



# Adult Ed March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## The Holocaust

This class is not about history, though we have cited history in every class. Nor is it about Scripture, though I have quoted both old and New Testaments and Qur'an when the topic seemed to call for it. When we began this class I said that it would be a search for our identity. No discussion of Jewish identity would be complete without reference to the Holocaust. Yet it is a topic that I approach with some trepidation. So much has been said, so much written about the systematic destruction of the Jewish population of Europe that I am intimidated. What can I possibly add? I would not be satisfied with a recapitulation of facts and figures, with showing pictures or films of the atrocities. Yet what can be said that will be meaningful, that has not been said already?

I am going to offer a thesis to you. The series of events that began with Hitler's ascent to power in on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933 and continued through 1945 changed our self-perception of what it meant to be a Jew, changed the way that much of the world perceived Jews and to a lesser extent changed the way that humanity perceives itself.

As we explore this topic, bear in mind that, as we discussed in our first class, Jewish identity has been defined at times as belonging to a particular race, a nation, a religion and a culture. We also said that definitions of identity may be internal, how we define ourselves, or external, how others define us.

### Why "The" Holocaust?

There have been many holocausts. Many times one people have determined to make an end to another people. Why then do we single out this Shoah or calamity as "The" Holocaust?

It is not my intent to numb you with all humanity's crimes and horrors, but I do want to place the events of the Second World War in a context.

The term 'Genocide' was coined by a jurist named Raphael Lemkin in 1944 by combining the Greek word 'genos' (race) with the Latin word 'cide' (killing). Genocide as defined by the United Nations in 1948 means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, including: (a) killing members of the group (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The Bible records that the ancient Hebrew people were commanded to make an end to the Amalekites, so named because their chief was named Amalek. Amalek had fought with Moses at a place called Rephidim. The Lord spoke to Moses and said *“Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”* (Exodus 17:14) The final task would be given to the king, Saul, with the command *“Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”* (1 Sam. 15:2-3). Saul will falter in carrying out this task, perhaps sparing some of the livestock and a pregnant woman, and this will cost him his kingship.

This story of the “righteous” genocide of a people will stay with us. Haman of the Purim tale, who will attempt the destruction of the Jews living in Persia, is sometimes referred to as the “Agagite,” which is usually taken to mean that he was a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag. The Judge Samuel is quoted as saying to Agag *“As your sword bereaved women, so will your mother be bereaved among women.”* (Samuel 1:15:33). These same words will be repeated to Adolf Eichmann by Israeli president Itzhak Ben-Zvi in his letter turning down Eichmann's petition for mercy.

It is interesting to note that 3 of the 613 mitzvot of Orthodox Jews refer to the Amalekites: to remember what the Amalekites did to the Jews, to not forget what the Amalekites did to the Jews, and to destroy the Amalekites utterly. In the modern day, both Hitler and the Arabs have been referred to as Amalekites, the later reference coming from Rabi Israel Hess.

The destruction of the Amalekites is shrouded in the far past, if it happened. But the Armenian Holocaust is certainly will known and well documented. Between 1915 and 1917 between one million and one and a half million Armenians will be killed by the Ottoman Empire, in circumstances that Turkey still refuses to acknowledge as genocide.



**Figure 1 Turkish soldiers surround Armenian corpses.**

The images and methods are familiar. There were massacres and forced deportations under conditions designed to lead to the death of the deportees. Armenians were driven from their homes and forced to march for hundreds of miles, deprived of food and water, to the desert of what is now Syria. The Armenian Genocide is the first genocide of the twentieth century...but not the last.

In 1997 *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* chronicling the casualties the author associated with Communism. The book lists 20 million dead in the Soviet Union (this figure is HIGHLY DISPUTED, Rudolph Rummel author of *Lethal Politics* estimates the figure at closer to 62 million and provides what I consider a compelling series of arguments for his number), 65 million in China, 2 million still being discovered in the Killing Fields of Cambodia, 1.5 million in Afghanistan and so on. Almost 8 million died in the Ukraine from a famine, now widely regarded as intentional, between 1932 and 1933.

We still have not fully counted up the butcher's bill for more recent events, including Rwanda, Darfur and Bosnia.

There are many, many similarities between the killings in Soviet Russia and in Nazi Germany. Not only were Hitler and Stalin contemporaries and sometimes allies, but the Nazis clearly emulated the methods of the Communists. "Deportation to labor camps was invented and systemized by the Soviet regime. Nazism only imitated it- the word *Lager* (camp) is common to both the Russian and German languages. The first camps were opened in Russia in June, 1918, about 6 months after Lenin and his party seized power."<sup>1</sup>

In light of these other genocides and calamities, what is it that makes one holocaust "The Holocaust?"

There are several factors; first and foremost that Nazi Germany lost the war. The camps were liberated by invading armies, who documented what they saw. The USSR and Communist China never faced foreign tribunals. The Communists were able to keep their atrocities secret for decades.

The second factor has been an ongoing and conscious attempt by the world-wide Jewish community to keep the memory of the Shoah alive. The world-wide level of awareness of "the Holocaust" is far greater than that of any other genocide.

A third factor was that the genocide of the Jews by the Nazis cannot be completely understood outside of the context of two thousand years of murder, rape and atrocities targeted against the Jews specifically by the Christian world.

---

<sup>1</sup> Alain Besancon, *A Century of Horrors: Communism, Nazism and the Uniqueness of the Shoah*. (ISI Books, 2007 Page 5

## **The Reasons Behind the Holocaust**

The Holocaust could not have taken place as it did without a philosophical and religious context.

Just as we saw in our discussion of Islam, the refusal of the Jews to acknowledge Muhammad as a Prophet created a problem for Muslims. Muhammad's legitimacy in part rested on his fulfilling prophecies from the Old Testament. Muslims solved this dilemma by asserting that the prophecies were valid, but that the Jews willfully concealed them. Why did the Jews do this? The answer in the Koran was that it was because the Jews had turned from God and had become evil. A similar problem occurred in Christianity as the Jews refused to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah with a similar solution.

Reading Christian and pre-Christian writings, you can see the evolution of this idea. Around 110 CE Tacitus wrote of the Jews "This worship, however introduced, is upheld by its antiquity; all their other customs, which are at once perverse and disgusting, owe their strength to their very badness. The most degraded out of other races, scorning their national beliefs, brought to them their contributions and presents. This augmented the wealth of the Jews, as also did the fact, that among themselves they are inflexibly honest and ever ready to show compassion, though they regard the rest of mankind with all the hatred of enemies. They sit apart at meals, they sleep apart, and though, as a nation, they are singularly prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign women; among themselves nothing is unlawful. Circumcision was adopted by them as a mark of difference from other men."

No one would confuse Tacitus' words with praise, but he is criticizing the actions of the Jewish religion, while expressing at least a grudging admiration for the people themselves.

John Chrysostom (347 CE to circa 407 CE) is recognized as a Saint by the Orthodox, Eastern, Roman Catholic and other churches. He authored a series of eight sermons called *Adversus Judaeos* (lit: Against the Judaizers). Judaizers were Christians who had the belief that one must first become a Jew, including the rite of circumcision, before one could become a Christian.

"Wherever Christ-killers gather, the cross is ridiculed, God blasphemed, the Father unacknowledged, the Son insulted, the grace of the Spirit rejected. If the Jewish rites are holy and venerable, our way of life must be false."

These words were taken to heart. John Chrysostom writes the eight homilies in 386 CE; in 388 CE a Christian mob, incited by the local Bishop, burns down a synagogue in Callinicum. The Emperor Theodosius orders the synagogue restored at Christian expense. Ambrose of Milan (later Saint Ambrose) interrupts his liturgy in the Emperor's presence

with an ultimatum that he would not resume until the case is dropped. The Emperor backs down.

While John Chrysostom is one of the religious authors most cited by the Nazis, he was referring to the rites and practices of the Jews, not the Jews themselves. "Hate the sin, not the sinner." But that sentiment was not shared by everyone.

In a sermon entitled *On the Passover*, written in 167 CE, Melito of Sardis became the first person recorded as accusing the Jews of the crime **deicide**, the killing of the Son of God.

This accusation is drawn from the New Testament itself. John 8 44- 48 has Jesus saying to the people of Jerusalem "Your father is the devil and you choose to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and is not rooted in the truth: there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie he is speaking his own language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But I speak the truth and therefore you do not believe me. Which of you can prove me in the wrong? If what I say is true, why do you not believe me? He who has God for his father listens to the words of God. You are not God's children; that is why you do not listen."

The most damning passage comes from Mathew: "24 When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." 25 And all the people said, "His blood **shall be on us and on our children!**" 26 Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

The question arises as to when this was written and whether it was changed over time. The earliest dates for the Gospel of Mark are between 60 CE and 75 CE, with Matthew and Luke following over the next two decades. There are historical citations of some New Testament scriptures that support these dates. But the complete New Testament was probably not written until the third century, approximating the time of the council of Nicea.

We see here the foundations of recognizable anti-Semitism and the external definition of what it means to be a Jew. The Jews are an evil people, a wicked race. Collectively as a people, all Jews are guilty of killing Christ and the guilt would be passed down from generation to generation.

### **Setting the Stage**

A series of events spanning almost a millennium led to the Holocaust.

As we have discussed, the Second Diaspora in 136 CE deprived the Jews of their homeland. They migrated throughout the Roman Empire, into what would become European and Muslim lands, establishing settlements in virtually every land. Anti-

Semitic incidents occur, but not of the same degree or nature that they would take on in later days. Anti-Jewish laws are enacted and sometimes rescinded or ignored. Special taxes are levied targeting Jews, rescinded, reenacted, and so on. With the beginning of the Crusades, however, there is a definite change in the tone of violence toward Jews.

What changed? Several things led to the increase in violence. Rome was gone, the barbarian tribes had conquered and been converted to Christianity. The tribes had a different view of “outsiders” and were less interested in incorporating them into an empire. The Church itself had, to some degree, given up on the idea of converting the Jews. The perception of the Jews had changed. They were not just people of a different faith, they were a different kind of people.

Make no mistake, there had been a tremendous amount of violence directed toward the Jewish population of the Roman province that would become known as Palestine. Estimates of the number killed by the Romans in the razing of the city of Jerusalem range from 600,000 to over 1 million (Josephus.) Jews were crucified. But the Romans were punishing rebellion, not looking to exterminate the Jewish people.

The German Crusade of 1096 was a peasant Crusade, directed at Jewish communities in Germany. It was led by Godfrey of Bouillon, who had vowed “that he would not set out on the Crusade before avenging the blood of Christ...so that there might not remain alive a remnant among them.” This is generally regarded as the first *pogrom*.

Meanwhile, in the Holy Land, the Jews made common cause with the Muslims against the Crusaders. Jews fought alongside Muslims during the siege of Jerusalem. After the siege, the Crusaders would burn the main synagogue of the city. Jews defended the city of Haifa for a month, until the city fell.

There is some dispute as to how important these incidents were. R. I. Moore, in his novel *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, argues that the effect on Christians was huge, with their entire society gaining feelings of the need for separation from their Jewish neighbors, which in turn made it easier them to persecute further in the future. Other authors argue that it was the Jews would pull away.

Then began the expulsions of the Jews. In 1261, the Jews were expelled from Belgium. In 1290, 16,000 Jews were expelled from England. In 1306, and again, in 1394, France expels the Jews. 1492 and 1507 mark the Jewish expulsions from Spain and Portugal. As we will see later, even after the Jews were expelled from countries, people who would never meet Jews would still be indoctrinated with hatred toward Jews.

The Inquisition marks a half-way point in the shift in how Jews were regarded. Jews were forced to convert to Christianity, but even after conversion, they were still regarded as pigs.

The Jews were progressively being driven east, into Germany, Poland and the lands of Eastern Europe.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the plague known as the Black Death devastated Europe. Jews were blamed for the origin of the plague and for the spread of the disease.

In 1543, Martin Luther would write *Von den Juden und Ihren Lügen* a title that translates as “On the Jews and Their Lies” one of the most anti-Semitic diatribes ever written.

In an earlier work, *That Jesus Christ was born a Jew*, Luther advocated kindness toward the Jews, but only with the aim of converting them to Christianity: what was called *Judenmission*. When his offer was rejected, he turned hostile.

He argued that the Jews were no longer the chosen people, but were "the devil's people." They were "base, whoring people, that is, no people of God, and their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be accounted as filth." The synagogue was a "defiled bride, yes, an incorrigible whore and an evil slut ..." and Jews were full of the "devil's feces ... which they wallow in like swine." He advocated setting synagogues on fire, destroying Jewish prayerbooks, forbidding rabbis from preaching, seizing Jews' property and money, smashing up their homes, and ensuring that these "poisonous envenomed worms" be forced into labor or expelled "for all time." He even seemed to sanction murder, writing "We are at fault in not slaying them."

Hitler's hatred of the Jews was influenced by Martin Luther's *On the Jews and their Lies*. Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass, took place on 10 November — Luther's birthday. Hitler cites Martin Luther as a great man in *Mein Kampf*, right alongside Wagner and Frederick the Great. More importantly, Luther's works and the writings of others who viewed the Jews as an evil race explain why millions of otherwise sane people followed Hitler.



In 1648 Bohdan Khmelnytsky, the Hetman of the Zaporozhian Cossacks would lead a rebellion against the Poles in the Ukraine, pausing from his rebellion to wipe out half the Jews in the region, a number estimated at between 20,000 to 30,000. It was not unusual for the Polish landowners to hire Jews as bookkeepers or supervisors. Bohdan would tell the rebels that the Poles had sold them as slaves "into the hands of the accursed Jews." Sholem Asch recorded these events in his book *Al Kiddush Hashem: A Novel of 1648*. Until the Holocaust of the Nazi era, this was regarded as the single greatest catastrophe.

The Age of Enlightenment and the rise of nationalism in Europe brought mixed relief. Jews were often praised and reviled for the very same traits, such as adaptability and mercantile skills. In 1753, during the debate of the Jewish Naturalization Act which is often referred to as The Jew Bill, in England, the phrase “The Jewish Question” is used

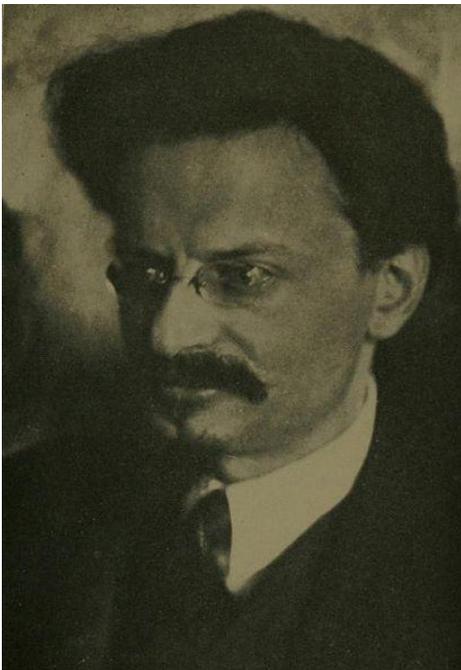
for the first time. This law was a reward to the Jewish community of England, which had shown particular loyalty to the crown during the Jacobite Rebellion. Under this law, which was repealed the following year, Jews could become naturalized citizens. The question was raised that, even if granted citizenship, would the Jews ever become a part of English society? The Jews lived in separate communities, with distinct lifestyles. How could they be amalgamated?

The repeal of this law in 1754 would so dishearten many of England's most prominent Jewish families, who were often of Sephardic descent and had fled to England from Catholic Spain and Portugal to avoid persecution, that they would disassociate themselves from their Jewish heritage.

Karl Marx, a Jew himself and the grandson of a rabbi, wrote in his infamous essay *The Jewish Question* written in 1843 "The social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from Judaism." In his mind, the Jews represented the worst evils of capitalism.

The Russian pogroms come in two waves, from 1881 to 1884 and again from 1903 to 1906. It is during this time (1903) that an agent of Tsar, Matvei Golovinski, plagiarizes a series of earlier works and publishes *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Elements were copied from the 1864 book *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu* (Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu), written by the French satirist Maurice Joly. Other parts are "inspired by" the 1868 book *Biarritz* by Hermann Goedsche, which contained a chapter entitled "The Jewish Cemetery in Prague and the Council of Representatives of the Twelve Tribes of Israel." In this work, the Devil appears between the representatives of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, who are plotting to take over the world and empower a Jewish King. Twenty-four protocols are listed as a blue-print for world domination to be given to a new Elder.

When progressive elements in 1905 Russia joined together to create a constitution and a parliament, the liberalization was blamed on the International Jewish Conspiracy. The Protocols reconcile how Jews could be both Communists and Capitalists at the same time.



In 1917, the Troika of Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky, whose Jewish name was Lev Davidovich Bronstein, seize power in Russia. Although he would later fall out of favor, initially Trotsky was second only to Lenin in authority. Trotsky was an example of how Communism was part of the International Jewish conspiracy.

That same year, the Balfour Declaration is written. During World War I, five battalions of Jewish troops from all over the world had fought in support of the British against the Ottoman Empire, an ally of Germany. The 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion was

comprised almost entirely of Jews from the US and Canada. The Balfour Declaration was made in recognition of these efforts

“Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood 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".  
I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

When Hitler sought to explain Germany's defeat during World War I, he would cling to the “stab in the back” theory. Germany would have won the war had the Jews and the Communists not stabbed the Germans in the back.

All the pieces are now in place. The Jews are an evil race, their hands stained with the blood of Christ. Their religion is only one manifestation of their evil. Even were Jews to convert, their evil would still remain. Proof of this can be drawn from the New Testament and from the Jewish practice of living apart. Jews are plotting to take over the world and both Communism and Capitalism are parts of that plot. Jews are responsible for Germany's loss of World War I and their actions may be construed as an attack on Germany. Any actions that Germany takes in the future are accordingly justified.

### **A Tale of Two Tyrants**

There is an almost seamless transition from the atrocities of Nazi Germany to the atrocities of Soviet Russia. Indeed, on more than one occasion, survivors of the Nazi concentration camps who fled East were incarcerated in the camps of the Soviet Union.

*Hitler's Willing Executioners, Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen is a wonderful and scholarly treatment on the attitudes of Germans participating in the Holocaust. His basic gist is that ordinary Germans not only cooperated in the Holocaust, they were zealous to the point of exceeding their orders. When ordered to kill, they would also torture, degrade and let no opportunity for abuse pass. Even when Himmler ordered the cessation of killing at the end of the war, soldiers disobeyed these orders.

Goldhagen's explanation for this hatred was that anti-Semitism had been growing ever more virulent in Germany for over 100 years. Voices crying out for expulsion of the Jews had now embraced extermination of the Jews. Jews were not defined as a religion, they were a race. Conversion would not be sufficient. The racial traits would remain. All that was necessary to start the conflagration was a spark.

Adolf Hitler was the spark. Hitler had been raised a Catholic. His own feelings about religion were ambiguous if not conflicted. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote that Jesus "made no secret of his attitude toward the Jewish people, and when necessary he even took the whip to drive from the temple of the Lord this adversary of all humanity, who then as always saw in religion nothing but an instrument for his business existence. In return, Christ was nailed to the cross." But elsewhere he expressed views hardly in keeping with tradition. "My feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter. It points me to the man who once in loneliness, surrounded by a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them and who, God's truth! was greatest not as a sufferer but as a fighter."

At the Nuremberg trials, it was disclosed that some of the Nazis planned to end Christianity after the war was over. The Nazis planned to infiltrate churches and use defamation, arrest and assault or the killing of pastors plus the re-education of church congregations. They intended to replace Christianity with a more aggressive religion or at least a more aggressive version of Christianity. But during the war they were not above taking advantage of Christian anti-Semitism to provide a veneer of legitimacy. Hitler said "Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."

There were many atheists in the Nazi Party, but Hitler rejected atheism because that was an attribute of the Communists. It is ironic to note that Stalin, whose atheism led Hitler to oppose it, was, as a young child, was educated at the Gori Church School and would later, at age 16, enroll at the Georgian Orthodox Seminary. He, along with twenty other students, would be expelled from the school in 1899 for revolutionary activities.

Like Hitler, Stalin's relationship with Christianity would be complex. After continuous persecution during the 1930's the Russian Orthodox Church was almost destroyed. But during World War II the church was revived as a patriotic institution. A new metropolitan was installed, who was an NKVD agent, and thousands of parishes were allowed to reopen.

Stalin initially opposed anti-Semitism, perhaps because he viewed it as a trait of the Nazis. But after World War II, beginning in 1948, Stalin launched a number of "anti-Zionist" campaigns. Whether you call it anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism, the victims were still Jews. But the definition of Jewishness had changed from a racial one to a national and political one.

Hitler's vision for the German people was based on racial purity. At one of spectrum were the pure Aryans, and at the polar opposite were the Jews. In Hitler's mind and the minds of his millions of followers the quality of Jewishness was genetic. Hitler himself was as far from the idealized, blonde haired, blue-eyed *ubermensch* as one could possibly be. He was the illegitimate son of a customs official, Alois Hitler, who married his half niece. Adolf was conceived before the marriage and he was not allowed to take his father's name until he was 39. Instead, he was Adolf Schicklgruber until well into

adulthood. One can argue that his vision of the Aryan superman was his way of compensating for what he himself lacked.

Stalin also came from humble beginnings. Born Ioseb Vissarionovich Jugashvili, his father Beso was a shoemaker and was considered affluent for their own in Georgia. Beso also became an alcoholic who abandoned his family because young Ioseb went to school. As a boy, Stalin became ill with smallpox, which left his face scarred. At age 10, Stalin was struck by a carriage, permanently damaging his left arm. His party name, Stalin, meaning “made of steel” is almost ironic.

Stalin’s persecution of the Jews is at least ostensibly based on political ideology, not racial or religious hatred. In 1946, Nikita Khrushchev, then the first secretary of Communist party of Ukraine, closes many synagogues (the number declines from 450 to 60) and prevents Jewish refugees from returning to their homes: "It is not in our interests that the Ukrainians should associate the return of the Soviet power with the return of the Jews." In 1952, we have “The Night of the Murdered Poets.” Thirteen of the most prominent Soviet Yiddish writers, poets, actors and other intellectuals were executed. In 1953, the Doctor’s Plot leveled false accusations against Jewish doctors in the USSR. Scores of Soviet Jews dismissed from their jobs, arrested, some executed.

The transition from Nazi anti-Semitism to Soviet anti-Semitism is clearest in East Germany, where former Nazi speech writers are brought out and told to substitute the words Zionist or Israel for Jew.

### **Christian Cooperation with the Nazis and European Opposition**

People from all over Europe cooperated with the Nazis. Some of the cooperators were in fear of their lives, others cooperated more willingly. Opposition was confined in large measure to individuals, such as Schindler. By and large, in Poland, France, the Ukraine, when the order was given to round up the Jews, people complied. They may not have agreed with the methods, but in general they agreed with the goal of “getting rid of” the Jews.

The attitude of Americans was different. Even supporters of Nazi ideas, such as Charles Lindbergh, were repelled by the violence when they saw it. We don’t have the same history of anti-Semitism to support hatred.

In 1933, the Vatican signed the Reichskonkordat. At this time, Hitler was the Chancellor. The Concordat guaranteed the German government freedom from clerical interference in all areas of politics. It also ensured the bishops' loyalty to the state by an oath and required all priests to be Germans and subject to German superiors.

Eugenio Pacelli, who would become Pope Pius XII, would emerge as an outspoken critic of Hitler. As early as 1925, he described Hitler as a violent man who would “walk over corpses” to get what he wanted. Pope Pius XII also raised his voice to speak out against anti-Semitism. “The Holy See is obligated to protect the Jewish people against unjust

vexations and...particularly condemns unreservedly hatred against the people once chosen by God; the hatred that commonly goes by the name anti-Semitism.”

But Pius never refused the Nazis communion or used excommunication as a tool. He said that his primary goal was to save lives and that it would be far more effective to work behind the scenes, hiding Jewish refugees, baptizing them when necessary, and issuing false papers.

World War II would mark a change in attitude on the part of the church toward Jews. Individual Catholics had cooperated with the Nazis or been Nazis, yet the Church after the war regarded their activities as sinful.

### **The Aftermath**

The Holocaust could not have taken place if the definition of Jews as a race was not widely accepted throughout Europe and to a lesser degree in the United States. Confronted with the grim images of the death camps, most of the world has rejected that definition.

The destruction of European Jewry left the United States as the nation with the largest Jewish population. In the United States Jewishness has always been perceived as a religion or a culture. (There are of course exceptions.)

By and large the surviving Jewish population of Europe would migrate to either Israel or the United States. There are about 1.5 million Jews remaining in Europe today. France, with just under 500 thousand Jews has the largest Jewish population.

Before the Holocaust, Jews were a race. This definition was not just external, coming from non-Jews like the Christians, Jews defined Jewishness based on parentage or “birthright.” After the Holocaust, we have Judaism defined as religion (belief), a culture and nationality.

Anti-Zionism is often very close to anti-Semitism and sometimes a thin disguise for anti-Semitism. But the truth is that people are complex. One can be anti-Zionist and not anti-Semitic.

Take John Hagee, the contemporary Christian Evangelist and supporter of John McCain. On one hand he says “Adolf Hitler attended a Catholic school as a child and heard all the fiery anti-Semitic rantings from Chrysostom to Martin Luther. When Hitler became a global demonic monster, the Catholic Church and Pope Pius XII never, ever slightly criticized him. Pope Pius XII, called by historians 'Hitler's Pope,' joined Hitler in the infamous Concordat of Collaboration, which turned the youth of the [sic] Germany over to Nazism, and the churches became the stage background for the bloodthirsty cry, 'Pereat Judea'. (Latin for “Down With Judea.”)In all of his [Hitler's] years of absolute brutality, he was never denounced or even scolded by Pope Pius XII or any Catholic leader in the world. To those Christians who believe that Jewish hearts will be warmed by

the sight of the cross, please be informed—to them it's an electric chair.” (John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown*.)

On the other hand Hagee says “It was the disobedience and rebellion of the Jews, God's chosen people, to their covenantal responsibility to serve only the one true God, Jehovah, that gave rise to the opposition and persecution that they experienced beginning in Canaan and continuing to this very day... Their own rebellion had birthed the seed of anti-Semitism that would arise and bring destruction to them for centuries to come.... it rises from the judgment of God upon his rebellious chosen people.” Hagee’s sources and support for this assertion are the Old Testament and the Siddur.

We are going to end with only a partial conclusion. Jewish identity, both external and self-defined, changed dramatically during and after the years of the Holocaust. It has become less racial, more religious, cultural and national. Diversity in religious practice has increased. Cultural Judaism has gained more acceptance. For good or ill, Judaism is identified with Israel and Zionism. There are more choices available to Jews. Can it change back? Possibly.

## **Bibliography**

*The Years of Extermination*, Saul Friedlander, Harper Collins, 2007

*Among the Righteous*, Robert Satloff, BBS Publishers, 2006

*A Century of Horrors*, Alain Besancon, ISI Books, 2007

*Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, Alfred A. Knopf, 1996

## **Web References**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Holocaust#Wannsee\\_Conference\\_and\\_the\\_Final\\_Solution\\_281942.E2.80.931945.29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust#Wannsee_Conference_and_the_Final_Solution_281942.E2.80.931945.29)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian\\_Genocide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Genocide)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Black\\_Book\\_of\\_Communism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Black_Book_of_Communism)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet\\_famine\\_of\\_1932-1934](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_famine_of_1932-1934)

<http://freedomspace.blogspot.com/2005/04/how-many-did-stalin-really-murder.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Chrysostom#Sermons\\_on\\_Jews\\_and\\_Judaizing\\_Christians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Chrysostom#Sermons_on_Jews_and_Judaizing_Christians)

<http://lesliemorrell.com/papers/Chr.pdf>

<http://www.sonoma.edu/users/g/goodman/lowe.htm#anti>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Jews\\_and\\_the\\_Crusades](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_and_the_Crusades)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\\_Crusade%2C\\_1096](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Crusade%2C_1096)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohdan\\_Khmelnysky#Khmelnysky\\_in\\_Jewish\\_history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohdan_Khmelnysky#Khmelnysky_in_Jewish_history)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_antisemitism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_antisemitism) (RECOMMENDED)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Jerusalem\\_\(70\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(70))

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew#Significant\\_geographic\\_populations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew#Significant_geographic_populations)