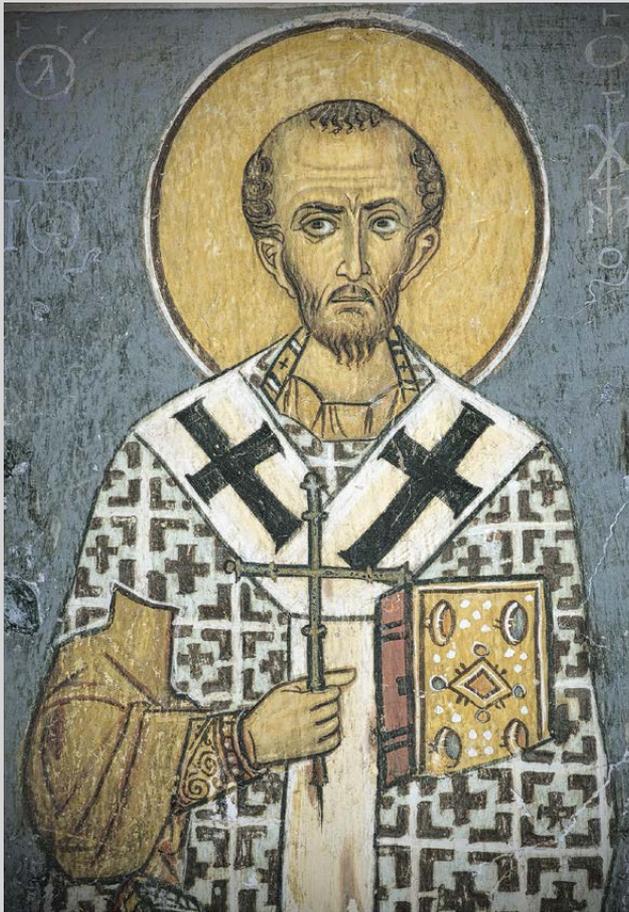
**IMAGES OF JEWS** In an 18th-c. painting (*left*), Edward Alcock depicts Shylock and Portia; in a 19th-c. one (*above*), Emilio Sala Francés shows inquisitor Torquemada expelling Jews from Spain.

Jewish greed and literalism to explore the Christian bonds of charity, even at a time when no actual Jewish communities existed in England.

Over the centuries, in the imagination of Christians, Jews became the doubting questioners from within; intimate others against whom morals, ethics, and aesthetics were judged. Meanwhile in Europe, and soon in its lands of conquest on other continents, Jews everywhere lived, got on, survived, even flourished—just ordinary Jews. Yet on occasion they could be morphed into that other Jew: cast in narratives of blood libel, the accusation that they used the blood of Christians (especially Christian children) in their rituals; accused of desecrating consecrated Eucharistic bread; or made the center of conspiracies of deceit.

And when Jews were thought of as Jews above all, they ceased to be everything else they were. The cultural resources for considering Jews to be “other” were abundant. Not all Christians believed these narratives and claims, but preachers and other shapers of opinion used them. Within society’s webs of interest and competition, this could make Jews seem unworthy of the human care that all others deserved. ❏

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## Looking for demons

To legitimize their campaign against the Jewish people, Nazis often pointed to the anti-Jewish writings of significant figures in Christian history, among them church father John Chrysostom and Protestant reformer Martin Luther (see p. 28). People held copies of Luther's 65,000-word treatise *The Jews and Their Lies* over their heads at Nazi rallies.

Chrysostom (349–407), whose name means “golden-mouthed,” preached at the cathedral in Antioch from 386, when he was ordained as a presbyter, until 397, when he was named the archbishop of Constantinople. Today Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans consider him a saint, and the Eastern Orthodox Church and Byzantine Catholics also name him one of the Three Holy Hierarchs.

Chrysostom followed long-standing Christian tradition by interpreting Paul's teaching as drawing a contrast between Judaic legalism and the message of grace. He preached exegetically on books of the Bible, and his sermons were transcribed and distributed to a wide audience. His emphasis on caring

**NOT SO GOLDEN HERE?** Chrysostom told Christians to stay away from Jewish synagogues, calling them “the shrines of men who have been rejected, dishonored, and condemned.”

for the needy and decrying the abuses of clerical and political power made him popular; his famous Easter sermon is still read in some churches today.

Early in his time in Antioch, Chrysostom preached a series of sermons called *Adversus Judaeos*, usually translated as “against the Jews” and sometimes as “against Judaizing Christians.” In this series of eight sermons, Chrysostom urged Antiochene Christians to have nothing to do with the Jewish faith. He denounced those he called “Judaizers,” who attempted to convince Christians to keep the rituals and traditions of Judaism.

He recognized that Christians far outnumbered Jews in late-fourth-century Antioch but felt an insidious cultural influence was at work. In his sermons he spoke of Christians in his community attending Jewish festivals and observing feasts, and women who were drawn to listen to the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. He described an encounter with one woman being dragged into a synagogue by a fellow Christian because “oaths sworn there were more to be feared.”

### “DWELLING OF DEMONS”

The intent of the sermons—to keep Antiochene Christians from engaging in Jewish worship—seems clear throughout. In his zeal, however, Chrysostom interpreted Jeremiah 12:7–9 and John 8:19 as proof that God had forsaken the synagogue and allowed it to be turned over to demon worship.

“Certainly it is the time for me to show that demons dwell in the synagogue, not only in the place itself but also in the souls of the Jews,” he proclaimed. And in another place, “If, then, the Jews fail to know the Father, if they crucified the Son, if they thrust off the help of the Spirit, who should not make bold to declare plainly that the synagogue is a dwelling of demons?”

He maintained that the Jews' poor treatment by the Romans was due to God's wrath for their part in the Crucifixion; announced that “I hate the Jews, for they have the Law and they insult it”; and called them and their festivals “wicked,” “unclean,” “pitiful,” and “miserable.” Though Chrysostom no doubt used exaggerated rhetoric to make a point, a reader might wonder what happened to Christ's mandate to “love your enemies.”

Years later Nazis reprinted and distributed these sermons throughout Germany and Austria and used them to fuel anti-Semitic hatred. —Matt Forster, director of admissions and communications at Houston Graduate School of Theology and frequent contributor to Christian History

# Larger than life

CHRISTIAN THINKERS ADOPTED JEWISH SYMBOLS—BUT MISTRUSTED THEIR SOURCES

**Edwin Woodruff Tait**

*Jerusalem the golden,  
With milk and honey blest;  
Beneath your contemplation  
Sink heart and voice oppressed.*

WE HEAR THESE WORDS today and think of cathedral choirs. But the original Latin dates back to the twelfth century—part of a rich heritage of medieval Christian prayer drawing on Jewish imagery.

Medieval Christians celebrated the Old Testament as part of their Scripture, reading it allegorically and applying it richly to their own experience. When under attack by Vikings or Magyars or Arabs, Christians prayed penitential psalms and confessed sins that they believed were bringing God's judgment, while asking God to smite their enemies just as he smote the enemies of ancient Israel. Bishops anointed Christian kings with holy oil like Old Testament rulers. Images of ancient Hebrew kings and prophets adorned churches. Christians sang songs of longing for Jerusalem. At the same time, Christians had relatively few dealings with actual Jews, and thus changes taking place within Jewish communities went unseen by Christians for centuries.

## "SLAY THEM NOT"

Initially Jews enjoyed essentially the same status under Christian emperors as under pagan ones. This changed around 500 when Eastern Roman emperors began persecuting Jews, pagans, and heretical Christians. In the seventh century, Emperor Heraclius attempted to force Jews to convert, in part due to allegations of Jewish collaboration with Persian invaders and atrocities against Christian prisoners. At around the same time in the West, Visigothic kings of Spain enacted harsh legislation to force Jews to convert; but Pope Gregory the Great (540–604) intervened.

For the most part, though, both Christians and Muslims in the early Middle Ages allowed Jews to live in peace as long as they submitted and paid taxes. For Muslims this policy was prescribed by Islamic law. For Western Christians the theology of St. Augustine provided the rationale for tolerating Jews while praying for their conversion. Augustine argued that Jews were indispensable witnesses to the truth of the gospel, citing Psalm 59:11: "Do not kill them, so that my people will not forget."

After 1000 Western Europe began a series of dramatic changes. A growing population, fueled by



**DISPUTED MEANINGS** 14th-c. Jewish and Christian scholars debate. The Jews are identified by *Judenhutten* (hats).

agricultural innovations, led to reborn urban life and trade. New universities developed around cathedrals; bishops and monarchs alike sought trained bureaucrats to govern an increasingly complex society. These new institutions used a new intellectual method, scholasticism, which asked critical questions and sought to systematize available knowledge.

Scholasticism led to a more active, dynamic engagement with non-Christian thought, both ancient and contemporary. Muslims and Jews living in the Islamic world introduced Christians to texts by Aristotle they had previously not known, along with commentaries on these texts by Jewish and Islamic writers. Christian scholars sought out Jews and learned Hebrew from them. They became aware of the massive body of rabbinic literature produced since the paths of the two traditions diverged centuries earlier. From the thirteenth century on, the



“mendicant (begging) orders”—Franciscans and Dominicans—pioneered this work. These religious communities both focused on engaging in active ministry in the world and evangelizing both non-Christians and lapsed ones.

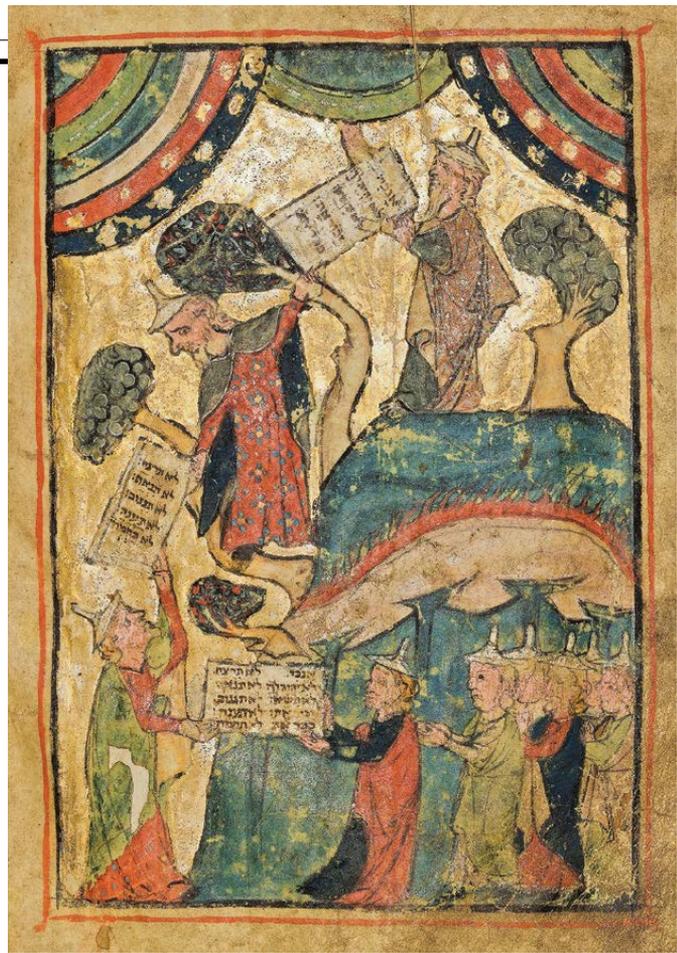
But this explosion of intellectual and cultural creativity had another side. Traditionally church officials had restrained civil authorities while maintaining their right to defend “true faith” and godly order. But now the church began taking a more active role in putting heretics on trial, handing them over to secular authorities for execution—and justifying this in Old Testament terms. Pope Gregory VII (1015–1085) frequently cited Jeremiah’s prophetic authority over nations and kings to “pluck up and tear down” to support papal actions. Medieval theologians spoke routinely of the gospel as the “New Law.”

Western Christian thought in the High Middle Ages increasingly identified the newly dominant, confident Catholic Church with the heavenly Jerusalem, hoping to capture some fragments of its glory even in this world of sorrow. The most dramatic expression of this was the Crusades—recovering the *literal* Jerusalem from the Muslims. The long-standing Christian tradition of pilgrimage to Jerusalem ignited crusading fervor, and this fervor had devastating side effects for Jewish populations through which the Crusaders passed.

Killing Jews on the way to fight Muslims had already become a reality in eleventh-century Spain. Pope Alexander II explicitly condemned these attacks and praised Spanish bishops for protecting Jews. Others followed suit. Some, however, offered protection only on the condition that Jews accept baptism, leading the Jews of Worms to kill themselves rather than abandon their faith or fall into the hands of the Crusaders.

In the twelfth century, Peter the Venerable advocated confiscation of Jewish property to fund the Crusades:

The evil, blaspheming Jews, far worse than Saracens, not at a distance, but in our midst, so freely and audaciously blaspheme, trample underfoot, deface with impunity Christ and



**YOUR MOVE** The later Middle Ages brought intellectual interchange; here Jewish and Muslim scholars play chess (*left*) and a Jewish illuminator illustrates the story of the Ten Commandments (*above*).

all Christian mysteries. . . . Let their life be safeguarded, let their money be taken away.

Bernard of Clairvaux, in contrast, while a passionate advocate of the Crusades, reaffirmed the official view:

It is noble of you to wish to go forth against the Ishmaelites; still, whoever touches a Jew so as to lay hands on his life, does something as sinful as if he laid hands on Jesus himself!

### INQUISITION AND EXPULSION

Mendicants often came from the rising middle classes, those most likely to compete economically with Jews. They also first identified for Christians the centrality of the Talmud to Jewish life and thought. These friars studied Judaism not just as ancient tradition but as a living rival to Christianity. And they were horrified.

Friars discovered Jewish arguments at odds with traditional Christian interpretations. Andrew of St. Victor (d. 1175) had already caused a stir by accepting, as the true literal sense of the text, the interpretation that Isaiah 7 refers to events in Isaiah’s own time. Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–1339), who knew Hebrew and engaged extensively with Jewish scholars, identified



this as the literal-historical sense and posited a second, more clearly Christian “literal-prophetic” sense.

As the friars laid claim to the literal sense of Scripture, they became increasingly aware that the Jews had their own nonliteral traditions of interpretation. This led the friars to focus on the Talmud and its alleged corruption of Scripture:

They, displaying no shame for their guilt nor reverence for the honor of the Christian Faith, throw away and despise the Law of Moses and the prophets, and follow some tradition of their elders. . . . In it are found blasphemies against God and His Christ. . . . They fear that if the forbidden truth, which is found in the Law and the Prophets, be understood, and the testimony concerning the only-begotten Son of God, that he appeared in the flesh, be furnished, these would be converted to the Faith and humbly return to their Redeemer.

This had serious consequences because the Inquisition had no jurisdiction over non-Christians, but considered Christians who chose to become Jewish as apostates. Jews who sheltered such people or were suspected of proselytizing could be prosecuted. Then in 1232, in the southern French town of Montpellier, some Jewish opponents of Maimonides (see p. 37) allegedly asked inquisitors for help: “Now, while you are exterminating the heretics among you, exterminate our heresies as well and order the burning of these books.” We don’t



**WHOSE TREE?** Medieval Christian thinkers emphasized Jesus’s Jewish ancestry in the Jesse Tree (above) but were alarmed by actual Jewish law such as the Mishneh Torah (left).

know whether anyone burned Maimonides’s books. But Christian authorities did burn the Talmud on a number of occasions throughout the later Middle Ages.

### “PERFIDIOUS JEWS”

Hostility to the Talmud became the central pillar of elite anti-Judaism. Christians interpreted Talmudic accounts of a heretical “Yeshu” as blasphemy against Jesus and criticized passages extolling Jewish superiority and encouraging hostility to gentiles. Allegedly the Talmud twisted Jews’ minds so they could not see evidence for Christian claims in Jewish Scripture. The Talmud’s focus on this life seemed to promote greed and worldliness; in contrast, Christian Scripture was seen as pointing people to the life of the world to come.

Medieval Christians felt that allowing Jews to exist among Christians was already an act of extreme forbearance. The church’s Good Friday prayers included a petition for the “perfidious Jews,” that God would have



mercy and turn their hearts—a conversion believed to be one of the signs of the End. But now the audacity of the Jews in developing their own traditions furnished a reason to withdraw toleration.

Increasingly authoritative popes led the charge. Innocent IV argued that he had “authority not only over Christians but also over all infidels.” In the course of the thirteenth century, popes and mendicants worked together to burn copies of the Talmud, force Jews to listen to Christian sermons aimed at their conversion, and compel them to debate Christian scholars.

Catalan friar Ramon Llull (c. 1232–c. 1315) tried to educate Jews to make them convert and evangelize other Jews. Jews who refused to go along could be expelled—and were. Jews were most secure from expulsion in Rome itself, but from the thirteenth century on, Jews in Rome had to present each new pope with a Torah scroll, which he accepted with the declaration that Christians accepted the Jewish Scriptures but not Jewish interpretations.

By focusing hostility on the Talmud, Christians could persecute Jews while claiming still to respect Jewish Scripture and the original Jewish Law. Calling the Talmud “human tradition” gave Christians an effective way of dealing with the fundamental problem posed by the continued resistance of Jews to Christianity.

### PRESSURE REDIRECTED

This hostility formed an important backdrop to the Reformation. In 1509 Dominican friar Johannes Pfefferkorn received a mandate from Emperor Maximilian to destroy all Jewish books opposing Christianity. A convert from Judaism, Pfefferkorn was not, by the standards of his

**DISPUTE ME** Ramon Llull (*at right*) is often seen as a forerunner of interfaith dialogue, but he believed Talmudic learning ill-prepared Jews for Christian arguments.

time, a particularly ferocious persecutor, but he agreed with the emperor. However, he ran into opposition from humanist scholar Johannes Reuchlin. An enthusiast for Christian Kabbalah, Reuchlin had published a Hebrew grammar so Christians could teach themselves the language of the Old Testament without consulting Jews.

Reuchlin won, for the time being, but this didn’t stop attempts to confiscate the Talmud. And many observers saw in the conflict between Luther and Tetzel a few years later a second round of the Reuchlin debate. Protestants believed medieval Catholics had fallen into exactly the same trap as Jews: replacing Scripture with human tradition. Yet at the same time, they continued enthusiastically to pursue Hebrew learning (Luther’s own scholarly emphasis was the Old Testament) and, even more than their medieval predecessors, appealed to the Hebrew text and Jewish commentaries. Calvin focused so heavily on what he took as the “literal” sense of the Old Testament, often challenging traditional Christian interpretations, that other reformers called him a “Judaizer.”

By relocating conflict between true revelation and false human tradition within Christianity, the Protestants took pressure off the Jews and made them just one more example of a people who had substituted human tradition for a proper understanding of God’s Word. Catholics controlled powerful nations, armies, and fleets; Jews, in contrast, posed little real threat.

In Reformed Christianity in particular, writings of Jewish rabbis filled the shelves of scholars, and the Old Testament, no less than the New, was seen as a revelation of Christ and a guide to the proper way to live and order society. Reformed rulers saw themselves in the mold of kings David and Josiah; this reached almost messianic proportions when Frederick V of the Palatinate (1596–1632) was called a new David delivering Protestants from Catholic oppression. Perhaps unsurprisingly the radical apocalyptic Calvinists of Cromwell’s England readmitted Jews after centuries of exclusion and the Protestant Netherlands, predominantly Calvinist, gave shelter to Jews driven out of Catholic Spain.

But because of the central role of Jews in the Christian story, it was hard, and remains hard, for all these Christians to look at Jews without seeing larger-than-life symbols. The tragedy of medieval encounters between Christians and Jews is that when Christians began engaging more seriously with Judaism, it accentuated rather than ameliorated their hostility. The turn toward a “literal” Jerusalem, whether in exegesis or in Crusade, was also a turn against real Jews. ❏

*Edwin Woodruff Tait is a Christian History contributing editor.*

# Kabbalah: A surprising point of meeting

The desire to experience the presence of or be unified with God is as old as religion itself, and we often give it the name “mysticism.” In the Jewish context, this took on different forms as Jewish communities migrated east and west following the destruction of the Second Temple. However, a new and influential form of mysticism emerged in the mid-twelfth century in Languedoc, a land bordering the Iberian Peninsula in the south, the Kingdom of France in the north, and stretching toward northern Italy in the east. It became known as Kabbalah.

Where did Kabbalah come from? Perhaps it arose in the meeting of cultures. Jews migrated to this area from communities in Ashkenaz (the Talmudic term for the area now known as Germany), where they had developed a form of pietistic mysticism partly based on the adoption of Christian monastic practices. These Jews were joined by others fleeing from fundamentalist Islam in Andalusia, a region of Spain.

They brought with them philosophical works and concepts unknown in the Christian world; new understandings of the relationship between God and humankind began to develop. Basing their activity on anonymous works such as the *Book of Creation* (*Sefer Yetzirah*) and the *Book of Clarity* (*Sefer ha-Bahir*), along with new interpretations of Jewish rituals, small groups of masters and disciples engaged in mystical practices designed to bring them into close proximity with emanations they believed to be proceeding from the divine. They hoped through their practice to restore unity in the divine world and hasten the final redemption.

## EXPLANATIONS FOR EXILE

In the late twelfth century, these oral teachings began to be put into writing, catalyzing a period of intense creativity that peaked with what would eventually become known as the *Zohar* (*Book of Splendor*). Written in Aramaic and attributed to a second-century sage, Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, different authors in Castile (modern-day Spain) actually composed it over a period from the mid-thirteenth century to the fourteenth.

These Kabbalistic compositions mostly focus on the 10 *sefirot*—considered to be revealed attributes or emanations of the divine emerging from within the Ein Sof (unknowable infinite) and drawing down the divine so that it flows out into creation. The Kabbalist aspires to unite with the last of these emanations, called *Malchut* (kingship) or *Shechina* (the feminine aspect of the divine). Kabbalists believe that human history mirrors the sefirotic world and that the

**RAYS OF THE DIVINE** This page from a manuscript by Pico della Mirandola shows his attempts to adopt Kabbalah for Christian purposes.

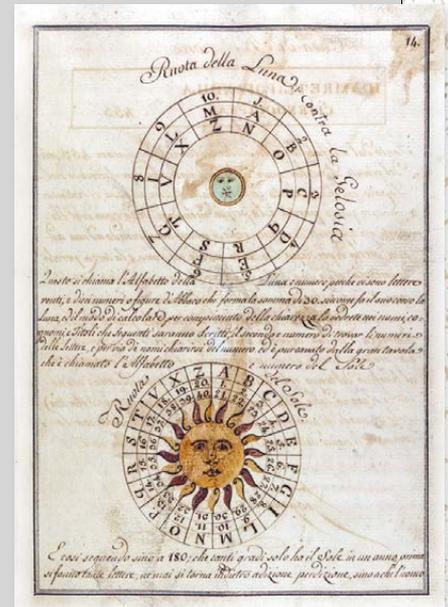
current Jewish exile is a result of a break between the top nine *sefirot* and the tenth *sefirah*, making the divine unable to flow into creation. They maintain that strict adherence to the 613 commandments (see p. 11) with right intention can help repair the break and bring about final redemption both in the material and the divine worlds.

Christian interest in these esoteric teachings started with Ramon Llull (c. 1232–1316), a late thirteenth-century polymath who worked and wrote tirelessly to convert all non-Christians. Llull thought that Kabbalistic teachings about the *sefirot* were so close to Christian teachings about the inner workings of the Trinity that Kabbalists could be easily convinced to accept Christian truth.

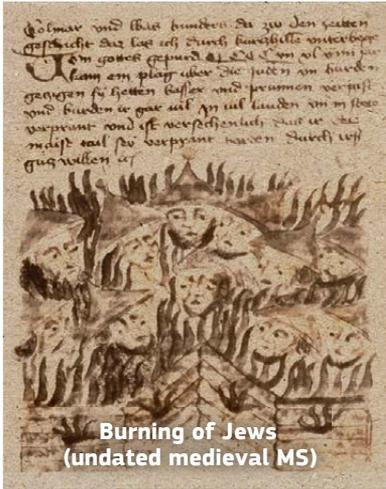
Llull’s quest was unsuccessful, but during the Renaissance, humanists such as Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) focused on Kabbalah’s supposed antiquity and argued that these ancient teachings revealed the truth of Christianity. They particularly focused on the first three divine emanations—*Keter* (crown), *Hochma* (wisdom), and *Binah* (understanding)—which they understood as representing the Trinity.

Mirandola used thousands of folios of Kabbalistic texts translated for him into Latin by a Jewish convert, Flavius Mithridates (1450–1489). Many Christian Kabbalists followed him, such as Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1631–1689) in the seventeenth century, who made Latin translations of many of the central medieval works of Jewish Kabbalah.

While the Christian world adopted and adapted Kabbalistic teachings for its own purposes, particularly after the advent of printing, Jewish Kabbalah had a renaissance of its own. The establishment of an important center of Kabbalistic thought in sixteenth-century Safed, then part of the Ottoman Empire, resulted in its spreading around the world.—Harvey J. Hames, professor of history, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel



# An uneasy 2000 years



**Burning of Jews**  
(undated medieval MS)

- c. 50 Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) says gentile converts to Christianity do not need to observe the Mosaic law.
- 70 Romans destroy Second Temple in Jerusalem.
- c. 100 Gamaliel II, leader of the Sanhedrin, excludes Christians and other “sectarians” from synagogues.
- 132-133 Bar Kochba rebellion leads Roman Empire to bar Jews from Jerusalem.
- c. 200 Mishnah is compiled.
- c. 305 A council in Spain forbids Christians and Jews to intermarry or share meals.
- 313 Christianity is legalized in the Roman Empire.
- 315 Constantine forbids Jews from making converts.
- 325 Council of Nicaea separates the date of Easter from the Jewish calendar.
- c. 350 Jerusalem Talmud is compiled.
- 380 Christianity becomes official religion of Roman Empire.
- c. 386 John Chrysostom preaches *Adversus Iudaeos*, “Against the Jews.”

- 388 All marriage between Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire is forbidden.
- c. 398 Augustine articulates the “witness” doctrine, which will govern church dealings with the Jews for centuries.
- 439 Jews are forbidden to hold certain offices in the Roman Empire and to build new synagogues.
- c. 500 Babylonian Talmud is compiled.
- 531 Jews are forbidden to bear witness against Christians in court.
- 591 Pope Gregory I condemns forced baptism of Jews.
- c. 600 *Edictum Theodorici* loosens some restrictions on Germanic Jews.
- 602 Pope Gregory I protects Jews celebrating their religious festivals.
- 693-694 Councils of Toledo restrict Jewish life in Spain.
- 794 Charlemagne encourages Jewish moneylending, then later restricts it in the *Capitulary for the Jews* (814).
- 1099 The First Crusade establishes the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Crusaders massacre many Jews along the way.
- 1144 Jews in Norwich are falsely accused of murder in the first known instance of “blood libel” (the



**Jews negotiate with Alexander the Great**  
(14th-c. MS)



**Tiferet Yisrael Synagogue,**  
ruined in the 1948 war

- accusation that Jews require Christian blood for their rituals).
- 1187 Muslim leader Saladin defeats Christian troops and captures Jerusalem.
- 1190 Maimonides writes *Guide for the Perplexed*.
- 1192 Kingdom of Jerusalem establishes a new capital at Acre.
- 1211 Three hundred French and English rabbis migrate to the Holy Land.
- 1215 Fourth Lateran Council requires Jews and Muslims to wear distinctive dress to prevent intermarriage.
- 1243 First known accusation against Jews of desecrating the Christian host (Communion wafer).
- 1247 Pope Innocent IV issues a mandate against blood libels.
- 1278 Pope Nicholas III requires Jews to attend conversion sermons.
- 1290 Jews are expelled from England.
- 1291 Acre falls to Muslim troops.
- c. 1300 Christian writer Ramon Llull becomes interested in Kabbalah.
- 1320 Baruch appears in court to protest his false conversion.
- 1478 The Spanish Inquisition begins.

BURNING OF JEWS BY VOLKMAR—THE HISTORY COLLECTION / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO  
THE PRIESTS OF THE JEWS OFFER ALEXANDER THE GREAT GOLD AND SILVER, THE ALEXANDER ROMANCE—THE PICTURE ART COLLECTION / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO  
OLD JERUSALEM RUINS OF TIFERET YISRAEL SYNAGOGUE—DJAMPA / WIKIMEDIA

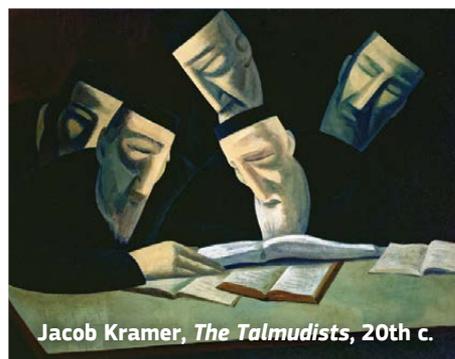
The history of Jewish-Christian relations is complex and has both political and theological aspects. Here are a few of the major people and events featured in this issue to help guide you through the story.



**Gilbert Stuart Newton, *Shylock and Jessica*, 1830**

- 1489 Christian kabbalistic philosopher Pico della Mirandola publishes *Heptaplus*.
- 1492 Alhambra Decree orders Jews to convert or leave Spain.
- 1516 Jews in Venice are segregated into a ghetto; other cities adopt this practice later.
- 1543 Martin Luther publishes *About the Jews and Their Lies*.
- 1553 Roman Inquisition burns a copy of the Talmud in Rome.
- 1621 English lawyer Henry Finch publishes *The World's Great Restauration*, which proposes a temporal Jewish homeland.
- 1645 Memoirist Glückel of Hameln is born.
- 1649 Johanna and Ebenezer Cartwright petition Oliver Cromwell, recommending a return of the Jews to Israel.
- 1655 Cromwell readmits Jews to England.
- 1730 Jews of Rhode Island build first North American synagogue.
- c. 1770-1880 Haskalah, Jewish Enlightenment, occurs in Central and Eastern Europe.

- 1858 Lionel de Rothschild becomes first Jewish member of the British Parliament.
- 1882 The word *pogrom* receives its first known use to describe a massacre of Jews in Russia
- 1891 American businessman William Blackstone spearheads a petition to return Jews to the Holy Land.
- 1897 Theodore Herzl formally establishes Jewish political Zionism.
- 1903 The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a Russian forgery purporting to describe a Jewish conspiracy for world domination, is published.
- 1917 Britain issues Balfour Declaration.
- 1920 League of Nations gives Britain a "mandate for Palestine."
- 1921 Franz Rosenzweig publishes *The Star of Redemption*.
- 1933 Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany.
- 1934 Hitler takes absolute power; Christians who oppose him issue Barmen Declaration.
- 1935 Nuremberg Laws restrict German Jews.
- 1938 Nazis attack Jewish businesses during Kristallnacht, "night of broken glass."
- 1939 World War II begins; Sholem Asch publishes *The Nazarene*.



**Jacob Kramer, *The Talmudists*, 20th c.**

- 1941 Marc Chagall flees Nazi persecution.
- 1942 Nazis begin systematically implementing the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question."
- 1945 By the end of World War II, Nazis have killed six million Jews.
- 1947 United Nations agrees on a partition plan for Palestine; Anne Frank's diary is published.



**Jews leave Buchenwald for Palestine, 1945**

- 1948 Leaders proclaim the State of Israel the day before the British mandate ends.
- 1951 Menachem Mendel Schneerson becomes Rebbe of Chabad.
- 1960 Elie Wiesel publishes *Night*.
- 1965 Second Vatican Council issues *Nostra Aetate*, which formally repudiates the doctrine that all Jews everywhere are responsible for the death of Christ.
- 1967 Six-Day War controversially expands Israel's boundaries.

GILBERT STUART NEWTON, SHYLOCK AND JESSICA FROM THE MERCHANT OF VENICE—GOOGLE ART PROJECT / WIKIMEDIA; JACOB KRAMER (1892-1962), THE TALMUDISTS—ESTATE OF JOHN DAVID ROBERTS, BY PERMISSION OF THE TREASURY SOLICITOR / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES; JEWS LEAVE BUCHENWALD FOR PALESTINE—COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION, COLLEGE PARK / US HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM [PUBLIC DOMAIN] / WIKIMEDIA



# “Never shall I forget”

FROM 1933 TO 1945, GERMANS—SOME OF THEM CHRISTIANS—MURDERED SIX MILLION JEWS

Chris Gehrz

IN 1998 Israeli scholar Yehuda Bauer was invited to speak before Germany’s parliament, the Bundestag. “I come from a people who gave the Ten Commandments to the world,” he told the legislators. “Time has come to strengthen them by three additional ones, which we ought to adopt and commit ourselves to: thou shall not be a perpetrator; thou shall not be a victim; and thou shall never, but never, be a bystander.”

During the 12 years of the Third Reich, Christians broke each of Bauer’s commandments. A few had resisted Nazi iniquity. But the majority fell along the complicated spectrum between *perpetrator* and *bystander*.

## THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS?

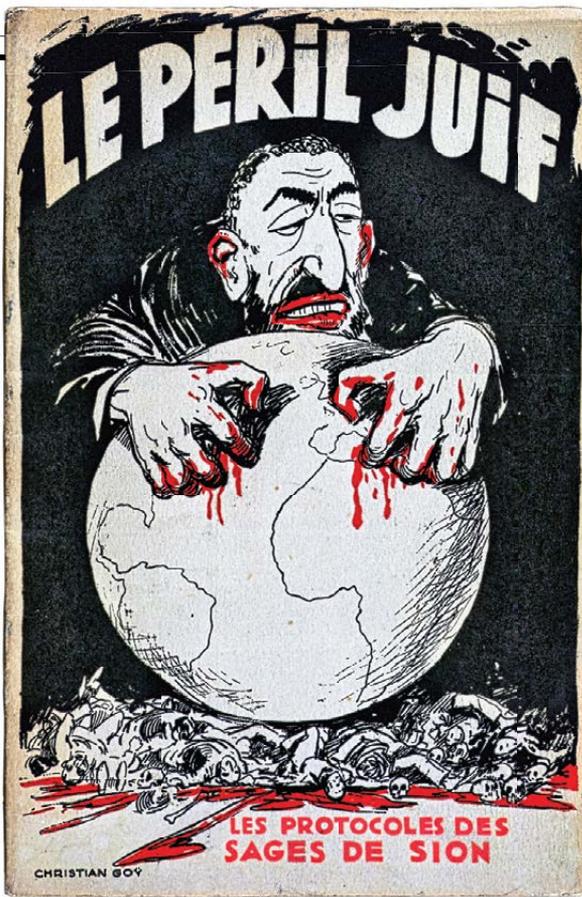
In World War I, most German Protestants, two-thirds of Germany’s population, had participated gladly in what they saw as a crusade against Catholic (French and Belgian) and Orthodox (Russian) national neighbors. But instead the costly war toppled the conservative German monarchy. In its place came the Weimar Republic, taking its nickname from the city where

**CRUEL IRONY** “Work makes freedom,” proclaim the gates of the Dachau concentration camp.

its constitution was signed. Its socialist and liberal founders were forced to sign a harsh peace treaty that later served as political fodder for right-wing groups like the Nazis. Even if the violence of the Nazi “Brownshirts” put them off, patriotic Christians living in Stalin’s shadow told themselves that the stridently anticommunist Nazis were at least the lesser of two evils.

On January 30, 1933, Protestant president Paul von Hindenburg, appointed a new chancellor: Adolf Hitler. Many clergy greeted this appointment gladly. The dean of Magdeburg Cathedral, Ernst Martin, said about the cathedral’s Nazi flags, “Whoever reviles this symbol of ours is reviling our Germany. The swastika flags around the altar radiate hope—hope that the day is at last about to dawn.” Another pastor, Julius Leffler, announced,

In the pitch-black night of church history, Hitler became ... the wonderful transparency for our time,



**FORGED FEAR AND DARK REALITY** This drawing of concentration camp prisoners at Auschwitz (above) was made by survivor Mieczyslaw Kościelniak in 1950; a c. 1940 French translation (left) of *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* warns of “Jewish Peril.”

COVER OF AN EDITION OF THE JEWISH DANGER, THE PROTOCOLS OF THE LEARNED ELDERS OF ZION, C. 1940 (COLOR LITHO)—© ARCHIVES CHARNIET / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES  
 AU SCHWITZ, BY MIECZYSLAW KOSCIELNIK—SCOTCH MIST (CC BY-SA) / WIKIMEDIA

the window of our age, through which light fell on the history of Christianity. Through him we were able to see the Savior in the history of the Germans.

Just two days later, young pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer questioned Hitler’s leadership on national radio—prompting the radio station to switch off his microphone mysteriously before he could broadcast his closing statement, which included the line “Leaders [Führers] or offices which set themselves up as gods mock God.” But such protests were unusual. Protestant clergy instead celebrated by holding mass baptisms for children left unchristened during the Weimar Republic’s more secular years.

Holocaust scholar Victoria Barnett wrote,

The genocide of the European Jews . . . was preceded by years of intensifying anti-Jewish persecution, which much of Europe’s non-Jewish population either witnessed or participated in.

Roots of this persecution went back centuries (see pp. 16 and 28), but in the twentieth century, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—a Russian forgery pretending to detail Jewish plans for world domination, published in German in 1920—added fuel to the fire.

As the Nazis came to power in 1933, Jews were first forbidden from holding government positions. Two years later the Nuremberg Laws stripped them of their citizenship and forbade them from joining the military and from marrying non-Jews. Soon those prohibitions expanded to holding professional jobs, receiving government contracts, attending non-Jewish schools, and being

treated by non-Jewish doctors. Special stamps on their passports and clothing forcibly marked them *Jude*.

In 1938, after a Polish Jew shot two German officials, the Nazis organized retaliation—Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, so called because the Nazis broke the windows of many Jewish businesses, as well as setting fire to synagogues. As some Jews fled to other countries and others were killed, Nazis declared regions to be *Judenfrei* or *Judenrein*—free or clean of Jews. But the worst was yet to come.

**“THE PURITY OF THE BLOOD”**

One who welcomed the Nazi revolution at first was pastor Martin Niemöller. A former U-boat captain, Niemöller became a Nazi voter, hoping that Hitler would restore Germany to greatness. But he soon grew troubled. Not only did the new regime attempt to place Protestant churches under state control, it encouraged the “German Christian” movement, which viewed Hitler as a messianic figure and sought to strip Jewish influences from Christianity.

In May 1934 Niemöller and other leaders of an opposition group (which would become the Confessing Church) issued the Barmen Declaration, a statement against “German Christians” largely written by Swiss pastor Karl Barth. But state church bishops rejected the Confessing Church, not wanting to lose their privileges. Wearing by political debates, many laypeople retreated from church involvement altogether. And even though German Christians derided Confessing Church leaders as “Jew-pastors,” those leaders actually said little on behalf of Jews who had not converted to Christianity. In 1935, the year the Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews of citizenship, Niemöller preached that God had cursed his chosen people as a penalty for the Crucifixion.



On January 30, 1937, Adolf Hitler celebrated his fourth anniversary as chancellor. Speaking before the Reichstag, he professed “thankfulness to our Almighty God” but promised more struggles lay ahead: “Of all the tasks which we have to face, the noblest and most sacred for mankind is that each racial species must preserve the purity of the blood which God has given it.”

That same day Niemöller spoke in another part of Berlin. Now his message was different; he prayed for all non-Aryans removed from their jobs during the Nazi revolution. By year’s end he had been arrested for statements against Nazism. He served his time awaiting trial, but the state detained him anyway; eventually he was transferred to the Dachau concentration camp.

### HIGHER THAN THE FATHERLAND

On the day he gave his fourth anniversary speech, Hitler pinned gold Nazi membership badges on cabinet members who had not yet joined the party. But when he reached his devoutly Catholic postal and transport minister, Paul von Eltz-Rübenach, the minister refused Hitler’s honor and loudly told the führer to stop “oppressing the Church.” The infuriated Hitler stormed away, and Eltz-Rübenach resigned. Hitler’s propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels responded, “That’s the Catholics for you. They take orders from somewhere higher than the fatherland—the only truly saving church.”

The Nazis had promised Pope Pius XI in the *Reichskonkordat* (1933) and earlier treaties that they would leave Catholic institutions alone in return for their church staying out of political affairs; some later argued that Pius could have done more to stop the Nazi menace. In that same year, Jewish convert to Catholicism Edith Stein had written him urging:



**NAZIFIED WORLD** Nazi flags fly from Berlin Cathedral (above); a soldier (left) stands by a sign reading “Germans! Defend yourselves! Do not buy from Jews!”

For weeks not only Jews but also thousands of faithful Catholics in Germany, and, I believe, all over the world, have been waiting and hoping for the Church of Christ to raise its voice to put a stop to this abuse of Christ’s name.

In January 1937 anti-Nazi Catholic bishops traveled to Rome, and, with the Vatican’s chief diplomat, Eugenio Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII), they convinced Pius XI to issue a German encyclical—in a departure from the usual Latin—condemning Nazi abuses. *Mit brennender Sorge* (*With Burning Concern*) was smuggled into the Third Reich and read aloud from Catholic pulpits across Germany on Palm Sunday:

He who sings hymns of loyalty to this terrestrial country should not . . . become unfaithful to God and His Church, or a deserter and traitor to His heavenly country.

Hitler ordered all copies seized and restrictions placed on Catholic churches. As many as one in three priests faced state discipline or imprisonment. But—even so—the “Red Threat,” as communism was called, loomed larger for Catholics: five days after issuing his German encyclical, Pius XI addressed an even more strongly worded one against communism.

Moreover, *Mit brennender Sorge* criticized Nazi racism without explicitly defending the Jewish people. Neither Catholic nor Protestant leaders spoke out

ON APRIL 1, 1933, THE BOYCOTT WHICH WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE NATIONAL SOCIALISTIC PARTY BEGAN. PLACARD BEADS, “GERMANS, DEFEND YOURSELVES, DO NOT BUY FROM JEWS”. AT THE JEWISH TIETZ STORE—(PUBLIC DOMAIN) / WIKIMEDIA THE ERECTION OF NAZI FLAGS AT THE BERLIN CATHEDRAL IN GERMANY, PHOTOGRAPH, C1937—GRANGER / GRANGER HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE



Das Kreuz war noch nicht schwer genug

**“THE CROSS WAS NOT YET HEAVY ENOUGH”**  
 Above: In his 1934 poster, German Jewish artist John Heartfield attacked the Nazi takeover—a takeover fully realized at the 1938 Nuremberg Rally (right).



effectively in the wake of Kristallnacht; Bishop Martin Sasse of the state church in fact exulted that “on Luther’s birthday, the synagogues are burning in Germany.” When Germany finally went to war in September 1939, Protestants and Catholics alike filled the ranks of the German military, wearing belt buckles that paired the broken cross of the swastika with the traditional German military claim, “God with us.”

**HIDING PLACES**

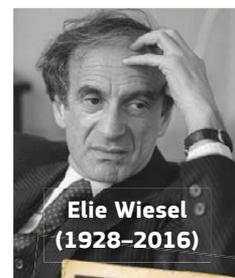
As the Holocaust began under the cover of war, some did resist. Thanks to Lutherans in German-occupied Denmark and Orthodox in German-allied Bulgaria, the vast majority of Jews in those countries survived. Reformed Protestants like French pastor André Trocmé and Dutch watchmaker Corrie ten Boom risked their lives to hide Jewish refugees. Anne Frank, whose diary would shock the world after her death from typhus in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, was hidden in a “secret annex” in Amsterdam by Dutch Catholics Miep and Jan Gies.

In Germany Clemens von Galen preached against the T4 euthanasia program, which ultimately killed 200,000 mentally and physically disabled people. Sophie and Hans Scholl and others of the “White Rose” were students whose nonviolent resistance through pamphlets and graffiti led to arrest and execution in February 1943. A third of Germany’s 30,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses were imprisoned for refusing to serve in the military or give the Nazi salute; a thousand died in the camps.

But even when those as courageous as von Galen protested mistreatment of Jews from their pulpits, they saved their sharpest critiques for state sanctions limiting Christian practice. As details of the Final Solution became known, church leaders largely retreated in fear, complaining only in private. In the end most clergy and

lay Christians would be bystanders, if not willing perpetrators, as six million Jews went to their deaths between 1933—when Dachau was first established for political prisoners—and May 1945 when the war in Europe ended. Elie Wiesel, a Romanian Jewish teenager living in Hungary when he was sent to Auschwitz, wrote in his influential memoir, *Night*,

Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.



On April 9, 1945, to the sounds of nearing Allied artillery, seven anti-Nazi resisters were hanged at the Flössenburg concentration camp. One was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Unlike hundreds of other priests and pastors held at Dachau, Martin Niemöller survived imprisonment. While he exerted significant moral authority in post-Nazi Germany, Niemöller knew that he and other Christians had largely failed the test of the Third Reich. In his 1946 memoir, he confessed that he felt compelled to tell any Jew he met,

Dear Friend, I stand in front of you, but we can not get together, for there is guilt between us. I have sinned and my people [have] sinned against thy people and against thyself. ☞



*Chris Gehrz is professor of history at Bethel University and coauthor of The Pietist Option. He blogs at PietistSchoolman.com. A different version of this article appeared in issue #121 under the title, “The church of the bystanders.”*

GERMAN STATE CHURCH—CHRONICLE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; THE NUREMBERG RALLY—AP/WIDEWORLD; JOHN HEARTFIELD—BRIDGEMAN IMAGES; PORTAIT OF ANNE FRANK (ANNA, 1929–1945) (ELEVEN YEARS OLD)—SERIES OF CLICHÉS GLOUED IN HER “JOURNAL” BEFORE HER ARREST BY THE NAZIS, 1940; 24 NOV. 1982, WRITER ELIE WIESEL—PHOTO © SOPHIE BASSOULS / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



**WORDS WITH CONSEQUENCES** Luther believed God had deserted the Jews, leaving them to wander homeless without a land or temple of their own.

a stone, as iron, as a devil.” Luther accepted the common belief that God had turned his attention to the “new Israel,” the Christian Church. He did not hold Jews responsible for the death of Christ, writing in a hymn, “We dare not blame . . . the band of Jews; ours is the shame.” And he felt that at least a few Jews might be won for Christ. Yet he did not want “fellowship or patience with obstinate [Jewish] blasphemers and those who defame this dear Savior.”

Blasphemy was a civil crime. To allow it to continue, Luther feared, meant

Christians would share in the guilt for it. Thus he proposed seven measures of “sharp mercy” for German princes to take against Jews and advised clergy, congregations, and government officials to help carry them out. Most Jews had already been expelled from Germany before 1536; yet a harsh anti-Jewish measure in 1543 mentioned his treatise.

Both friends and foes criticized Luther’s anti-Semitic statements, but he persisted. He repeated as true the worst charges from medieval literature: Jews killed Christian babies; they murdered Christ over and over again by stabbing Eucharistic hosts; they poisoned wells. The aging, cantankerous Luther declared in the 1540s the very thing he had denounced Catholics for saying in 1523: Jews were dogs. “We are at fault for not slaying them,” he fumed shortly before his death.

Luther had taught his students that one cannot and should not speculate about the will of the hidden God, for what God has not revealed cannot be known. But many believe that here he violated his own theological method and fell victim to what his friend Melancthon called the “rabies of theologians.” His arguments against Jews were theological, not biological. But they became more treacherous when French cultural anthropologist Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882) proposed that humankind consists of inferior “Semites” and superior “Aryans.” European intellectuals and politicians adopted de Gobineau’s views and read them back into Luther’s. Nazis would call Luther a genuine German who had hated non-Nordic races.—*Eric W. Gritsch (1931–2012), Maryland Synod professor of church history at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. A longer version of this article appeared in CH #39 under the title “Was Luther anti-Semitic?”*

## Jews, lies, and Nazis

Set fire to their synagogues or schools,” Martin Luther wrote in *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543). Jewish houses should “be razed and destroyed,” and “prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught, [should] be taken from them.” In addition “their rabbis [should] be forbidden to teach on pain of loss of life and limb.” Luther also urged that “safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews,” that “all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them,” and that “a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade” be put into their hands so “young, strong Jews and Jewesses” could “earn their bread in the sweat of their brow.” These fierce comments have puzzled and embarrassed many Christians and led to charges that Luther paved the way for Hitler.

In 1523 Luther had accused Catholics of treating Jews “as if they were dogs.” He added, “If we really want to help them, we must be guided in our dealings with them not by papal law but by the law of Christian love. We must receive them cordially, and permit them to trade and work with us, hear our Christian teaching, and witness our Christian life. If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either.”

### DESERTED BY GOD?

But as time went on, rumors of Jewish efforts to convert Christians upset Luther, and he vented his frustration. He concluded that converting Jews had become hopeless: “A Jewish heart is as hard as a stick,

# A land called holy

THE FOUNDING OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL OPENED NEW QUESTIONS FOR JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

**Robert O. Smith**

SINCE BEFORE CHRISTIANITY emerged as distinct from Judaism, the area known as the Land of Israel or Palestine or the Holy Land has held special significance. The desire to exercise political sovereignty over Jerusalem has animated conflicts among Christians, Jews, and Muslims throughout history.

The modern State of Israel, founded in 1948, inherited this historical significance. While some Jews had migrated to this area across the centuries, the state's founding resulted most directly from Jewish immigration to the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century. Spearheaded by German Jewish activist Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), the Zionist movement encouraged immigration as it sought the establishment of a Jewish state.

In 1917 the Balfour Declaration—a letter by British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour to Walter Rothschild, a prominent Jewish British nobleman—expressed support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” provided “that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.” After the Allies defeated the Ottomans in World War I, the British took sole occupation in 1923 under what was called the Mandate for Palestine. The rise of Nazism and the ravages of the Holocaust led to a steady stream of Jews hoping to immigrate.

In February 1947 the United Nations proposed a plan to partition the area between Jewish and Palestinian Arab residents, but on the day before the mandate ended in May 1948, Jewish leaders declared independence. War followed, leaving Israel in control of about three-quarters of the formerly mandated area. In 1967 Israel captured and began occupying further territory.

## WAS THIS PROPHECY?

That these events happened is (mostly) uncontroversial. Because this nation-state of the Jewish people carries theological significance for many Christians as well, these geopolitical events sparked spiritual imagination. Some Christians viewed the founding of the State of



**NEW LIGHTNING BOLT** This 1839 German tombstone illustrates the concept of supersessionism: God dismissing the Jewish covenant in favor of the Christian one.

Israel as *prophetically significant*, a doctrinal commitment that has translated into a generally favorable evaluation of Israel's conduct. Other Christians considered themselves *prophetically agnostic*—holding no belief about the State of Israel's prophetic role, but supporting it as a place for Jews to escape religious and political persecution.

A third approach developed mainly after Israel expanded in 1967, occupying areas outside the territory established in 1948. Some Christians began to consider themselves *critically prophetic*, convinced that Palestinian suffering under Israeli sovereignty or military rule demanded prophetic witness against state violence. Instead of viewing the State of Israel as “the apple of God's eye,” they believed that Israel was to be judged alongside other states and according to the same standards.

For centuries most Christians had held to the notion that the “New Covenant” established by Jesus

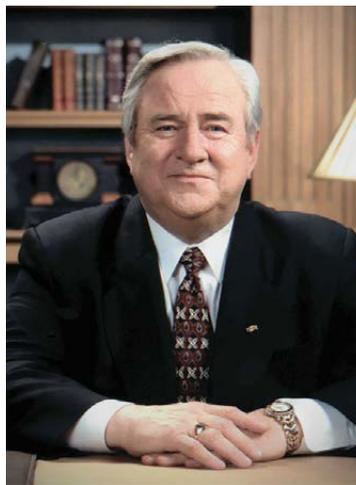


had significantly diminished or eliminated any Jewish claim of being God's "chosen" people. Any positive promises God had made to the Israelites had been transferred to Christians, including covenants of land. This is known as "replacement theology" or "supersessionism."

Among Western Christians this view was challenged in 1965, when the Second Vatican Council issued *Nostra Aetate*. It repudiated a previous Christian teaching, the "teaching of contempt," that Jews were always and everywhere responsible for the death of Jesus. This led to a new era of Jewish-Christian theological dialogue, but political questions regarding Israel remained unaddressed.

Israel's dramatic territorial expansion in 1967 changed things. On one side many Catholic and mainline Protestant churches saw Israel's annexation of an expanded East Jerusalem and military occupation of greater territory as violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention. On the other side many evangelicals interpreted these events as stages in the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, including the miraculous rebirth of Jewish sovereignty over their undivided capital city.

From then on support for the State of Israel became a central plank in evangelical theology—from Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority in the late 1970s to John Hagee's Christians United for Israel in the early 2000s. They interpreted the State of Israel as a prophetic "sign of the times" and viewed Israel as an ally in the Cold War. But the underpinnings of this theopolitical interpretation had actually been formed centuries before.



**DISPUTED LINES** Far left: A 1967 Israeli map shows (in yellow) the controversial, short-lived boundaries after the Six-Day War.

**SIGN OF THE TIMES** Leaders from John Winthrop (near left) to Jerry Falwell (below) have considered Israel's political existence significant for American Christians.

### "THE POPE AND THE TURK"

The system of biblical interpretation known as premillennial dispensationalism (see CH #128) is usually considered the most recent historical source for evangelical attitudes toward the State of Israel.

Created by John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) in the late 1800s and popularized by Cyrus Scofield (who developed the Scofield Reference Bible, first published in 1909), this system emphasizes a distinction between Jews and gentiles as two separate peoples of God.

This way of reading the Bible grew out of long-established English Protestant traditions of prophecy interpretation. In the Reformation era, Protestant Christians felt themselves to be facing two existential threats: the Roman Catholic Church and the Ottoman Empire. Both Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564) referred to

these threats, respectively, as "the Pope and the Turk," which together they identified as the Antichrist.

The crises of the sixteenth century sparked renewed interest in apocalyptic interpretation of the Bible. Searching the Scriptures for aid in these struggles, English Protestants as early as 1585 began identifying Jews as allies. These were not actual Jewish communities in England; Edward I had officially banished Jews three centuries before. Having little to no experience with living Jews, the English Protestants viewed Jews as literary characters for their purposes in God's narrative.

By the 1630s English Protestant theologians had developed precise apocalyptic plans in which Jews, upon their return to Palestine, would form an army and defeat the Ottomans. This would, in turn, aid the Protestant struggle against Rome. These anti-Islamic and anti-Catholic ideas were deeply woven into the Puritan struggle as Puritans separated from the Church of England and (temporarily) eliminated the British monarchy in favor of a Puritan commonwealth.

In 1649 Johanna and Ebenezer Cartwright, English subjects living among Jewish communities in the

ISRAEL, C. 1967; A USED VINTAGE ISRAELI ENVELOPE AND POSTAGE STAMP (CAMPAIGN POSTER) SHOWING A MAP OF THE 1967 WAR WITH THE INSCRIPTION "THE DISCOVERY OF ISRAEL IN THE RAFAH POST OFFICE", SERIES 1967—NEWBORN / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO  
 PORTRAIT OF JOHN WINTHROP (1588–1649), OIL ON CANVAS, HARVARD UNIVERSITY PORTRAIT COLLECTION, HB—PUBLIC DOMAIN / WIKIMEDIA  
 DR. JERRY FALWELL (EN, D. 2007), THE FOUNDER OF LIBERTY UNIVERSITY, WAS A CHRISTIAN PASTOR AND TELEVANGELIST—LIBERTY UNIVERSITY (CC BY-SA) / WIKIMEDIA

Netherlands, joined their theological ideas to a political proposal. Their petition, written in part to Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell, suggested that aiding a Jewish return to the “Land promised to their forefathers” would appease God’s wrath manifested in the English civil war. This political effort, undertaken to promote Jewish sovereignty over the Holy Land for specifically Christian purposes, is the first documented example of Christian Zionism.

### OLD TESTAMENT, NEW WORLD

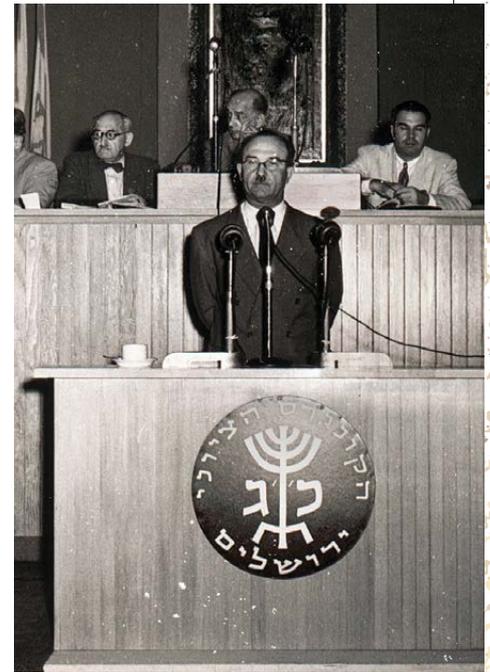
Puritan settlers such as John Winthrop (1588–1649) and Increase Mather (1639–1723) carried these ideas to the New World. Through them the English Protestant tradition of Jewish-centric prophecy interpretation was woven into America’s founding story.

Often Puritan leaders imagined English settlers through the biblical image of the Israelites in the wilderness. Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, declared it was “as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us.” With the stroke of a pen, the New World became “the Promised Land” and the indigenous peoples the “Canaanites,” who would eventually yield to the English settlers who saw themselves as conquering Israelites.

Subsequent generations of English settlers turned their attention toward the theological significance of America itself, mapping elements of the Hebrew Bible onto life in New England. In addition to promoting the study of Hebrew at newly established universities like Harvard and Princeton, Puritans often named their children with Hebrew names of Old Testament characters and named places with Hebrew names drawn from the same narratives.

Increase Mather’s son, Cotton (1663–1728), and Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) displayed acute concern for the place of England and America in God’s apocalyptic timeline. Ideas about how and when Jews would be restored to the Promised Land were a common matter of public debate. Some, like the Mathers’ friend Samuel Sewall, wondered if America might even be the site of God’s New Jerusalem. These speculations (which later teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints would explicitly reflect) helped form the idea of America itself.

Premillennial dispensationalism took hold in the United States following the Civil War. Studied at prophecy conferences throughout the nation, the system helped make sense of recent national trauma. For Chicago businessman William E. Blackstone



**ECHOES OF THE PAST** A 1948 cartoon (*above left*) shows the US supporting Israel while Britain calls Israel “Shylock” and leaves the Middle East. Christian leaders gather (*above right*) for a Christian Zionist conference in Basel (1987), where Herzl held his first Zionist conference (1897).

(1841–1935), these theological ideas formed the basis for political action similar to that of the Cartwrights of the 1640s. In 1891 he presented a petition, signed by prominent politicians, publishers, and business leaders, to President Benjamin Harrison.

The “Blackstone Memorial” argued that the suffering of Russian Jews should be alleviated by giving “Palestine back to them again.” This was logical because “according to God’s distribution of nations it is their home, an inalienable possession from which they were expelled by force.” US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis and other prominent Jews—who endorsed the Jewish expression of Zionism—supported Blackstone’s effort.

Today, in a post-Holocaust world, the debate rages on. The modern nation-state of Israel cannot be separated from either the long history of Jewish-Christian relations or specific Judeo-centric prophecy interpretations viewing “the Pope and the Turk” as the antagonists whom such a state must overcome. The land may be called holy, but its history is also fraught. ☐

*Robert O. Smith is director of Briarwood Leadership Center, Argyle, TX; he previously directed the University of Notre Dame’s Jerusalem Global Gateway. He has written or edited More Desired than Our Own Salvation: The Roots of Christian Zionism; Christians and a Land Called Holy; and Comprehending Christian Zionism.*



# Nozrim and Meshichyim

MESSIANIC JUDAISM COMBINES JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES, BUT NOT WITHOUT CONTROVERSY

*Yaakov Ariel*

**MESSIANIC JUDAISM** combines faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior with Jewish identity, culture, symbols, and rites. Until the 1970s even those Jews who accepted Christianity and created what they called “Hebrew Christian” congregations, retaining some Jewish customs, mostly rejected such a combination. Today Jews, Christians, and Messianic Jews wrestle with the uniqueness of the movement.

## **BABY BOOMERS AND JEWS FOR JESUS**

Missionaries and communities of Hebrew Christians in Israel noted in the mid-twentieth century that for Israeli Jews, the term Nozrim (Hebrew for Christians) meant an alien, if not hostile, religion. In contrast, Meshichiyim, meaning Messianists, held an aura of hope, emphasizing the Messianic element of the faith. Especially among themselves many Messianic Jews identified as Maaminim, “Believers” (in Jesus). In recent years many have preferred the more inclusive “Jewish Believers in Jesus,” which includes all Jews who accept the Christian faith and remain connected to their Jewish roots, regardless of their communal affiliation.

The term “Messianic Jew” resurfaced in America in the early 1970s; a vigorous and assertive movement

**UNITED UNDER A CHUPPAH** A leader conducts a wedding at a Messianic Jewish congregation in Wisconsin.

formed out of American Jews who had accepted Jesus as their Savior. Members of the Baby Boomer generation filled these new communities; as in other forms of Boomer religion, Messianic Judaism sought to put together elements that previous generations had considered to be in contrast to each other.

At the same time, many religious and ethnic groups of the 1970s were taking greater pride in their roots, and evangelical Christianity—where Messianic Judaism found its home—was beginning to offer more space for ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences. Israel’s defeat of its Arab neighbors in June 1967 strongly affected evangelical attitudes. Evangelicals developed growing appreciation for Jews, whom they saw as playing an important part in the events leading to Jesus’s Second Coming. Some evangelical churches began to include Jewish symbols and customs in their worship. Likewise the 1967 war boosted the desire of Jews who joined Christian churches to maintain Jewish identity and culture. Many Messianic Jews and their evangelical Christian supporters felt that they

MESSIANIC JEWISH WEDDING—USED WITH PERMISSION / BETH IMMANUEL MESSIANIC SYNAGOGUE



**CONTESTED MEAL AND SEAL** Some Jews have critiqued Christian celebrations (left) of the *seder* (Passover meal). Controversy also surrounds this diagram (below) combining Christian and Jewish symbols which has been adopted as a Messianic Jewish seal.

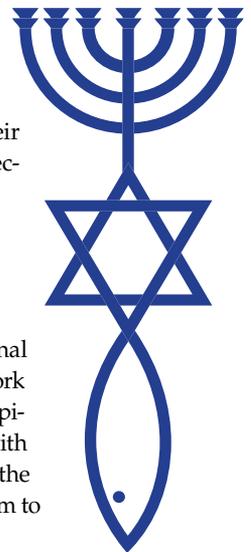
Today some Jews continue to feel negatively about Messianic Judaism, while others call upon fellow Jews to accept Messianic Jews as part of the larger Jewish community. Some liberal Protestants have also expressed reservations about Messianic Judaism, largely because of the movement's association with conservative evangelical tenets and views; they object to its theology, its interpretation of Scripture, and its support for right-wing politics.

As a rule evangelicals do not promote interfaith dialogue, but they see their acceptance of Messianic Judaism as a way of recognizing Jewish tradition.

Messianic Jews embrace the major premises of evangelical theology, including the principle that all people need to undergo personal experiences of conversion and accept Jesus as their Savior. They promote traditional evangelical morality and embrace a strict work ethic and obedience to the law. They also typically see special merit in sharing the gospel with fellow Jews, instructing them in how to read the Bible along evangelical lines, and bringing them to accept Jesus as Savior.

Messianic Jews study both the Old and New Testaments, regarding both as historically accurate and prophetically revealing. They share the premillennialist evangelical belief in the imminent return of Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God on earth and in the dominant role of the Jews and Israel in bringing about the Messianic times.

Even while adhering to evangelical principles, the founders of Messianic Judaism desired independence from the Protestant denominations or missionary societies that had traditionally aimed at making Jews into Protestants. However, missionary societies such as Chosen People Ministries have helped to create self-standing Messianic Jewish congregations since the 1980s. Such communities serve as centers of evangelism for Jews and non-Jews alike. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the majority of members in Messianic Jewish congregations had not grown up in Jewish homes (though many claimed Jewish ancestry or were married to partners of Jewish descent). More than 400



were working to heal old wounds and bring together two religious traditions they believed should never have been at odds.

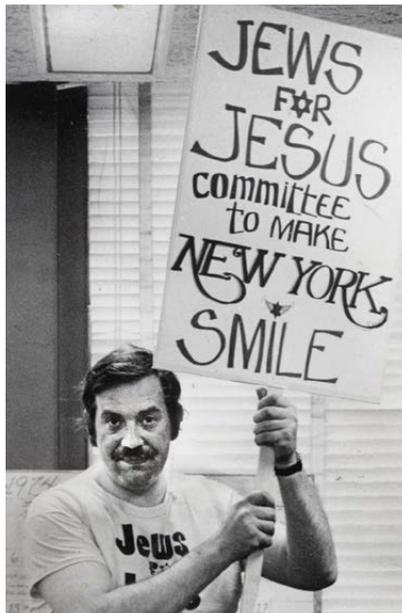
Messianic Judaism was not the only attempt at this collaboration. Jews for Jesus, founded by Moishe Rosen (1932–2010), quickly became one of the more energetic evangelical-Jewish groups of the early 1970s. Jews for Jesus was an explicitly Christian-Jewish missionary organization; Rosen related skeptically to Messianic Jewish congregations. He asked his missionaries to join non-Jewish churches and to direct inquirers and converts to such churches. Later on the movement did establish Messianic congregations.

Another group resembling Messianic Judaism is the Hebrew Catholic movement. The group has a handful of churches in Israel, as well as mostly virtual communities elsewhere. Hebrew Catholics follow Catholic liturgy and theology; at the same time, they have written their own prayers, bringing Catholic elements of faith together with Israeli culture, such as Hebrew hymns for Miriam HaMevurahat (Mary). The Vatican recognizes the movement and created the Vicariate of St. James in 2011 for Hebrew congregations in Israel.

**OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

Despite the growing visibility of Jewish believers in Jesus in the 1970s, most Jews did not accept the claim that one could embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior and remain within Judaism. Some considered the new movement to be a missionary ploy to lure Jews away from their ancestral faith. Others viewed it as a harmful cult. On rare occasions Jews turned to violence against Messianic Jews—defacing sanctuaries or harassing individual members.

CHRISTIAN SEDER PLATE—IMAGE © DAYSpring CARDS, INC. USED BY PERMISSION. A HAGEN DAVID; WITH A MENORAH ABOVE AND A DEAD FISH HANGING BELOW—SHLANIA AT ENGLISH WIKIPEDIA [PUBLIC DOMAIN] / WIKIMEDIA



## יהודים למען ישוע JEWS FOR JESUS

Messianic communities exist in America and over 100 in Israel, with dozens more in Europe, Latin America, South Africa, and Australia. Tens of thousands of people are members of Messianic congregations and tens of thousands more consider themselves Messianic Jews, or Jewish Believers in Jesus, even if they are members of mainstream churches. There are now significant numbers of second- and third-generation Messianic Jews.

Major divisions do exist in practice and interpretation. One is between charismatics, who advocate a direct personal encounter with the divine and practice expressive modes of worship, and noncharismatics, whose prayer is more traditional and formal. Most early congregations chose to become charismatic, but later ones were established by mostly noncharismatic missionary societies.

Congregations reflect a broad spectrum of observance of Jewish traditions and rites and put different Jewish and Christian liturgical elements together. Most congregations conduct their weekly prayer meetings on Friday nights or Saturday mornings, and they often ask male members and guests to wear yarmulkes during the services. They have installed arks with Torah scrolls and read a passage from the *parasha*, the weekly Jewish reading from the Pentateuch.

Messianic Jews have incorporated Israeli songs and the use of modern Hebrew into their services. Their attachment to Israel has come to signify devotion to Jewish causes as well as a premillennialist understanding of the role of Israel in God's plans.

### YESHUA THE SAVIOR

While struggling to be accepted as both genuinely Jewish and authentically Christian, Messianic Judaism has built its own subculture—national organizations,

**A DIFFERENT COMBINATION** Moishe Rosen, leader of Jews for Jesus, preferred to have his followers join established Christian congregations.

youth movements, conferences, retreats, prayer books and hymnals, websites, periodicals, and theological, apologetic, and evangelistic treatises.

Many Messianic hymns resemble contemporary evangelical ones, but refer to Yeshua, Jesus, as the Savior of Israel. Messianic Haggadot (Passover services) and *siddurim* (prayer books) include elements of traditional Jewish liturgy, replacing certain passages with prayers expressing faith in Jesus as Redeemer. The embrace of *bar mitzva*hs serves as a statement that Messianic Jews still practice Jewish culture, albeit with a Messianic focus. Instead of the

conventional *haftarah* (prophetic reading), Messianic *bar mitzva*h boys often read from the New Testament, and the *drasha*, a customary *bar mitzva*h sermon, is often a public declaration affirming Messianic Jewish faith and identity.

Most Messianic Jewish writers claim the antiquity of their movement, emphasizing that the earliest Christians were Jews. David Stern (b. 1935), a leader in the Messianic Jewish movement in America and Israel, edited a Messianic Jewish New Testament in which he changed the name of the Epistle to the Hebrews to Letter to the Messianic Jews. In his *Messianic Jewish Manifesto* (1988), Stern asserts that Messianic Jews are not 50 percent Jewish and 50 percent Christian, but rather 100 percent Jewish and 100 percent Christian.

The early twenty-first century has seen a new generation of Messianic Jewish intellectuals with new interpretations of the movement. For example Israeli Gershon Nerel (b. 1952) advocates relying solely on the Scriptures as a source of authority instead of Protestant theology or creeds. Mark Kinzer (b. 1952) of Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism and the group Hashivenu (Bring Us Back), advocates cutting the cord between Messianic Judaism and the missionary community, basing theology on Jewish postbiblical sources. While still committed to some basic elements of evangelical theology and devoted to Jewish identity and heritage, Messianic Jews are now becoming more autonomous, creating theological and communal spaces of their own. **■**

*Yaakov Ariel is professor in the department of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the author of Evangelizing the Chosen People, On Behalf of Israel, and An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews among other works.*

# Experiencing Messianic Judaism

*Paul Phelps has attended Messianic congregations both in America and in Israel. He is the father of Michael Phelps, network administrator for our sister company, Vision Video.*

## **CHRISTIAN HISTORY:** Tell us about your history with Messianic Judaism.

**PAUL PHELPS:** I have attended Messianic congregations in the US, been in overseas missions, and lived in Israel as a citizen. I was raised in a Christian family; my father was a Bible teacher all his adult life. At age 20 I went to Israel and stayed until a US Army call-up and afterwards moved to Chicago. While there I met and married my wife, a believing Jewish girl. We had three children; two are now living in Israel as Israeli citizens. My first experience in Messianic congregations was in Chicago. In later years I have also attended Messianic congregations in and near Philadelphia.

## **CH:** What does the community look like?

**PP:** Most Messianic leadership has been through Protestant Bible colleges; they have typically taken the traditional synagogue as a model for ceremonies and activities—to present a Jewish identity. Following synagogue tradition most congregations have an ark and Torah scroll, which typically is used for display (not to read from). Many new Messianic-style songs have been written in the United States, in Israel, and internationally, and have gained popularity; in Israel the lyrics are often Bible verses set to Hebraic music. Prayer books are written by Messianic believers and many prayers are quoted directly from the Bible. Most synagogues gather on Friday nights or Saturdays, and Messianic congregations follow that tradition. This practice also allows members to attend church Sunday services if they want—and many do.

The Jewish understanding is that Sabbath is a day of rest, but worship (as a state of mind) can happen any time. The congregation always puts on a special program for Jewish holy days. There are books explaining their meaning and spiritual significance. The Messianic movement gives more regard to the Mosaic Law than do most churches; but yet, following surveys, no one claims to follow all the Law—not even kosher food law.

The Messianic movement has attracted the interest of many Christians who see Israel's reestablishment and the increase of Jews returning to faith in Christ as being end-time fulfillments. One stated objective of the movement is to be more culturally accessible to Jews on the assumption that a "more Jewish" type of

**PILGRIMAGE PLACES** Messianic Judaism has a complicated relationship with Israel today.

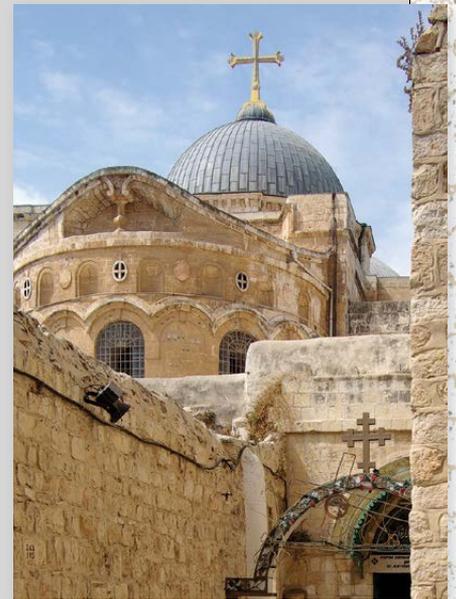
witness might be more acceptable to Jews and evangelism more effective. Whether that has really been true is debatable. For many Jews the question is: "Are you still part of our community?" When Jews take on the Christian faith and are baptized, they are regarded as having left the community; the rise of the Messianic movement has not contributed to an improved climate of trust.

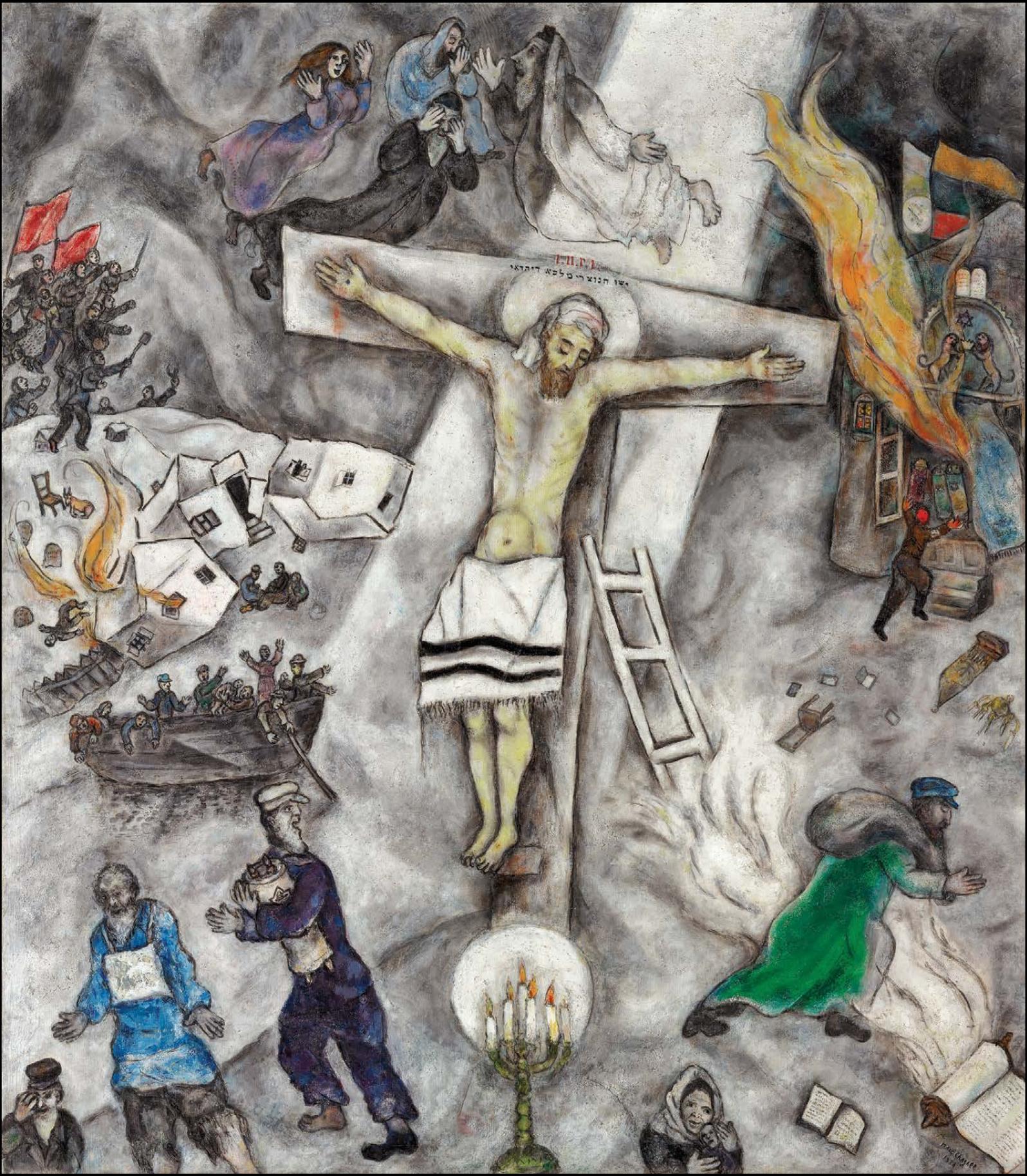
## **CH:** Could Messianic Jews claim to be just one point on the diverse spectrum of Jewish doctrine?

**PP:** The Jewish community has so far not accepted that position, partly because of the traditionally bad relations between Christians and Jews—Jews distrust Christianity more than any other religion. No other religion has tried to convert Jews to any great extent except Christianity. If allowed to live in Muslim countries, they were accepted as Jews without being forced to convert. There is a deeply built-in prejudice against conversion but not against Jesus as a person. He is recognized as a Jewish man—a rabbi with an opinion, living a Torah-observant life as any other rabbi. In Judaism no two rabbis have the same opinion anyway. With Jews ideas can generally be discussed, but conversion is out of the question; they see that as attacking their identity.

## **CH:** What does the movement look like in Israel?

**PP:** I would not say it even exists in a distinctive form; believers there are not interested in synagogue traditions. Israel is a Jewish state by definition; there is no need to prove Jewish identity. Also most secular Israelis are very prejudiced against the synagogue due to laws passed by Orthodox parties in the Israeli government. As far as I've seen, there are no prayer books in congregations and almost no ritual. They don't typically have a cross because to them, it is a reminder of past tragedies in Christendom; however in other ways Israeli congregations resemble informal home-style meetings. ☞





# “Our Jewish life”

JEWISH THINKERS, WRITERS, LEADERS, AND ARTISTS WITH LASTING IMPACTS

Jennifer A. Boardman

## MAIMONIDES (1135–1204)

Born in Córdoba, the capital of Islamic Spain, Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon) was a Jewish scholar and philosopher especially known for his Torah scholarship. When the fantastically intolerant Almohad regime conquered Córdoba in 1148, the ben Maimon family had to hide their Jewish faith and practices. By 1159 the charade finally proved too difficult, and they fled, traveling through southern Spain and northern Africa for years. They settled in Egypt, where Maimonides was appointed *nagid* (Hebrew for prince and leader) of the Egyptian Jewish community in 1171. His rise may have been due to his campaign to rescue Jews captured during Christian king Amalric's siege of Bilbays, Egypt.

Maimonides's younger brother, David, a wealthy jewelry merchant, died in a shipwreck in the early 1170s, leaving the family without fortune. Maimonides turned to practicing medicine to financially support them. In his writings he demonstrated his vast understanding of Greek and Arab medicine, while also using his own observations of patients to advance medical knowledge. Not only a tireless scholar, he also treated patients all day long: first the Egyptian royal family, then the common people waiting for him when he arrived home.

Maimonides was the first person to compile a Jewish creed. His most famous works are the *Mishneh Torah* (c. 1170–1180), a wide-reaching systemization of Jewish law, and *Guide for the Perplexed* (1190); he also wrote many other books on theology, doctrine, philosophy, and medicine. He argued that when people contemplate the beauty and order of God's creation, they love him and recognize their own insignificance. Having lived among believers in both Islam and Christianity, Maimonides believed both derived from Judaism but had gone astray. He criticized the doctrine of the Trinity, considering it polytheistic, and wrote of Deuteronomy 6:4, “The Christians utilized this verse to prove that God is one of three, teaching that *Lord, Our God, the Lord* makes three names, all followed by One.”

## BARUCH (14TH CENTURY)

In July 1320 a Jewish man named Baruch testified in court about his conversion from Judaism to Christianity and back to Judaism. He recalled that one day as he sat



**BIBLICAL VISIONS** Marc Chagall (see p. 38) often used Jewish themes in his work, as in *Moses and the Burning Bush* (above) and *White Crucifixion* (1938, facing page).

in his study in the Jewish quarter of Toulouse, France, a Christian mob barged in yelling, “To death, to death, be baptized or we will kill you immediately!” He went to a church for shelter, but church officials demanded baptism. He did not believe this baptism was authentic, though, because it was done under duress.

When the court asked Baruch if he put up any fight before his baptism, he replied, “No. I feared that I would be assassinated if I did or said anything.” Asked if he wished to be Jewish or Christian, Baruch was emphatic: “I wish to live as a Jew and not as a Christian, because it does not seem to me that I am a Christian. I never believed that [the baptism] was valid.”

But in the end, the bishop did not believe Baruch was baptized by force. The court considered him a Christian and said because he was still practicing Judaism, he would be tried as a heretic. He responded, “I do not wish to believe or observe Christianity, and I prefer to die than to leave Judaism, the more so since I am no small authority for the Jews of these regions.” But Baruch agreed that if no discord between Jewish and Christian teachings could be proven, he would remain a Christian. After weeks of comparing the teachings of



the Christian Scriptures and the Jewish Law and Prophets, he agreed that Christianity is correct.

One month later, in August of 1320, however, he was back in front of the court to express doubts about Christianity after he reread parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. He cited many verses that countered Trinitarianism, including the same one Maimonides had noted, Deuteronomy 6:4. When asked if the court had previously countered his doubts, he said that it had, but he could not recall the arguments.

On September 25, 1320, Baruch returned yet again and told the court, “I, Baruch, appearing for questioning before you . . . abjure entirely all heresy against the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Roman Church.” But on December 3, he returned to the court once more to beg for mercy as a heretic because he had continued to live as a Jew after Christian baptism. His final sentence is lost to history.

#### GLÜCKEL OF HAMELN (1645–1724)

Born in Hamburg, Germany, Glückel was one of six children from the prosperous Jewish family of Judah Joseph Leib. Leib educated all his children, including his daughters, and Glückel received a formal education in a *cheder* (traditional Jewish school). At age 14 she married Hayyim of Hameln, who became a wealthy businessman in the gold trade. The couple had 14 children, 13 of whom survived to adulthood and married well throughout the European Jewish community. When Hayyim passed away in 1689, Glückel successfully took over the family business. She eventually married again, although her second husband lost his own fortune as well as hers.

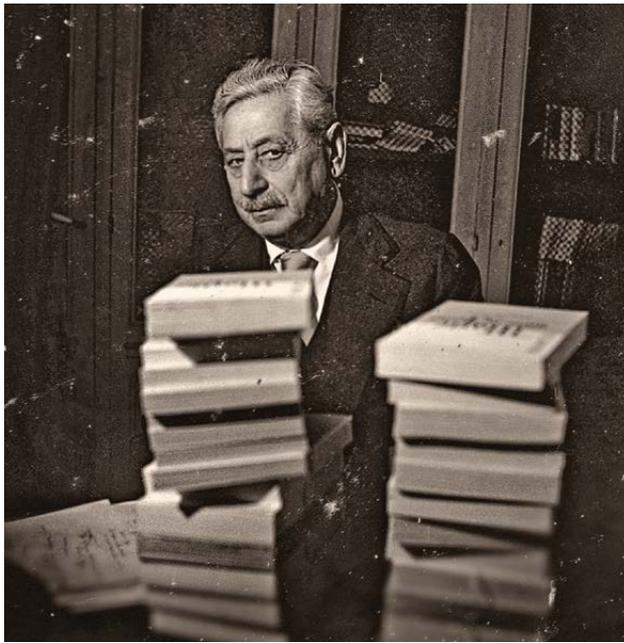


**WRONG PROPHET** Above: This c. 1420 illustration of Revelation shows Antichrist converting the Jews—recognizable by their *Judenhütten*.

**WATCH THIS** Left: In this painting from 1347, Maimonides teaches disciples about the concept of universal scale.

After Hayyim’s death, Glückel began writing a memoir to cope with her deep grief. From 1691 until 1719, she wrote seven books cataloging her life, adventures, sorrows, and faith; they give us remarkable insight into northern European Jewish life of the era and chronicle many important historical events: Sweden’s war on Denmark, the Khmelnytsky Uprising, the Black Death, Sabbatai Zevi, the Franco-Dutch War, and the War of Spanish Succession. She described difficult circumstances for Jews, including anti-Semitism, and also recalled the expulsion of Jews from Hamburg to Altona when she was a child, remembering that Jews were forbidden to live in whole regions of Germany.

Glückel explained in the beginning of her book that its purpose was not a moral one; her children only needed Torah to live a godly life. Instead she wanted to tell her children and their descendants the family story. After her second husband’s death, Glückel moved in with her daughter and son-in-law in Metz, where she continued to write her memoirs.



**ONE CULTURE?** Above: Sholem Asch poses with copies of his controversial book, *Mary*, in 1949.

**FADING MEMORY** Right: We have no images of Glückel from her own day; here 20th-c. activist Bertha Pappenheim represents her on a charity calendar in 1932.



was still Jewish and only wanted to bridge some of the division between the two religions. He believed that Christianity is an expression of Judaism, asserting they are “one culture and civilization.”

His Jewish readers and contemporaries, however, did not like his more open-minded treatment of Christianity, and he was fired from the New York Yiddish newspaper *Forverts*. He started writing for a communist paper, which led to multiple questionings by the House Un-American Activities Committee. Because of the hearings and widespread criticism from fellow Jews, Asch left the United States permanently in 1953 for London and eventually died in Israel.

### SHOLEM ASCH (1880–1957)

Sholem Asch was born in Poland to a large Hasidic family (see p. 11). His parents enrolled him in the town’s best Jewish school, where he studied the Talmud. When he moved to Warsaw in 1889, he met his hero, Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz (1852–1915), who convinced him to write exclusively in Yiddish, the historical language of Ashkenazi Jews.

Asch began establishing himself as a gifted writer with his first book of stories, *In a Bad Time* (1902). He continued to write short stories and also plays, for which he became even more famous thanks to multiple translations of his work. His most well-known and often reviled play was *God of Vengeance* (1906), set in a Jewish brothel. While theaters throughout Europe and on Broadway performed it, many Jewish leaders decried it as anti-Semitic fodder.

Asch and his young family moved to New York in 1914 to escape the violence in Europe, eventually settling on Staten Island. He wrote for Yiddish newspapers and was active in Jewish relief programs, traveling to Europe to report on the devastation of World War I. Though he became a US citizen in 1920, he eventually moved back to Europe, spending extended time in France.

He returned to the United States as World War II was beginning, and there wrote a trilogy, *The Nazarene* (1939), *The Apostle* (1945), and *Mary* (1949). Many accused him of converting to Christianity, but Asch insisted he

### FRANZ ROSENZWEIG (1886–1929)

Franz Rosenzweig was born in Germany to an intellectual middle-class family. Though his family was ethnically Jewish, his parents were not religiously observant. A gifted student, he studied modern history and philosophy; after researching Hegel’s German idealism and its stress on holistic history over the individual, Rosenzweig found himself attracted instead to existentialism and its emphasis on how personal experience shapes meaning. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (1888–1973), one of Rosenzweig’s close university friends, also criticized German idealism. But instead of looking to philosophy for answers, Rosenstock-Huessy turned to religion, converting from Judaism to Christianity.

In July 1913 Rosenzweig decided he, too, would convert to Christianity. Before conversion, however, he wanted to attempt to live as early observant Jews would have. During a Yom Kippur service in a Berlin synagogue in October 1913, he encountered new (to him) concepts of human sinfulness, God’s forgiveness, and the deep love God has for his people. At that moment he became a committed Jew. He never considered converting to Christianity again.

Rosenzweig and Rosenstock-Huessy remained close friends. During their time as soldiers in World War I, the young men corresponded via letter about



their respective religions. These letters were compiled and published decades later as *Judaism Despite Christianity* (1970).

Rosenzweig's most famous book, *The Star of Redemption* (1921), chronicles how, as humans love God, they become more connected to the world—and that, Rosenzweig believed, is redemption. In the last seven years of his life, Rosenzweig suffered from paralysis due to ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). His wife, Edith, helped him continue to produce important scholarship, including a new German translation of the Hebrew Bible with Jewish scholar Martin Buber (1878–1965).

#### MARC CHAGALL (1887–1985)

Born in modern Belarus, Moishe Segal (later gallicized as Marc Chagall) was the oldest of nine children in a Lithuanian Jewish Hasidic family. Art critic Michael J. Lewis wrote that he was “most emphatically a Jewish artist, whose work was one long dreamy reverie of life in his native village of Vitebsk.” Although Jewish children were not allowed to attend regular high schools, Chagall's mother bribed a local high school headmaster to admit her son. There Chagall saw a fellow student drawing and was amazed; he had not been exposed to such art in his home.

After studying art in Saint Petersburg for four years, Chagall relocated to Paris, only to return to Russia to marry his fiancée, Bella Rosenfeld. They returned to France following World War I, and Chagall finally began to make a name in the French art world in 1927. When commissioned to illustrate an edition of the Old Testament, Chagall traveled to Israel where he “found the Bible and part of my own being.”

Though the German art world originally lauded Chagall's work, following Hitler's rise German authorities mocked Chagall's style as “. . . green, purple, and



“PART OF MY OWN BEING” Above: Chagall sits with his painting *The Martyr* (1940), which pairs the Crucifixion with modern images of Jewish suffering.

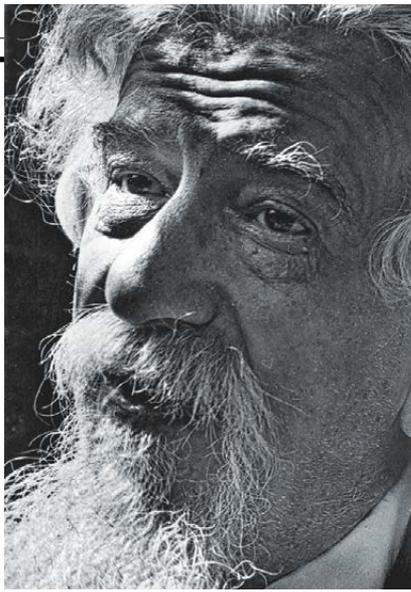
**ENCOUNTER WITH FORGIVENESS** Left: Rosenzweig left a rich legacy before he died of ALS when he was only 42.

red Jews shooting out of the earth, fiddling on violins, flying through the air . . . representing [an] assault on Western civilization.” The Chagalls remained in Vichy, France, until they realized the Nazi threat to their safety as Jews. A rescue operation to get artists and intellectuals out of France ultimately saved them, and the Chagalls finally landed in New York in 1941.

As he learned more about atrocities in Europe, including concentration camps, Chagall angrily spoke out: “After two thousand years of ‘Christianity’ in the world . . . with few exceptions, their hearts are silent . . . I see the artists in Christian nations sit still—who has heard them speak up? They are not worried about themselves, and our Jewish life doesn't concern them.” He returned to his beloved France shortly after World War II and remained there until his death.

#### MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON (1902–1994)

The son of a renowned Talmud scholar and rabbi, Schneerson was born in what was then Imperial Russia and is now Ukraine. When Schneerson was 11 years old, his private tutor informed his father that he had no more to teach his son. By the age of 17, Schneerson had mastered the entire Talmud—which was over 5,000 pages—as well as its early commentaries.



**“RAGING IN THE PROPHET’S WORDS”** Above: A photographer captures Heschel in a relaxed moment around 1970.

**REBBE KNOWN AROUND THE WORLD** Above right: Schneerson participates in a parade in Brooklyn in 1987.

In 1928 Schneerson married Chaya Mushka, a daughter of the sixth Chabad-Lubavitch Rebbe, leader of the Chabad Orthodox Hasidic movement. He and his bride moved to Berlin where he resumed his studies. As the Nazi Party continued to gain popular traction, the couple relocated to France and eventually escaped to Brooklyn in June 1941. A year after his father-in-law passed away, Schneerson became the seventh Chabad Rebbe, leader of one of the world’s most well-known Hasidic movements.

One of Schneerson’s practices as rebbe was to hold *yechidus*, private meetings, on Sunday and Thursday evenings (often running till the early morning hours). Anyone was welcome to ask questions and seek his advice on all matters spiritual and personal. Even politicians and leaders (including President Kennedy) sought his advice; the meetings finally had to be discontinued in 1982 due to the impossibility of accommodating all who desired his company.

During his tenure as rebbe, Schneerson established Chabad branches in Canada, England, Israel, and the United States and international schools and synagogues in England, Italy, Morocco, and the United States; promoted public lightings of the menorah during Hanukkah; rescued thousands of Jewish Iranian youth from Iran in 1979; and supported a campaign to study Maimonides’s *Mishneh Torah* daily. A tireless worker, he dedicated 18 hours of every day to work and study and never took a day of vacation.

In 1978 Schneerson became the first (and so far only) rabbi to have a US national day proclaimed in his honor. He died in June 1994, leaving many followers and fans, both Jewish and gentile. He was so

beloved that many of his followers believed he was the Messiah, even after his death.

### ABRAHAM HESCHEL (1907–1972)

The youngest of six children, Abraham Heschel was born in Poland, coming from a long line of important European rabbis on both his father’s and mother’s sides. He earned his doctorate at the University of Berlin and obtained a liberal rabbinic ordination, studying under some of the greatest European Jewish teachers of his time.

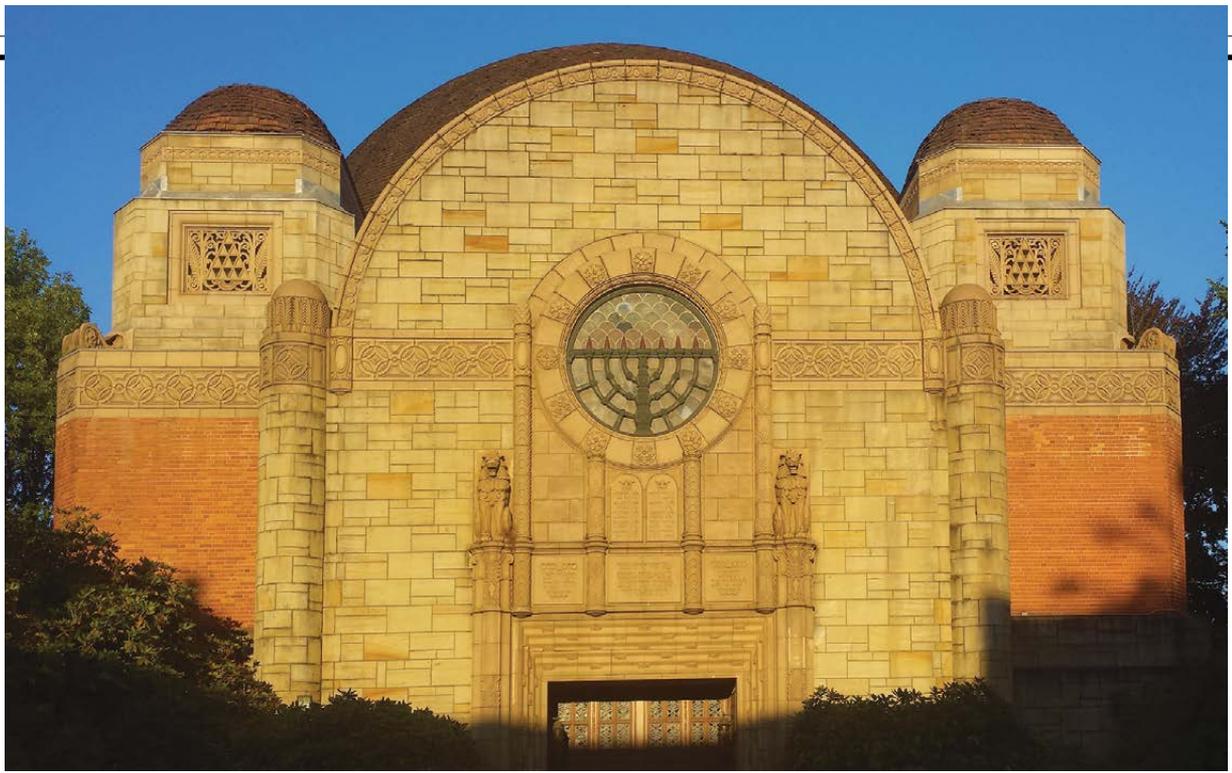
In 1938 the Gestapo captured Heschel in Germany and deported him to Poland. Just six weeks before the German invasion of Poland, he escaped, never to return. Nazis murdered one of his sisters and his mother. Heschel moved to the United States in 1940 and eventually served as professor of Jewish ethics and mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York City from 1946 until his death.

In much of his work, Heschel argued that humans must be amazed by God. Heschel criticized Maimonides’s rationalism and argued that awe brings us closer to the divine. In his book *The Prophets* (1962), he wrote that Jewish prophets are God’s voice for the oppressed: “Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profane riches of the world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God and man. God is raging in the prophet’s words.”

Believing that Jewish people should engage with the larger world, Heschel supported the civil rights movement (he walked from Selma to Montgomery with Martin Luther King Jr. in 1965), protested against the Vietnam War, and worked to improve Jewish-Christian relations. He served as a representative of American Jews at the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and convinced the Catholic Church to either eliminate or alter liturgical passages that demeaned Jews. ❏

*Jennifer A. Boardman is a freelance writer and editor. She holds a master of theological studies from Bethel Seminary with a concentration in Christian history.*

ABRAHAM HESCHEL, PHILOSOPHER AND AUTHOR, IN A PORTRAIT FROM THE EARLY 1970S—CSU ARCHIVES/EVERETT COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES  
MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON, THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE, LAG BAOMER PARADE, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, USA, 17/05/1987—MORDECAI BARON [CC BY SA] / WIKIMEDIA



# Sorrow and blessing

TWO THEOLOGIANS SEEK TO ILLUMINATE THE DIFFICULT HISTORY IN THIS ISSUE

*ELLEN T. CHARRY is professor emerita of theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and is working on a project about Jewish-Christian relations tentatively titled "Who Is the Israel of God?" HOLLY TAYLOR COOLMAN is assistant professor of theology at Providence College. Her current research focuses on Christian theologies of the Jewish people.*

**CHRISTIAN HISTORY:** What are the most common Christian misunderstandings about Jews?

**HOLLY TAYLOR COOLMAN:** I would say Christians have two problematic tendencies. First, to think of Jews as a monolithic community; secondly, to imagine, in a vague way, that Jewish religious practice is more or less identical to that of the first century. These two come together when Christians assume that all Jews are supportive of the policies of the modern-day state of Israel. I hesitate even to mention the most pernicious ways Christians might misunderstand Jews, but, especially in light of the rise of anti-Jewish violence, I have to say frankly that we can sometimes see old, terrible prejudices at work: some groups still think of Jews as a powerful, manipulative cabal that poses a threat to non-Jews.

**ELLEN T. CHARRY:** Another likely misunderstanding is that Jesus, the canonical evangelists, the apostles, and Paul were Christians. They were Jews. Additionally, today's Jews are descended from the scribes and

**PRAYING STILL** Jews have worshiped at Congregation Beth Israel in Oregon, a Reform synagogue, since 1858.

Pharisees who sought to reinvent Judaism from the ashes of the temple's destruction. Condemning, demeaning, and hating the scribes and Pharisees insult today's Jews.

**CH:** What can Christians do today to heal relationships with Jews and to address anti-Semitism?

**HTC:** Educate themselves and do everything they can to encourage preachers, church leaders, teachers, and others to do the same. The Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations ([www.ccsr.us](http://www.ccsr.us)) has resources.

**ETC:** The damage done by Christians and Christianity to Jews and Judaism is too deep, too pervasive, too prolonged, and too long unrecognized to repair. Yet at the local level Christians can listen respectfully, answer questions truthfully, try to understand the pain. Contrition requires maturity. If Christians try to defend themselves, they declare themselves to be part of the problem; the appropriateness of disputation ended in the thirteenth century. This would include becoming aware of Christian speech and preaching that offend Judaism. Christians must be willing to rule out patronizing and condescending caricatures that have controlled Christian rhetoric for many centuries.

**A BEGINNING?** In the 20th c., Vatican II (*below*) released a formal statement repudiating anti-Semitism, and Christians and Jews found arenas of political cooperation (*at right*, Abraham Heschel and Martin Luther King Jr. protest the Vietnam War).

**CH:** What is the most theologically productive way to view the relationship between Old and New Testaments, church and Israel?

**ETC:** The title “Old Testament” itself implies (as Christians intended) that it is now the background for the gospel found in the New Testament, meaningful only to a greater end, like the shell of an egg once the chick has hatched. A better title would be Hebrew Tanakh. Here is the nub of the Jewish-Christian conflict: Who is the rightful owner of these texts? Who is the people of God? The Hebrew texts have a voice, a life, a meaning on their own terms, both when written and in the history in which they were received as sacred Scripture by both communities. Let the texts speak their own word.

**HTC:** At the risk of oversimplification, I would say that claiming that the church *replaces* the people of Israel is a mistake. Scripture does not describe the church as “the new Israel,” and, if Christians do, they must do so with care. Paul describes the Jewish people as a root stock into which the branch of gentile Christianity is grafted. The eternal covenant God makes with the Jewish people has never been—and never will be—abrogated.

**CH:** What are some things that, in your view, we can learn from Rabbinic Judaism?

**ETC:** I regularly took students to a Shabbat morning synagogue service. At one the student next to me (who had grown up with Jewish friends and bar mitzvah parties) whispered: “You know, we could learn something from these people.” His arrogance utterly escaped him. Rabbinic Judaism has perhaps been Christian biblical scholarship’s favored whipping boy, blinding Christians like my students from its riches. The Younger Testament admonished believers to pray without ceasing. That summarizes Jewish piety that revolves around constantly thanking and blessing God for every gift. The cycles of nature, every act and event of the day, unexpected events (a rainbow, seeing a scholar or artist, experiencing an electrical storm, donning new clothes, seeing great natural beauty or other wondrous sight) are divine blessings. Many of these are celebrated in the synagogue so that the whole community suffers and celebrates the changes and chances of life together.

**HTC:** If I had to narrow it down, I would note *community* and *memory*. Against a background of modern individualism, Judaism has a deep sense of the way that the individual comes from and belongs to a larger community. Similarly, especially in an American context of continual reinvention, Judaism does not imagine life as “starting from scratch”: whatever the path



forward might be, the story of this people is a treasure and offers solid ground from which to begin.

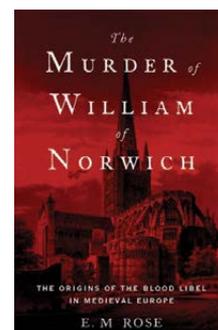
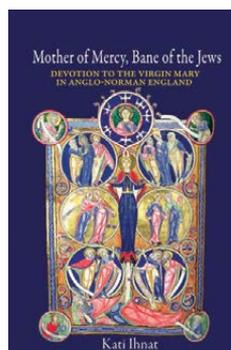
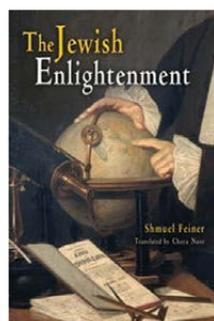
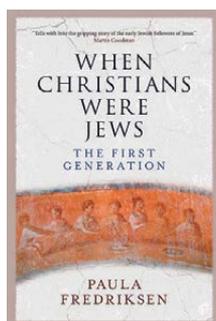
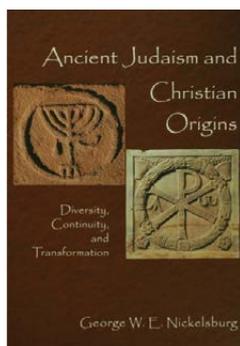
**CH:** How has your interest in Jewish-Christian dialogue shaped your work as a Christian theologian and your personal spiritual life?

**HTC:** When I first discovered these questions, they re-energized me as a Christian and as a theologian. These hard questions sit at the earliest moments of Christian life and reflection. What could be more important?

**ETC:** I am too knowledgeable about the sorry history of these traditions’ relationship to be sanguine with the self-presentation of either or the depiction of one by the other. I am always asking: What does this look like from the other side? Am I ready to have the certainty of my beliefs about piety, religion, and God held up to a mirror? To see myself as I am seen? Some would counsel “let bygones be bygones.” Unfortunately the pain and suffering of Jewish people is not all that bygone. Jews have memorized the pages torn from Christian history books. If Jews cannot forgive, perhaps God can. Go and learn. E

# Recommended resources

HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR EDITORIAL STAFF AND THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS.



## BOOKS

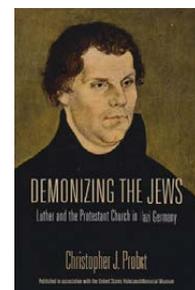
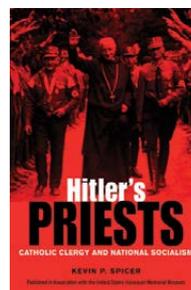
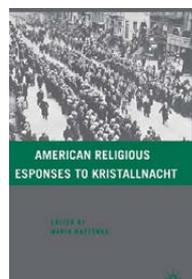
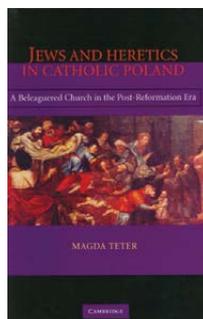
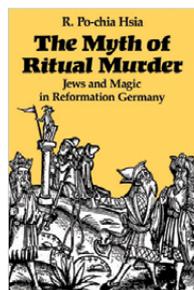
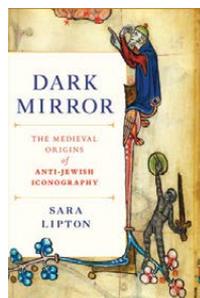
To learn more about **Christianity and Judaism in late antiquity**, check out E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977); Hayim Perelmuter, *Siblings* (1989); Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham* (1989); S. G. Wilson, *Related Strangers* (1995); George Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins* (2003); Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb* (2008); Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus* (2007); and Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews* (2010), *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (2012), and *When Christians Were Jews* (2018).

For the **medieval period**, consult Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (1982), *Living Letters of the Law* (1999), and *Sanctifying the Name of God* (2013); Benzion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain* (1998); Steven McMichael and Susan Myers, eds., *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (2004); Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales* (2004); Jonathan Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart* (2007); and Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror* (2014).

Studies of Jews and Christians from the **Reformation through the nineteenth century** include Robert

Chazan, ed., *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages* (1979); Heiko Oberman, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism* (1984); R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder* (1990); Anna Sapir Abulafia, ed., *Religious Violence Between Christians and Jews* (2001); Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (2011); Debra Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion* (2011); E. M. Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich* (2015); Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen Burnett, eds., *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (2016); Kati Ihnat, *Mother of Mercy, Bane of the Jews* (2016); Thomas Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews* (2017); and Kenneth Austin, *The Jews and the Reformation* (2020). Read more about the **ghetto** in Riccardo Calimani, *The Ghetto of Venice* (1987).

The books about the **Holocaust** recommended in *CH* issue 121 are all helpful. Most relevant here are Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross* (1996); Robert Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, eds., *Betrayal* (1999); Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus* (2008); Kevin Spicer, *Hitler's Priests* (2017) and (as ed.) *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust* (2007). In addition, look at David Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews* (2001); Maria Mazzenga, *American Religious Response to Kristallnacht* (2009);



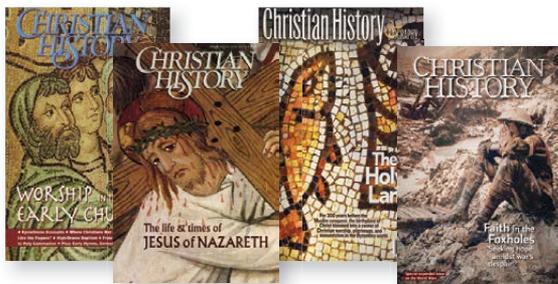
Christopher Probst, *Demonizing the Jews* (2012); and the famous Holocaust memoirs *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank (1952); *Night* by Elie Wiesel (1960); and *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom (1971). One survey of anti-Semitism throughout history is David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism* (2014).

On **Christian Zionism**, consult Yaakov Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel* (1991); Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon* (2004); Uri Bialer, *Cross on the Star of David* (2005); Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel* (2008); Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion* (2009); Donald Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism* (2010); Robert Smith, *More Desire than Our Own Salvation* (2013) and, as editor with Göran Gunner, *Comprehending Christian Zionism* (2014).

For **Messianic Judaism**, look at Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People* (2000) and *An Unusual Relationship* (2013); and David Rudolph and Joel Willitts, *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* (2013). Some books on **Jewish-Christian dialogue** include Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks With Jesus* (1993); Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, eds., *Jews and Christians* (2003); and Michael Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise* (2004).

Finally, **biographies** of some of the people in our gallery include Nahum Glatzer, ed., *Franz Rosenzweig* (1961); Ben Siegel, *The Controversial Sholem Asch* (1976); Marvin Lowenthal, translator, *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln* (1987); Fritz Rothschild, *Jewish Perspectives on Christianity* (1990); Jackie Wullschläger, *Chagall* (2008); Joel Kraemer, *Maimonides* (2010); Joseph Telushkin, *Rebbe* (2016); and Edward Kaplan, *Abraham Joshua Heschel* (2019).

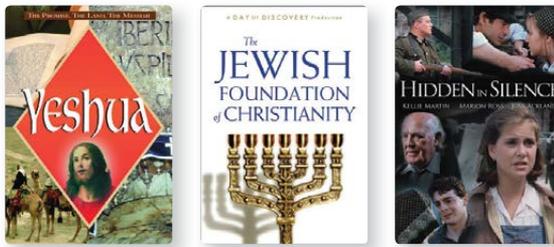
### CHRISTIAN HISTORY ISSUES



Read these related issues of *Christian History* on our website. Some are still available for purchase.

- 27 *Persecution in the Early Church*
- 37 *Worship in the Early Church*
- 40 *The Crusades*
- 43 *How We Got Our Bible*
- 59 *Jesus of Nazareth*
- 74 *Christians and Muslims*
- 97 *The Holy Land*
- 121 *Faith in the Foxholes*

### VIDEOS FROM VISION VIDEO

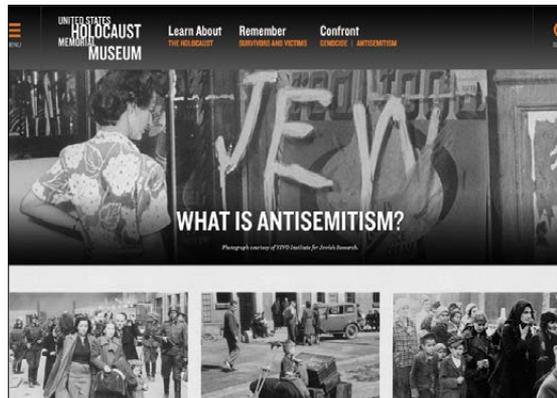


Videos on the theme of this issue include *The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler*, *The Cyrus Call*, *Hidden Heroes*, *The Forsaken Promise*, *Hidden in Silence*, *The Hiding Place*, *Jesus: The New Way*, *The Jewish Foundation of Christianity*, *The Jewish Roots of Christianity*, *Memory After Belsen*, *Passover*, *The Wannsee Conference*, and *Yeshua*.

### WEBSITES

Many writings of those featured in this issue who wrote prior to 1900 are available to read online or download for free at sites such as the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Project Gutenberg, and the Ancient History Sourcebook, the Medieval History Sourcebook, and the Modern History Sourcebook. The same site also hosts the Jewish History Sourcebook.

*The Jewish Encyclopedia* is an early 1900s publication which, for its time, is remarkably complete. [The Jewish Virtual Library](#) also contains a number of texts and articles. Both of these assume a Jewish audience. Many large scholarly libraries at universities have sites devoted to Jewish studies; although some resources are only open to their students and faculty, they often post online exhibits and bibliographies for the public. You can start by checking out resources at the University of Michigan, Yale, Harvard, and the University of Pennsylvania. "Digital Judaica" at the Association for Jewish Studies links to many other sites. Finally, the online sites of The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem: World Holocaust Remembrance Center are well worth consulting. 





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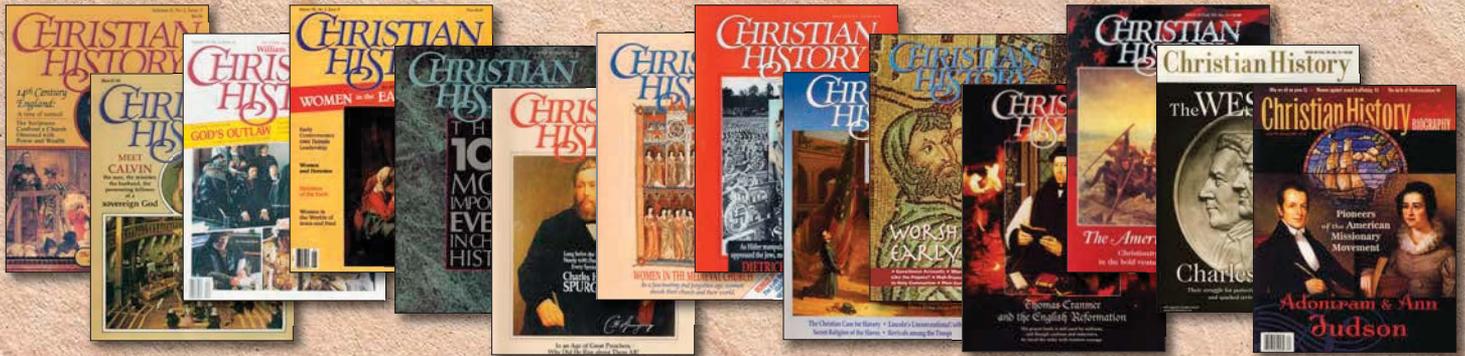


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