

# The Guilt of Christianity

## Towards the Jewish People

After the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed, the question was raised: How could it have happened? The shocking truth is that the Holocaust was the culmination of centuries of hatred and violent persecution, often inspired by Christian theology.

I feel deeply convicted as a Christian but also as a German, for as early as the Middle Ages Jews were mercilessly killed by the thousand in German cities. Mother Basilea Schlink, founder of our community in Darmstadt, Germany, writes movingly in her book *Israel, My Chosen People* of how those who attack God's people attack Him, for Israel is the apple of His eye.

Considering the atrocities committed against the Jews in the name of Christ throughout much of Christianity's 2000-year history, how can we celebrate the millennium without first expressing our deep sorrow over the past in a spirit of repentance? By our unchristian attitude and behaviour we have brought shame upon the name of Jesus, making it offensive to His own people, the Jews ... And so today it is our prayer that Christians all over the world will be inspired to commemorate the millennium with a service of repentance in a spirit of unity, acknowledging our common Christian heritage.

Drawn from Christian and Jewish historical sources in English and German, the following is a brief résumé of the horrific history of Christianity's dealings with the Jews — dealings which paved the way for the Holocaust.

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## How It All Began

In the Early Church, Jews and Gentiles were gathered round Jesus as one body, the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile having been broken down. They were one flock with one Shepherd. Later on, the situation changed. More Gentiles entered the Christian community so that the ratio of Gentiles to Jews steadily grew. Then, by and by, the Jews who had not yet entered the Christian fold, were regarded no longer as brothers in the belief in the one revealed God, but as aliens, even enemies. In spite of all the difficulties and struggles that arose, there would have been every reason to have been humbly and lovingly disposed towards them, considering that it was from them that we have received the law and the prophets and the Lord Jesus. It is not without reason that the Apostle Paul exhorts us who believe in Christ not to adopt a superior attitude towards the Jews but to remain humbly aware that the Jews are the root of the tree. They bear us, not we them, for we are only grafted in (Romans 11). But the evil one succeeded in luring the Christian Church away from this humble, brotherly attitude when, in self-glory, she appropriated all the graces and promises meant for Israel, thereby expunging Israel from God's redemptive history.<sup>1</sup>

## Theology and a Stolen Birthright

It was after the age of the apostles that those other elements of imagined superiority crept into Christian teaching, stealing Israel's birthright. The so-called Letter of Barnabas (dated late first century or early second) spiritualised the Old Testament, claiming that it only prefigured Christ and the Church:

Do not add to your sins and say that the covenant is both theirs and ours. Yes! It is ours; but they thus lost it forever.<sup>2</sup>

This, plus similar sentiments contained in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (70-107 AD), gave rise to the theory that the Church is the New Israel.<sup>3</sup> Later the Emperor Constantine was to declare that the land of Israel no longer belonged to the Jewish people. From that time forward, he said, it belonged to the Christian Church.<sup>4</sup> All this is simply Replacement or Covenant Theology<sup>5</sup> in embryo. Gaining especial momentum between the 1400s and 1700s, it is with us to this day.

After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70 AD) and the Bar Kokba Revolt (132-135 AD), Judaism did not disappear but regained its vitality and influence. Consequently, the argument that the Church had replaced Israel was no longer convincing. Moreover, as the struggle between Christians and Jews to win converts among the pagans intensified, Judaism was seen as a threat to the Church. To counter this threat, Christian theology tried to create a non-Jewish Jesus.<sup>6</sup> The strangest proofs (ranging from Abraham's faith to the promise given to Adam) were cited, all with a view to supporting the argument that the Church not only predates Israel, but is, in fact, 'eternal Israel' (Tertullian).<sup>7</sup>

The dangers of such a mentality are evident from the Third Reich when Hitler, seeking to win over the Christians, promoted an Aryan, or non-Jewish, Christ.

Next, the Jews were accused of deicide (the crime of killing God). Although Matthew 20:18-19 and Acts 4:26-28 clearly state that the Gentiles were also to blame for Jesus' crucifixion, the theory of exclusive Jewish guilt and punishment came into vogue. The 'tribulations were justly imposed upon you, for you have murdered the Just One' (Justin c.100-165).<sup>8</sup> Third-century Christian theologians, including Hippolytus and Origen, elaborated on this theory. In the fourth century it was to dominate Christian thinking.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, as 'ordinary' Christians continued to mix with Jews or even visit the synagogues, Church leaders, fearful of losing their flock, increased their verbal attacks, in order to inspire fear and revulsion of Judaism.<sup>10</sup>

Chrysostom (344-407), whose name means 'golden mouth', denounced the Jews in the strongest language: 'most miserable of all men' — 'lustful, rapacious, greedy, perfidious bandits' — 'inveterate murderers, destroyers, men possessed by the devil' — 'debauchery and drunkenness have given them the manners of the pig and the lusty goat' — 'pests of the universe' — 'they have surpassed the ferocity of wild beasts, for they murder their offspring.'<sup>11</sup>

But far more damaging was the theology this highly esteemed Church Father developed concerning the fate of the Jews as a result of their deicide. For this crime, he maintained, there is 'no expiation

possible, no indulgence, no pardon'; their 'odious assassination of Christ' was the origin of all their woes.<sup>12</sup>

'God hates you.' These words of Chrysostom popularized Jew-hatred for centuries to come. Thus, to quote one historian: 'The popular Christian doctrine has always been that anyone, whether pagan or Christian, who has at any time persecuted, tortured or massacred Jews has acted as an instrument of Divine wrath.'<sup>13</sup>

Chrysostom's contemporary, Augustine (354-430), though more restrained, was ambivalent. While reaffirming Paul's attitude that we have a duty to love the Jews, he shared the view of other Church Fathers that Judas was the image of the Jewish people. From Augustine came the theory that the Jews are a witness-people destined to live as testimony to both evil and Christian truth, but who were not to be killed, for like Cain they bore a sign.<sup>14</sup> 'Let them live among us, but let them suffer and be continually humiliated' (Augustine).<sup>15</sup> The witness-people theory was later misused by many as a pretext for increasing the misery of Jews, short of taking their lives.

## From Theology to Law

After Christianity became officially recognized under Constantine in the fourth century, theology was translated into government policy, and the Synagogue came under repressive measures.<sup>16</sup> Under Emperor Justinian I (483-565) many laws protecting Jewish religious and civil rights were abolished and restrictions imposed.<sup>17</sup> Later, in the seventh century, for political purposes the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius imposed forced baptism upon the Jews in order to ensure unity within his realm.<sup>18</sup> This practice was to be repeated elsewhere with devastating results in following centuries.<sup>19</sup>

## The Middle Ages

In medieval society, the close link between Church and State meant that the seeds of Christian anti-Semitism, already sown, yielded terrible fruits.

## The Crusades

The year 1096 ushered in a period of viciously cruel harassment unique in Jewish history in terms of duration: the Crusades.<sup>20</sup>

Great, ill-organized hordes of nobles, knights, monks, and peasants — ‘God wills it’ on their lips as they set off to free the Holy Land from the Muslim infidel — suddenly turned on the Jews ... One chronicler, Guibert of Nogent (1053-1124), reported the crusaders of Rouen as saying: ‘We desire to combat the enemies of God in the East; but we have under our eyes the Jews, a race more inimical to God than all the others. We are doing this whole thing backwards.’<sup>21</sup>

Approximately a quarter to one-third of the entire Jewish population in Germany and northern France was murdered during the First Crusade.<sup>22</sup>

In Jerusalem the Jews fled from the Crusaders, locking themselves in the main synagogue, where all 969 were burnt to death. Outside, the Crusaders, who believed they were avenging the death of Christ, sang, *Christ, We Adore Thee*, holding their Crusader crosses aloft. Earlier that day, as the Crusaders ran over the mutilated bodies of those slaughtered, one leader, Raymond of Aguilers, quoted Psalm 118:24: ‘This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.’ The Crusaders intended to make Jerusalem a Christian city.<sup>23</sup>

### Doomed to Perpetual Servitude

During the first two Crusades German Jews appealed to the crown for help. In return for royal protection they were made ‘serfs of the Imperial Chamber’. Required to pay vast sums for this privilege, the Jews eventually became a very real source of royal revenue. As the king’s property, they could be — and were — bought, loaned and sold, to pay off creditors.<sup>24</sup> The custom spread to other countries. Church leaders justified this status theologically on the basis of earlier Church teaching that the Jews were doomed to perpetual servitude for having crucified Christ.<sup>25</sup>

Other factors, too, contributed to the demeaning of the Jews. Banned from most professions and the guilds which permitted only Christian membership, Jews were virtually forced into money-lending as out-

siders in feudal society. Rather like a sponge, they would soak up the floating capital in the country, only to be periodically squeezed by the exchequer.<sup>26</sup> Though frowning on Christians practising usury, the Church would borrow money from Jews to build cathedrals and churches.<sup>27</sup> The negative image of the Jewish money-lender was later immortalized in Shakespeare’s Shylock and Dickens’ Fagin.<sup>28</sup>

Sadly, the protection for which the Jews paid such a high price did not always materialize. Sometimes economic motives also lay behind the massacre of Jews. At the time of the Third Crusade one of the most tragic anti-Jewish riots in England occurred in York.<sup>29</sup>

There, Crusaders, before setting out to follow their King, plundered the possessions of the Jews, who fled into the royal castle where they were besieged by the warriors — many of whom were deeply in debt to their quarry. The climax was reached when a stone, thrown from the castle, killed a monk whose custom it was to celebrate Mass outside the castle every morning and urge the people to ‘destroy the enemies of Christ’. When the Jews saw the fury of the besiegers and felt their fate to be sealed, they took their own lives, cutting one another’s throats. When the mobs gained access to the tower, the few Jews left, who begged for baptism and deliverance, were slaughtered. The total casualties have been estimated variously from 500 to 1500. From this scene of carnage, the attackers converged on the cathedral and burned all the records of financial obligations to the Jews kept in its archives.<sup>30</sup>

Writing in 1135, the French scholar Pierre Abelard has the Jew in *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian* speak these words:

No nation has ever suffered so much for God. Dispersed among all nations, without king or secular ruler, the Jews are oppressed with heavy taxes as if they had to repurchase their very lives every day. To mistreat the Jews is considered a deed pleasing to God. Such imprisonment as is endured by the Jews can be conceived by the Christians only as a sign of God’s utter wrath. The life of the Jews is in the hands of their worst enemies. Even in their sleep they are plagued by nightmares. Heaven is their

only place of refuge. If they want to travel to the nearest town, they have to buy protection with the high sums of money from the Christian rulers who actually wish for their death so that they can confiscate their possessions. The Jews cannot own land or vineyards because there is nobody to vouch for their safekeeping. Thus, all that is left them as a means of livelihood is the business of money-lending, and this in turn brings the hatred of Christians upon them.<sup>31</sup>

## Vilification

Though opposed to mass murder of Jews, France's Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) declared that they were 'a race who had not God for their father, but were of the devil'. Following the custom of theologians of his day, he had taken a scripture (John 8:44) and applied it to the whole Jewish people for all time. Centuries later Nazi leader Julius Streicher carried this further, recommending 'the extermination of that people whose father is the devil'.<sup>32</sup>

## Scapegoat

An early example of the scapegoat theory occurred in 1021 when Pope Benedict VIII had Jews executed, blaming them for a hurricane and an earthquake.<sup>33</sup>

When the Black Death (1347-1350) broke out in Europe, the Jews were held responsible: they had poisoned the wells. In southern France, northern Spain, Switzerland, Bavaria, Rhineland, eastern Germany, Belgium, Poland and Austria the charge was believed — and over 200 Jewish communities throughout Europe were destroyed. The extent of the tragedy can best be gauged by the reported 10,000 casualties in Poland — where the Jews escaped comparatively lightly. Considerably more than 10,000 were killed in three German towns (Erfurt, Mainz and Breslau) alone.<sup>34</sup>

## Ritual Murder

Originating in antiquity, the charge of ritual murder was first levelled against Jews by Christians in twelfth-century England. Jews were said to kill Christian children, often before Easter, for ritual purposes. These fabrications, known as the Blood Libel, which made a cult of the supposed victims, were to take a toll of thousands of lives throughout

Europe.<sup>35</sup> The tale of little Hugh of Lincoln was incorporated in Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale*.<sup>36</sup> Between 1880 and 1945 the ritual-murder lie was widespread in central Eastern Europe, among both Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians.<sup>37</sup> The Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer* regularly featured rabbis sucking the blood of German children.<sup>38</sup>

## The Host-Desecration

A similar accusation was that the Jews desecrated the sacred elements in Holy Communion (the Host) in an attempt to crucify Jesus anew.<sup>39</sup>

In 1298 the host-desecration accusation caused Röttingen's entire Jewish community to be burned at the stake. Their attackers went on to massacre Jews elsewhere in Germany and also in Austria. According to estimates, 100,000 were murdered, and some 140 Jewish communities decimated.<sup>40</sup>

In Prague, in 1389, a priest carrying a wafer host was accidentally sprayed with sand by Jewish children at play. As a result 3000 Jews were massacred.<sup>41</sup>

## The Badge of Shame

In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council, called by Pope Innocent III, decreed that, on the basis of Numbers 15:37-41, Jews should wear distinctive dress (a restriction also applied to Saracens and later to heretics, prostitutes and lepers).<sup>42</sup> In addition, a distinctive mark was imposed on their clothing — centuries before the Nazis' Yellow Star — the badge of shame, the shape and colour of which varied from country to country. The badge of shame made Jews social outcasts, exposing them to both physical and verbal abuse.<sup>43</sup>

## Forced Baptism

This expression, denoting baptism chosen as an alternative to death or exile, became a big issue in medieval Spain. In 1391, when some 50,000 Jews died in riots instigated by the preaching of Ferrand

Martinez, an archdeacon in Seville, several times that number were baptized, including many rabbis.<sup>44</sup> Forced baptism, however, created a problem, since many of the converts still practised their former faith secretly, while others compromised for personal advantage; both groups were called *marranos*, meaning ‘swine’.<sup>45</sup>

## Obsession with Purity of Blood

In Spain anti-Semitism as well as *anti-marranism* grew alarmingly. The notion arose that hereditary Jewishness or *mala sangre* (bad blood) was the problem, a problem which not even baptism could alter. Spanish racism, the obsession with pure blood, was born.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, racism was the basis of the Nazis’ Aryan Paragraph and Nuremberg Laws, barring Jews from public office and denying them German citizenship.<sup>47</sup>

## The Spanish Inquisition

In 1480 King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain established a tribunal to purge the Church of those who clandestinely clung to their Jewish faith. Wholesale arrests followed. In 1481 the first victims were burnt at the stake.<sup>48</sup> Over the years an estimated 30,000 *marranos* were consigned to the flames. The Spanish Inquisition had a long history (from the fifteenth century until the threshold of the nineteenth)<sup>49</sup> and a wide geographical reach, spreading with all its well-documented atrocities to Latin America.

## Expulsions

Jews have been expelled from nearly every country in which they have resided.<sup>50</sup>

In 1290 the Jews were expelled from England. Sixteen thousand left for France and Belgium, some to meet with death on the way.<sup>51</sup>

There were repeated expulsions of Jews from France and Germany.

Ferdinand and Isabella expelled all Jews from Spain in 1492 in order to consolidate their Christian realm. Many of the 300,000 refugees fled to Portugal. There they were permitted to stay for a few months,

but at a price. Afterwards they were temporarily enslaved by King John II (1481–1495), then — freed by his successor — brutally and forcibly baptised.<sup>52</sup>

## Carnivals

Jewish sufferings were often a highlight of pre-Lenten carnivals.

In medieval Rome the weakest member of the Jewish community would be thrust naked into a nail-spiked barrel and rolled down the hill to his death, his fellow-Jews forced to watch his martyrdom.<sup>53</sup>

At the time of the Counter Reformation, Jews in Rome, especially fattened for the occasion, were pelted with mud by the crowds — ‘as the faithless deserve’ — and made to run naked through the streets of the carnival in the icy cold and rain.<sup>54</sup>

## The Reformation

Martin Luther (1483-1546) originally favoured the Jews in the hope that they would accept his form of the faith, even praising their contribution to Christianity. However, when he did not succeed in converting the Jews, his attitude changed dramatically.

All the blood kindred of Christ burn in hell, and they are rightly served, even according to their own words they spoke to Pilate ...

Verily a hopeless, wicked, venomous and devilish thing is the existence of these Jews, who for fourteen hundred years have been, and still are, our pest, torment and misfortune. They are just devils and nothing more.<sup>55</sup>

In the tract *Concerning the Jews and Their Lies* (published 1542) Luther wrote:

Firstly, their synagogues should be set on fire ... Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed ... Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayer-books and Talmuds ... Fourthly, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more ... Fifthly, passport and travelling privileges should be absolutely forbidden to the Jews ...

Sixthly, they ought to be stopped from usury ... Seventhly, let the young and strong Jews and Jewesses be given the flail, the axe, the hoe, the spade, the distaff, and spindle, and let them earn their bread by the sweat of their noses ... We ought to drive the rascally lazy bones out of our system ... Therefore away with them ...

To sum up, dear princes and nobles who have Jews in your domains, if this advice of mine does not suit you, then find a better one so that you and we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden — the Jews.<sup>56</sup>

In a sermon shortly before his death he called for the immediate expulsion of all Jews from Germany.<sup>57</sup>

Later, Luther's anti-Semitic teachings were to be applied literally in the Third Reich.

## Ghettos

The Renaissance popes had been fairly liberal in their treatment of Jews in Italy, but the Counter-Reformation, especially with Pope Paul IV (1555-1559) at the helm, brought an abrupt change in attitude.<sup>58</sup> In the second half of the sixteenth century ghettos were introduced, firstly in Italy and then in the Austrian Empire. The ghetto was considered an additional demonstration of the error of Judaism: 'A Jewish ghetto is a better proof of the truth of the religion of Jesus Christ than a whole school of theologians' (G. B. Roberti, eighteenth century).<sup>59</sup>

## The Modern Era

By the modern era Christian anti-Semitism was so deeply entrenched that it shaped the attitudes of ordinary people, regardless of Christian tradition or political persuasion.

The taunt 'Christ-killers' continued to be hurled at Jews. A young child who, in 1921, fled with his family from Kiev to Poland, later recalled the first Polish sentence he had been taught: 'The Jews killed Christ.'

## Caught in the Middle

Poland was once a haven for German Jews fleeing from the Crusades, the Black Death and repeated massacres.<sup>60</sup> But then the situation was complicated by Polish-Ukrainian relationships. As Eastern Orthodox Christians oppressed by Polish Catholics, the Ukrainians came to resent particularly the Jewish middlemen acting on behalf of the hated Poles. When in 1648 Eastern Orthodox Cossacks from the Ukraine devastated Poland, the Jews were singled out for special cruelties.<sup>61</sup>

An eye-witness reported:

Some were flayed alive and their skins were tossed to the dogs as meat. Others were severely wounded and then thrown onto the streets ... Others were buried alive. Babes in their mothers' arms were stabbed to death ... Large numbers of Jewish children were thrown into the water in order to make the fords more level.<sup>62</sup>

Other atrocities are unmentionable.

During the Swedish invasion of 1655-1658, Polish Jews were again, so to speak, caught in the crossfire. They were attacked in turn by Russians, Cossacks and Swedes and, after their departure, by the Poles themselves on the grounds that they had aided the invaders.<sup>63</sup>

In Poland, from 1648-1658, until then perhaps the bloodiest decade in Jewish history since biblical times, some 100,000 to 500,000 Jews were murdered, and 700 Jewish communities destroyed. Refugees fled in droves to other European countries.<sup>64</sup>

In Russia, during the civil war between the White and Red Armies (1918-1920), Jews were attacked by both sides — by the White Army as revolutionaries and by the Red Army as bourgeois oppressors.

## Assimilation

In the wake of Jewish emancipation in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Jews' new status was not welcomed by all. In Germany anti-Semitism took on racist features in reaction to the move towards Jewish assimilation.

In 1819 one pamphleteer went so far as to propose massacres, castrations, and consignment of Jewesses to prostitution. These

extravagances moved Graetz — no friend of Catholicism — to state: ‘Protestant theology and German philosophy proposed regulations against Jews unrivalled by the canonical restrictions of Innocent III and Paul IV.’<sup>65</sup>

## The Dreyfus Affair

When in France, in 1894, a French Jewish officer, Alfred Dreyfus, was accused of spying, a wave of extreme anti-Semitism was unleashed — and that in one of the most civilized countries in the world, and the first in Europe to grant emancipation to the Jews. In the end Dreyfus was exonerated, but not before the affair scandalized the world and rocked the French government, leaving behind much bitterness towards Jews. One of its legacies was the Vichy regime, which collaborated with the Nazis.<sup>66</sup>

## Oppression

With the partition of Poland in the late eighteenth century, Russia became governor of the largest body of Jews in the world. Catherine II restricted Jews to the newly won provinces, now called the ‘Pale of Settlement’. At the same time she invited foreigners, excluding Jews, to settle in Central Russia.<sup>67</sup> Under Nicholas I (1825-1855) the situation for the Jews worsened. Military conscription began at age 12 for Jewish youths and could be extended up to 25 years. They were sent to remote areas. Every method was employed, including torture and verbal abuse, to make them renounce their faith and accept Christianity.<sup>68</sup>

After Russia, Romania at that time was the greatest oppressor of Jews. Its population of 200,000 Jews suffered in conditions similar to those in the worst days of the Middle Ages.<sup>69</sup>

## Pogroms

During the reign of Czar Alexander III, Russia’s first major pogrom began at Easter 1881 and spread to a hundred Jewish communities. The czar’s anti-Semitic adviser intended to solve the Jewish problem by causing a third to emigrate, a third to die, and a third to disappear (i.e. to be converted).<sup>70</sup> Pogroms and accompanying mass emigrations

continued under Czar Nicholas II (1894-1917), who regarded the Jews as Christ-killers ... Even after World War II, pogroms occurred in Poland, despite the horrors of the Holocaust and the greatly decimated Jewish population.<sup>71</sup>

## The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

First appearing in 1905 in czarist Russia, this anti-Semitic propaganda charged the Jews with conspiring to conquer the world. Translated into many languages after World War I, it made a lasting impact on the twentieth century, even after being exposed as a forgery in 1921. Three editions were given wide circulation in America due to the efforts of Henry Ford, the influential industrialist.<sup>72</sup> In 1922 the Jewish foreign minister of Germany’s Weimar Republic was murdered by two fanatics imagining him to be one of the ‘Elders of Zion’.<sup>73</sup> In Nazi Germany the influence of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* reached a peak.<sup>74</sup>

## Nazism

Although Nazism was anti-Christian, Christian anti-Semitism made the Holocaust possible.

Hitler and the Nazis found in medieval Catholic anti-Jewish legislation a model for their own, and they read and reprinted Martin Luther’s virulently anti-Semitic writings. It is instructive that the Holocaust was unleashed by the only major country in Europe having approximately equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants. Both traditions were saturated with Jew-hatred.<sup>75</sup>

*Kristallnacht*, in November 1938, the night the synagogues were burnt in Germany, was chosen in honour of the anniversary of Luther’s birthday. Hitler claimed, as he chronicled his sixteen steps to Nazi policy, ‘I am only doing the work of the Catholic Church.’<sup>76</sup>

An awkward situation was created for the churches when baptized Jews with stars turned up for services ... The representatives of the Evangelical-Lutheran church in seven provinces invoked the teachings of Martin Luther to declare that racially Jewish Christians had no place and no rights in a German Evangelical church.<sup>77</sup>

Although individual Christians assisted the Jews, the official Church generally did not.<sup>78</sup>

## World War II

Even in the face of the horrors of full-blown Nazism, many failed the Jews in their hour of need. Centuries of anti-Semitism took their toll in various countries.<sup>79</sup>

At a war-crimes trial in 1958 a former Lithuanian minister was asked why he remained silent in the face of the terrible shootings he witnessed. His reply was that he believed the scripture verse was being fulfilled for the Jews: 'His blood be on us and our children.' Horrific though it is that this scripture could be used to justify such callousness, similar views have been expressed by Christians of other nationalities.<sup>80</sup>

When a papal ambassador was asked to intervene in the deportations from Slovakia to Auschwitz, considering the innocent blood of Jewish children, his reply was: 'There is no innocent blood of Jewish children in the world. All Jewish blood is guilty. You have to die. This is the punishment that has been awaiting you, because of that sin [the crucifixion].'<sup>81</sup>

Switzerland closed its borders. The strict immigration policies of Canada and America prevented many Jews from entering those countries.<sup>82</sup> The British government reneged on their promises to the Jews concerning a national homeland (as stated in the 1917 Balfour Declaration), closing the door to thousands of Jews seeking asylum in Palestine during and immediately after the Nazi era.<sup>83</sup> The tragedy of the *Struma* deserves special mention. After being turned away by the British, the ship was torpedoed in the Black Sea in the winter of 1942; of the 769 Jewish refugees on board only one survived.<sup>84</sup>

## Callous Indifference

Sadly, after 2000 years of Christianity, this is the charge to be laid at the door of virtually all. In fact, had it not been for the abject passiveness of almost the entire world community on the eve of World War II, Hitler could not have gone ahead with his mass extermination of the

Jews. At the Evian-les-Bains conference in France, specifically convened by President Roosevelt in July 1938 to discuss the lot of European Jewry, only three of over thirty nations (Denmark, the Dominican Republic, the Netherlands) volunteered to take in a few thousand Jews. Nazi informers reported back to Hitler: 'You can do what you like with the Jews, nobody wants them.'<sup>85</sup>

## A Call to Repentance

The Catholic priest and historian Edward Flannery, reflecting on Christian anti-Semitism, observes:

It is a tragedy in which Jesus participates, crucified again in the person of His people at the hand of many baptized in His name. The sin of anti-Semitism contains many sins, but in the end it is a denial of Christian faith, a failure of Christian hope, and a malady of Christian love. And was not this Christianity's supreme defection: that the Christian people to whom persecution was promised by its Master (John 16:2-4) was not the most persecuted people in Christendom, but rather was it the people from whom He came? And the ultimate scandal: that in carrying the burden of God in history the Jewish people did not find in the Christian churches an ally and defender but one of their most zealous detractors and oppressors? It is a story that calls for repentance.<sup>86</sup>

In the same spirit Mother Basilea writes:

Today let us take our place at Jesus' side and look upon His people with His eyes, full of love and mercy. Then our hearts would ache to see this chosen people of God wandering through the centuries, wretched, despised, shunned, ostracized and afflicted with pain like the suffering Servant of God in Isaiah 53. Then, looking on them, we would be reminded of Him.<sup>87</sup>

## Notes

1. M. Basilea Schlink, *Israel, My Chosen People*, Kanaan Publications, Darmstadt, Germany, 1995, pp.27-28.
2. *The Letter of Barnabas*, 4:6-7; FCCH, *Apostolic Fathers*, p.195, as cited by Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism*, Paulist Press, New York/Mahwah, 1985, p.34.
3. *Ibid.*, pp.34-35; also Dr. William James Broadway, *Has the Church Fallen Under a Curse? And if the Whole Congregation Sins*, p.16, published 1996 by Broadway Ministries, 257 Inverness, Courtenay, B.C., Canada, V9N 9S6. Email: wmbroadway@safe-mail.net
4. Transcript of a talk by Olga Marshall (Lydia Research Adviser), Swanwick, England, May 1997, p.7.
5. Broadway, p.7.
6. Flannery, p.38.
7. Tertullian, *Apol.* 17:6 (PL, 1:433), as cited *ibid.*, p.39.
8. *Dialogue*, ch.16; FCCH, *St. Justin Martyr*, p.172, as cited *ibid.*, p.40.
9. *Ibid.*, p.46.
10. *Ibid.*, pp.46, 50.
11. *Ibid.*, pp.50-51; also Homily I:6 (PG, 48:852), as cited *ibid.*, p.64.
12. *Ibid.*, p.51.
13. Quoted in Malcolm Hay, *The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism*, Liberty Press, New York, 1981, p.27, as cited by Michael L. Brown, *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood: The Tragic Story of the "Church" and the Jewish People*, Destiny Image Publishers, Shippensburg, 1992, p.11.
14. Flannery, pp.52-53.
15. Marshall, p.7.
16. Flannery, pp.47-48, 55-58.
17. *Ibid.*, pp.68-69.
18. *Ibid.*, p.70.
19. *Ibid.*, p.71.
20. *Ibid.*, p.91; see also Eerdmans' *Handbook to the History of Christianity*, Grand Rapids, 1977, pp.24-25.
21. Flannery, pp.91-92.
22. *Ibid.*, p.93.
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24. Flannery, p.95.
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### Recommended Reading:

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