

IN SEARCH OF THE IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF THE HOLOCAUST

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Good afternoon. I would like to thank Dr. Armenteros and Dr. Bello for inviting me to speak with you today. I am very sorry that I cannot be with you in person in Santo Domingo to give this conference. I look forward to coming to visit and speak on another topic at a later date.

What I am going to do today is to offer a first glance at a book which I have been working on since the publication of my *World Fascism: a Historical Encyclopedia*.¹ The subject is incredibly important, but at the same time extremely delicate. The Holocaust: one of the most horrendous atrocities in all of modern history, which consisted in the deliberate and systematic shooting, gassing, or murder by brutal neglect of human beings, men, women, children, picked up from all over Europe and sent by train to a hideous end.

This war waged by Hitler and his inner cabinet against the Jews of Europe has been the object of a vast quantity of studies. However, only a relatively small number of them has addressed the central question: Why? Why did the National Socialist leaders decide not simply to enslave or rob or exploit the Jews, but actually to remove them from the face of the earth?

I am a historian of ideas. I am not going to speak about the events that constituted the Holocaust. What interests me are the ideas that motivated the authors of this monstrous crime.

Gunnar Heinsohn, a German historian who wrote a book entitled "Why Auschwitz?" listed more than forty explanations that have been put forward. More recently, American historian Peter Hayes published a book entitled "Why the Holocaust?" while Jan Hornik wrote a book with the same title some years before.²

For my part, I have been studying the motivations of the National Socialist leadership as expressed in their speeches and writings and their propaganda publications for more than twelve years. It has become apparent to me however that there is an elephant in the garden of Holocaust and Anti-Semitism studies.

It is this.

Israel – the Jewish people – were at the heart of German and European culture because the first Catholic missionaries and their successors put them there. In the minds of the National Socialist leaders, in the minds of those ultimately responsible for the Holocaust, this fact was extremely important. If we want to understand what the Holocaust was about, we must start here.

I EUROPE'S JEWISH SPIRIT

Studying the books that they recommended, the propaganda they produced, and the ideas they formulated, we can see that National Socialist anti-Semitism was rooted in the broad tradition of secularism in Europe, a tradition which goes back at least as far as Voltaire.

When I speak of secularism, I am referring to the movement of thought which from the eighteenth century onwards made war on

the culture brought to Europe by the first Catholic missionaries and implanted in the civilisation of the Continent by the first Catholic missionaries and their successors. I will call the soldiers in the war on this culture – the Judaeo-Christian culture - secularists.

Secularists realised that when we speak of Catholicism, we are speaking of Israel – the Jewish people. This came home to me when I saw that the National Socialists liked to refer to it as a “Jewish religión”. It was clear to me that they were right.

For the historian, it is evident that the traditional Christian culture of Europe is Jewish to the core.³ There was an important Greek and Roman (and in Spain Muslim) influence, to be sure. But small in comparison with the Jewish or Hebrew contribution. The Holy Scriptures of the Church comprise two volumes, the Old Testament and the New. The Old Testament is the Hebrew Scripture, a sacred book of the Jewish people. It makes up by far the largest part of the Christian Bible. The New Testament is largely focussed on events in the Jewish homeland which involve Jews. John the Baptist, Jesus, son of a Jewish mother, Saint Peter and Saint Paul and the disciples, all Jews.

The Church accepts the claim of the Jews to be the Chosen People of God, she validates and sanctifies it. The Church says that God chose the Jewish people to cradle the birth of the Son of God. The Church taught the peoples of Europe to adore the son of a Jewish mother as God incarnate and to venerate his mother Mary as the Mother of God.

Over many centuries the Church taught believers to reverence the great heroes of the Jewish people, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon. The Church directed the eyes of the West towards the Jewish capital Jerusalem as the Holy City and the supreme place of pilgrimage.

II THE HOSTILITY OF THE INTELLECTUALS TOWARDS THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN CULTURE OF EUROPE

The point I am coming to is this. One of the most important developments over the five hundred years before the National Socialists came to power was the movement emerging from the ranks of the European intelligentsia to subvert the Judaeo-Christian culture of Europe. The rebellion of the intellectuals began in the middle of the fourteenth century in the Italian Renaissance; it spread gradually through Europe, and it settled firmly into public opinion in eighteenth-century France, where literature hostile to the established Catholic culture became commonplace. Here I must pause and consider the case of Voltaire and his peers. Voltaire and his peers give us a very instructive illustration of how we got to the Holocaust. It is not widely known that Voltaire, Diderot, and d'Holbach made pitiless assaults on the Jews.⁴

This is a typical example of their writing:

“Magnificent Asian kingdoms had existed and flourished long before this ‘vagabond horde of Arabs called Jews’ found a small corner of the earth which they could call their own – they were a crude people, ignorant and void in the arts. And what they did actually have, they were alleged to have copied from others.”⁵

Referring to the thoroughly Catholic and Biblical account in the book by the seventeenth-century French Bishop Bossuet on universal history, which of course focussed on the destiny of Israel - Voltaire simply dismissed it as the story of four or five peoples and especially of the Jewish nation “which has either been ignored or justly despised by the rest of the world”.⁶

This is a classic case of a phenomenon that would recur repeatedly in the writings of the secularists: the Jewish people was picked out for abuse on account of its central role in Judaeo-Christian culture.

In his hatred for the Catholic Church, Voltaire popularised the idea that the intrusion of the Hebrew mind into Western Christianity was an alien infection. He likewise popularised the idea that the problem with the Jews was not a matter of their creed but of their innate character.

“They are, all of them, born with a raging fanaticism in their hearts, just as the Bretons and the Germans are born with blond hair.”⁷

The American scholar Rosemary Radford Ruether identifies Voltaire’s violent aversion for the Jews as that of an anti-Christian ex-Catholic. And she makes a comparison with Nazism, as “the demonic anti-Christianity of ex Christians. Hitler ... wished to destroy the Jews to also pull out by the roots the foundations of the Church ... we cannot doubt that Christians were intended to be his final victims.”⁸ The American Jewish scholar Arthur Cohen observed that, for Voltaire and the French Enlightenment, Christianity “was the palpable enemy of reason, but Christianity grew from the delusions of Judaism, and hence Judaism was equally a ragbag of legends, superstitions, and falsities.”⁹

Voltaire and his peers did not care about the Jews in themselves. They were concerned about the Jews because the latter were at the heart of the civilisation they wanted to uproot. This civilisation can be justifiably called Judaeo-Christian. It is Christian because it is founded on Christ, ‘Judaeo-’ not simply because it originated with the Jews, but also because it promoted the unique role of Israel in history.

It is a notorious fact that Voltaire’s watchword – one he never tired of repeating – was *Ecrasons l’infâme/Let us crush the infamous one* – the ‘infamous one’ being for Voltaire the Church and her doctrine.

Since the era of Voltaire and his peers, hatred of the Jews was promoted more and more by secularist thinkers as part of their crusade against the traditional Jewish-inspired culture of Europe.

I am not saying for a moment that the mutual antipathy between the Church and the Synagogue disappeared. I am saying that it lost its importance in a society in which the churches were increasingly marginalised.

The enemies of Judaeo-Christian civilisation saw that it was based on the acceptance, validation, and sanctification of the idea that the Jewish people were the recipients of special divine revelations and the object of special divine election. If God had not appeared to Abraham and if he had not made him promises about his descendants, if God had not appeared to Moses, if God had not inspired David to write the Psalms, all the edifice of Catholic dogma would collapse. On the Road to Emmaus, Jesus explained to the disciples how the Hebrew Scriptures referred to him.¹⁰ All of Judaeo-Christian culture was based then on a special revelation. God's especial revelation to ONE people.

This was what irritated philosophers more and more from the age of Giordano Bruno, Voltaire, and Kant onwards. For them, religion must be rational and not take its basis in a particular revelation to ONE people. Where was the divine justice if ONE PEOPLE ALONE is favoured above all others? This was an important issue for the English Deists from whom Voltaire drew inspiration.

Moreover, why would God have chosen Israel? Why not the Romans, the Greeks, the Persians, the Egyptians, one of the great civilisations of Antiquity which have left us great art, great architecture, great philosophy, great literature – why the Jews? A group of desert tribes, their only legacy to the world their Scriptures which preached their own superiority, their own unique status before God, their own absurdly inflated destiny?

This theme became a commonplace in the attacks of philosophers and cultural figures on Judaeo-Christian civilisation. And not just fanatics, but eminent figures in the secularist canon. Immanuel Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, the

composer Richard Wagner and the scientist Haeckel attacked the Jews because they were the founders of the Catholic Church and because Israel was at the heart of the Church.

I cannot provide the evidence here because there is not the time, but you can find it in the excellent multi-volume survey entitled *History of Antisemitism* by the Jewish scholar Leon Poliakov.¹¹

It was this sort of person that the National Socialist leaders and National Socialist propaganda took for their inspiration. The only defender of Judaeo-Christian culture that they respected was Martin Luther – but they did not praise him for his theology, in which they had not the slightest interest. Indeed, they considered that his greatest weakness lay in his failure to abandon the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament. What they admired about Luther was that he liberated the Germans from the grip of Rome. Luther gave the Germans freedom from papal power. They also admired Luther because at the end of his life he gave expression to a violent hatred of the Synagogue.

The thinkers and cultural figures respected by the National Socialist leaders virtually all opposed the Catholic Church and Protestant Confessional orthodoxy (which preserved Catholic doctrinal veneration for Israel). We could say in fact that the hatred of the Secularists for the Jews, which culminated in the monstrous crusade of the Hitler regime, was a reaction to the huge veneration for Israel embedded in Europe's Judaeo-Christian culture.

III BUT OF COURSE THERE IS AN OBVIOUS OBJECTION TO THIS: THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST WERE JEWS, NOT CATHOLICS

Although many Catholics did perish in the camps and at the hands of the Hitler regime, Auschwitz was there to burn Jews. Catholics did not suffer to anything like the same extent as Jews.

My response is this.

The Holocaust was not for Hitler an end in itself.

It was only one part of a programme that actually had three parts.

The first part was the war against the Jews.

The second part was the war against the churches.

The third part was the replacement in the minds of Germans of the traditional Judaeo-Christian world view with National Socialist ideology.

The three parts were implemented simultaneously, from 1933 onwards.

In respect of the second part, Hitler's policy was not like that of the Bolsheviks in Russia: shoot the priests and close the churches.

Rather, Hitler followed a policy of strangulation: excluding the Catholic Church especially from education, from the media, and from work with young people. After he had won the War, he planned to make sure that the young were indoctrinated in National Socialist ideas and kept away from churches. The old could be left to keep up their religious practices. Religion would gradually fade away because modern science had already refuted its teachings.

In 1933 Stefan Lorant, a Hungarian Protestant journalist, was put in prison for six months by the Hitler government and managed to keep a diary. The entry for the third of April is extraordinary.

“The Jews are being used as scapegoats.

...

The other prisoners are for the most part Catholics. The real fight is directed against them.

...

It is already possible to see, here in prison, the trend of the coming struggle.

Whether National Socialism is to be or not to be will be decided not only by the present economic crisis, but also by

the outcome of the struggle between the Swastika and Catholicism.

...

The whole momentum is now being brought to bear against the Catholics."¹²

Curiously, this immediate attack on Catholics by the new National Socialist regime is rarely mentioned by historians, who prefer to focus on the National Socialist campaign against the Communists and Trades Unionists.

IV THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST LEADERS LAUNCHED A WAR AGAINST THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN CULTURE

In recent years a lot of studies have come out about Hitler's inner cabinet. I want to focus on them because we must suppose that it was they who conceived, planned, and executed the mass murder of the Jews of Europe. What we really need to know is what drove the leaders, those who thought that this terrible evil must be accomplished.

It is a shocking truth that Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels, and Heydrich were all baptised Catholics.

However, the fact is that all of them – without exception – were apostates; all of them turned against the Church. These men made war on the Church.

In this second part of my talk, I am going to say a few words about those members of Hitler's inner cabinet most deeply implicated in the Holocaust, beginning with the *Fuehrer* himself, then Himmler, Heydrich, Goebbels, and Bormann. I will conclude with some observations about Hitler's main propagandist, Alfred Rosenberg.

ADOLF HITLER

Hitler was a consummate politician, he did not want to alienate believing Protestants or Catholics unnecessarily. Consequently, in

his public statements, he would often refer to God, and he was very careful to distinguish himself from the openly and unashamedly atheistic Communists who had taken power in the Soviet Union.

However, numerous reports smuggled out of Germany at the end of the 1930s provide massive evidence of the campaign under way against the Catholic Church in particular.¹³ One commentator noted that in private Hitler never missed an opportunity to mock the churches and their representatives.¹⁴ Albert Speer, his architect and close friend, imprisoned for many years after the War, spoke of his "interminable diatribes against the Catholic Church" in private company.¹⁵

Hitler admitted in 1928 that his Party was often regarded as being opposed to the Church. He said that they were of course bad Christians if by Christianity was understood *the Confessions* (that is to say, the churches).¹⁶ But if "*the Word of the Lord*" was what mattered, then his Party was the best.

This illustrates a very important point. The question on which I am focussing is not the question of the National Socialists and Christ, nor of the National Socialists and "Christianity", nor of the National Socialists and 'religion'. These words could mean whatever the speaker wants them to mean. The question on which I am focussing here is specifically and particularly the question of the National Socialists and the Judaeo-Christian tradition as contained in the doctrines of the Catholic Church and in biblically orthodox Protestantism.

The reason this is so important is that the message brought by the first Catholic missionaries and incorporated into the foundations of European culture for many centuries - a culture for which the Catholic Church was the validator and support - held the unique status of the Jewish people as bearers of revealed truths about God and the people among whom God chose to become incarnate, as set in stone. Those Protestants who departed from this original

message in the name of a purer Christianity were liable to raise questions about the uniqueness and preciousness of the Jewish people or indeed even to reject it.

In a speech of 1927, Hitler complained that the Bavarian People's Party, which was a Catholic Party, had been attacking the National Socialists on the grounds that their hostility to the Jews was "not Christian".¹⁷ Hitler asked whether it was not Catholic to be an anti-Semite, considering that Jesus himself had made harsh statements against the Jews.¹⁸ Hitler liked the idea of the cleansing of the temple, Jesus persecuting the Money-changers, which he took to be an indication that Jesus himself was anti-Semitic.¹⁹

All this is ridiculous, since as a question of historical fact, Jesus himself was Jewish, as were his disciples.

When the Germans occupied Poland, Hitler ordered the troops to launch a brutal war on the Polish Catholics. More than two thousand priests were executed and thousands sent to concentration camps; there was a special camp for nuns and four hundred were interned in it.²⁰

It is not generally known that the Austrian Catholic Church also suffered terribly after the *Anschluss* of 1938. (Eight hundred priests and religious brothers were imprisoned in that year.²¹) An American contemporary wrote that the regime of Hitler treated the Church in Austria even more brutally than the Church in the Reich.²²

The Terms of Reference set out by the leaders of Hitler Youth in Austria contain the following declarations: German culture was already on a high plane before the advent of Christianity, which destroyed it ... the Ten Commandments represent the lowest instincts of mankind; ... Christianity is merely a cloak for Judaism."²³

Albert Speer refers to Hitler's 'endless tirades against the Catholic Church' when he was with his 'intimate entourage'.²⁴ Walter Tiessler, who held an important position in the Reich Propaganda Office, referred to Hitler quite casually as a 'non-Christian'.²⁵ In 1939

Hitler's press chief, Otto Dietrich, spoke of Hitler as wanting to eliminate the influence of Christianity in Germany and replace it with a new heroic racial idea of God.²⁶

HEINRICH HIMMLER

Heinrich Himmler, the notorious head of the SS, had a huge share of the guilt for the horrors of the Death Camps. Of Himmler, one commentator said: "A boy who had once attended church almost daily became, by the 1930s, a militant anti-Catholic".²⁷ He announced that he had officially left the Church in 1936.

Like Hitler, Himmler praised Islam for inspiring men to be warriors and allowing them to die happy; he allowed the appointment of Muslim Chaplains for his Muslim SS Divisions while he denied them to the rest of the Waffen SS.²⁸

Himmler stated that since the Jews were incapable of defeating the Romans militarily, they subverted the Roman Empire by inoculating it with Jewish blood and the Christian message. Conscience was a Jewish invention, the circumcision of the human being.²⁹

One biographer identifies Himmler's objective as the construction of an uninterrupted tradition from pre-Christian Germany to the Third Reich, so as to eliminate fifteen hundred years of Christian "occupation".³⁰

Himmler was very interested in the Cathars, a heretical mediaeval movement in the South of France. His fascination with them arose from the fact that they believed there was a true esoteric religious tradition not derived from the Jews that the Church had repressed.

In other words, they were anti-Jewish. Himmler thought that the brutal repression of the heresy with the encouragement of the Church authorities was down to the fact that the Church was afraid that people would find out about this *non-Hebrew* source of knowledge of the truth.

REINHARD HEYDRICH

Reinhard Heydrich was Himmler's Second in Command until he was assassinated in Prague in 1942. He made no secret of his hatred for the Judaeo-Christian tradition in Europe. He was the one who summoned the individuals to attend what has come notoriously to be known as the Wannsee Conference which met early in 1942. This conference was called to deliberate on the "final solution" of the Jewish question. One biographer said that Heydrich was the first person in Europe who consciously conceived the idea of cleansing Central and Eastern Europe racially by the extermination of entire peoples.³¹ German scholar Eberhardt Jäckel said that he, rather than Himmler, was the principal architect of the genocide.³²

At the same time, he was in the vanguard of the antiCatholic measures taken by the National Socialist regime and indeed he declared that Catholicism was the main opponent of the regime.³³ His widow Lina confirmed this after the War.³⁴ One biographer says that he threw himself into the persecution of Catholic clerics with "an enthusiasm even greater than Himmler's".³⁵

JOSEPH GOEBBELS

It was said that Joseph Goebbels was the most irreconcilable enemy of the Jews in the whole NS leadership. His diaries survived the War and they give testimony of his hatred for the churches. Already in 1924 he was stigmatising Catholicism and the Jews as the worst enemies of Germany.³⁶ His attacks on the Catholic Church between

1934 and 1939 were described by a biographer as manifesting a "hysterical ferocity".³⁷ In an entry of 1939, Goebbels noted that Hitler was "completely anti-Christian" and considered Christianity to be a symptom of decomposition, indicating his own agreement with this.³⁸

MARTIN BORMANN

Martin Bormann, from a Protestant family, was all-powerful as Hitler's Deputy, once Rudolf Hess disappeared from the scene in 1941. He was deeply involved in the mass murder of the Jews.³⁹ After the War, Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, identified Hitler, Goebbels, and Bormann as the persons mainly responsible for it.⁴⁰

We have letters from Martin Bormann to his wife, which were published after the War. He showed an obsessive hatred of the Church in these letters. Christian books and publications were not allowed in their house. His biographer Jochen Lang dedicates a whole chapter to the subject entitled "Against Christians and Jews".⁴¹ Hitler was very aware of this and gave him licence to use part of Poland as "a testing-ground for anti-Christian experiments".⁴²

A biographer says there is no doubt that Bormann wanted to destroy the Confessions.⁴³ He said that Christianity had taken Europe backwards, obstructing science for fifteen hundred years.⁴⁴

In June 1941, he circulated to National Socialist leaders a declaration on National Socialism and Christianity. He stated that National Socialism was based on scientific principles and was therefore greatly superior to the principles of a religion taken from Judaism.⁴⁵

ALFRED ROSENBERG

Alfred Rosenberg was Hitler's chief ideologue and a prominent figure in the Occupied Territories of Eastern Europe while the mass murders of the Jews were taking place. The second bible of the National Socialist movement along with Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century*.⁴⁶

A contemporary observer, the American journalist Rothay Reynolds, noted that Rosenberg was everywhere as propagandist, especially among the young.⁴⁷ "His teaching on the National Socialist philosophy of life and on religion is given with authority, and is conveyed to the German people by a thousand channels. His book... is the manual from which the instructors of German youth derive the doctrines that are taught to Little boys.... To older boys, of the Hitler Youth, to Storm Troopers... and to the aristocracy of the Party in institutions for the training of future leaders of the movement."

Rosenberg called for the elimination of the Old Testament from German culture, to put an end to centuries of struggle to make the Germans spiritually Jews. Stories of "Jewish cattle dealers", should be replaced by Nordic sagas.⁴⁸ In a book published in 1940, Rosenberg focussed openly on Christianity as the main enemy, referring to the "dogma of the Syrian-Jewish church" and "Jewish-Asiatic church creeds".⁴⁹

Under the direction of Rosenberg, a substantial reference work was planned with the title *Handbuch der Romfrage* ('Handbook of the Roman Question'). Only the first volume came out, in 1940. It had more than 800 pages. It was clearly intended to provide an arsenal of arguments against the Church, exposing her closeness to the Jews. For example, some lines are cited from St Augustine in the article: *Judenfrage* ('the Jewish Question'). In a commentary on Psalm 75, St Augustine said that the true Jews were those who had joined the Church. "The true Jewry is the Church of Christ, which believes in the King who was born from the Virgin Mary of the Tribe of Judah. David came from Judah and Jesus from David. We

who believe in Christ belong to Judaea. The Church believes that the Jews are the Chosen People of God until the end of the world.”⁵⁰ the article says that the Church is the logical fulfilment of Judaism and that the Jewish essence lives in the Roman Church.

The article complains because at the Eucharistic Congress of 1939 in Algeria, Cardinal Verdier-Paris as Papal Legate welcomed local Jewish leaders and spoke about the mystical bonds between Catholicism and the Mosaic religion.⁵¹

A contemporary commentator observed that for Rosenberg, Christianity was the most dangerous and poisonous product of the ‘Semitic-Latin spirit’, and especially the Christianity of the Catholic Church.⁵² This expression "Semitic-Latin spirit" is absolutely crucial. For the National Socialist leaders, Rome and the Jews were practically identical. War against one of them meant war against the other.

CONCLUSION

I have no intention of comparing the horrific sufferings of the Jews under National Socialism with the lesser sufferings of Catholics. What I am saying is that the two are connected. In the eyes of the National Socialist leaders, the Jews were culpable for having been the creators of the hated Judaeo-Christian culture. This culture had ruined the German soul and the German mind and had to be replaced by the worldview of National Socialism, a Nietzschean ideology for the strong, for conquerors, for the rulers of the earth. The Judaeo-Christian culture by contrast was a doctrine for the weak, the cowardly, and the dreamers.

In the end, the destiny reserved for the Jews - creators of the Judaeo-Christian culture – and for the churches – the promoters of the Judaeo-Christian culture – was to be the same: extinction. The means would not be the same, but the end would. Only then could

the proud heirs to the Aryan master race take their proper place in the world – at the summit, with their enemies crushed.

¹ Cyprian Blamires, *World Fascism: a Historical Encyclopedia*, Santa Barbara CA: ABC-Clio, 2 vols., 2006.

² Gunnar Heinsohn, *Warum Auschwitz?*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1995; Jan Hornik, *Why the Holocaust: Hitler's Darwinistic Messianic Genocide*, Rybka, 2009; Peter Hayes, *Why? Explaining the Holocaust?*, New York: WW Norton, 2018.

³ Cf. for example Thomas Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews*, Oxford: Lion Hudson, 1998; Arthur A Cohen, *The Myth of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and other Dissenting Essays*, New York: Harper & Row, 1970, 176; Marcus Eli Ravage, 'A real case against the Jews. One of them points out the full depth of their guilt', *Century Magazine*, Feb 1928, 346 ff.

⁴ Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, New York: Columbia University Press/Jewish Publication Society, 1968; Peter Gay, *Voltaire's Politics*, New York: Vintage Books, 1965; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Anti-Semitism*, Sutton Publishing, 2002 169; Paul-Henri Thiry d'Holbach, *l'Esprit du Judaïsme ou Examen raisonné de la loi de Moïse et de son influence sur la religion chrétienne*, 1768.

⁵ Cited in Harvey Mitchell, *Voltaire's Jews and Modern Jewish Identity: rethinking the Enlightenment*, Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 50.

⁶ Adam Sutcliffe, in Ilana Y Zinguer/Sam W Bloom (eds), *l'Antisémitisme Eclairé. Inclusion et Exclusion Depuis l'Epoque des Lumières jusqu'à l'Affaire Dreyfus/Inclusion and Exclusion: Perspectives on Jews from the Enlightenment to the Dreyfus Affair*, Leiden: Brill, 2003, p. 121; Mitchell, *Voltaire's Jews*, p.49.

⁷ Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, Columbia University Press/Jewish Publication Society, 1968, 300.

⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'The Faith and Fratricide discussions: old problems and new dimensions', in Alan T Davies (ed.), *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, New York/Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979, 247

⁹ ARTHUR A COHEN, *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition and other dissenting essays*, New York: Harper & Row, 1969, xviii

¹⁰ Luke 24, 27: 'Beginning with Moses and the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.'

¹¹ Leon Poliakov, *History of Anti-Semitism*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 4 vols., 2003.

¹² Stefan Lorant, *I was Hitler's Prisoner*; Leaves from a Prisoner's Diary, tr. James Cleugh, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939 [1935], 66.

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- ¹³ Anon., *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in the Third Reich*, London: Burns Oates, 1940; Nathaniel Micklem, *National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church, being an account of the conflict between the National Socialist government of Germany and the Roman Catholic Church, 1933-1938*, London/New York/Toronto: OUP, 1939; Richard J Bonney, *Confronting the Nazi War on Christianity. The 'Kulturkampf' Newsletters, 1936-1939*, Verlag Peter Lang, 2009; Rothay Reynolds, *When Freedom Shrieked*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1939.
- ¹⁴ Volker Koop, *Martin Bormann, Hitlers Vollstrecker*, Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2012, 129.
- ¹⁵ Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009, 163.
- ¹⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, Band II, 1, Munich/London/New York/Paris: K G Saur, 1992, 318.
- ¹⁷ Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, II, 2, 699.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 753.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 704.
- ²⁰ Joseph Tenenbaum, *Race and Reich: The Story of an Epoch*, New York: Twayne, 67-8.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 65.
- ²² Michael Power, *Religion in the Reich*, London/New York/Toronto: Longmans Green, 1939, 159.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 174-7.
- ²⁴ Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 163.
- ²⁵ Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conceptions of Christianity 1919-1945*, Cambridge: CUP, 2003, 249.
- ²⁶ Richard Weikart, *Hitler's Religion. The Twisted Beliefs that Drove the Third Reich*, Washington DC: Regnery, 2016, 95.
- ²⁷ Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide. Himmler and the Final Solution*, London: the Bodley Head, 1991, 15
- ²⁸ Johann Chapoutot, *La Révolution Culturelle Nazie*, Paris: NRF, 2017, 200.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 100-1
- ³⁰ Josef Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologe*, Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1970, 62.
- ³¹ Mario R Dederichs, *Heydrich, the face of evil*, London: Greenhill Books, 2006, 16-17
- ³² *Ibid.*, 117.
- ³³ Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conceptions of Christianity 1919-1945*, 133.
- ³⁴ Dederichs, *Heydrich*, 75.
- ³⁵ Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman. The Life of Heydrich*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 101-2.
- ³⁶ Joseph Goebbels, *Tägebücher*, Bande i, ed. Elke Frölich, Berlin: de Gruyter, 7/24.
- ³⁷ Josef Reimann, *Goebbels. The man who created Hitler*, tr. S. Wendt, London: Sphere, 1979, 264.
- ³⁸ Steigmann-Gall, *op. cit.*, 252.
- ³⁹ Jochen Lang, *The Secretary. The man who manipulated Hitler*, New York: Random House, 1979, 193.

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- ⁴⁰ Volker Koop, *op. cit.*, 219.
⁴¹ Jochen Lang, *op. cit.*, 124 ff.
⁴² Jochen Lang, *op.cit.*, 191.
⁴³ Volker Koop, *op. cit.*, 134.
⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.
⁴⁵ Jochen Lang, *op. cit.*, 188.
⁴⁶ Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20 Jahrhunderts*, 1930.
⁴⁷ Rothay Reynolds, *When Freedom shrieked*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1939, 277.
⁴⁸ Michael Hesemann, *Hitlers Religion*, Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich Verlag, 2012, 236.
⁴⁹ Robert Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race. Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology*, Harper Collins, 1972, 129.
⁵⁰ Alfred Rosenberg (ed.), *Handbuch der Romfrage*, Munich: Hoheneichen Verlag, Band I A-K, 1940, 701 (my translation).
⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 702.
⁵² Konrad Heiden, *The Führer*, London: Robinson, 1999, 289.

COMMENTS

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I thank Drs. Alina Bello and Carolina Armenteros for their kind invitation to participate as a respondent to the presentation by Prof. Cyprian Blamires. Everything I will present as remarks is in memory and honor of Prof. Zeev Sternhell, זרבי מורי, who passed away this week. I learned everything from him

I appreciate the knowledge and scholarly analysis of Dr Cyprian Blamires but have a few observations:

1. Despite the centrality of the Old Testament and Jerusalem for Christianity, the doctrines of Judeophobia and anti-Semitism adopted by large sectors of the Church cannot be ignored. From its origins, Christianity presented itself as the “New Israel” and was scandalized that the Jews persisted in their “blindness” of continuing to wait for the coming of the Messiah, to fulfill the

Promise that God made to Abraham, when the Messiah had already arrived: it was Jesus Christ – that is why for centuries, as Joseph Pérez comments in *Los judíos en España* (2009 [2005]), Christian iconography represented the synagogue “as a woman blindfolded, implying that she neither saw nor wanted to see the Truth.” The Catholic Church could not allow the Jews to deny Jesus Christ as the Messiah because that called into question the very existence of Christianity. Thus arose the accusation against the Jews that they were the deicide people, responsible for the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and for centuries, in the ceremonies of Good Friday, the Christian faithful were invited to pray *pro perfidis judaeis*. The phrase literally meant pray for the Jews who are estranged from the true faith, but it was always given another meaning, that of the perfidy that characterized the Jewish people as a whole. It took almost two thousand years for Pope John XXIII in 1959 to order that the *Oremus pro perfidis judaeis* no longer be prayed in Catholic churches. In his book *El antisemitismo explicado a los jóvenes* (2018), Michael Wieviorka affirms that

“there are two main sources ... [of] ‘anti-Judaism’ [in Christianity]. On the one hand, and in the first place, the reproach made to the Jews of not recognizing Jesus and of refusing to adhere to Christianity (this resistance, this refusal to renounce their faith, to convert is, in all history, a prominent phenomenon that arouses hostility). And, on the other hand, the accusation of being a criminal people, ‘deicide’.”

Without going into details, we must remember that these doctrinal points served as the basis for an innumerable number of acts of anti-Semitism – a term coined by the German publicist Wilhelm Marr – which ranged from the attack on Jewish individuals to collective attacks, inquisitorial torture, murders, pogroms and even the expulsion of all Jews from countries such as England, France and Spain in the Middle Ages and afterwards. Unfortunately these

facts are integrated into European and Western culture and constitute, towards the modern era, an integral part of it.

The historical trajectory traced by Professor Blamires contains a great leap that goes from the Jewish origins of the Christian Church to the secularism of the eighteenth century, the century of the Enlightenment on which Zeev Sternhell wrote a great work – *Anti-lumières* or *Anti-Enlightenment*, published in 2006 in France and later translated, as well as several earlier ones, such as *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* published in 1989 in Paris and later translated – showing intellectuals of another type of revolution such as Burke, De Maistre and Herder, and their followers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who wielded strong anti-rationalist, anti-humanist and anti-universalist arguments that would establish the foundations of an alternative civilizational project to that of the Enlightenment. It is about communitarian, anti-individualist ideas that reject the autonomous individual and his free will and human rights. At the beginning of this school Sternhell places Gianbattista Vico who in 1725 expressed anti-intellectual, relativistic and particularistic arguments against the tradition of the philosophers of the Enlightenment and later Kant. This intellectual current will lead, according to Sternhell and his followers – like me – to the origins of fascist ideology and German Nazism in the twentieth century.

2. It cannot be disputed that German Nazism was influenced by Martin Luther in his overt anti-Semitism. In 1543, Luther published *On the Jews and their Lies*, a work in which he comes to assertions such as that the Jews are an “abject and despicable people, that is, not a people of God, and their boast of lineage, their circumcision and their law should be considered dirty”; they are stained with “the feces of the devil (...) in which they wallow like pigs.” The Synagogue is an “impure bride, yes, an incorrigible whore, an impious slut.” Luther advocates that synagogues and rabbinical schools be fueled by fire, their prayer books destroyed, that rabbis be prohibited from preaching, that their homes be razed, and their

property and money confiscated. They must be shown no mercy, provided with no legal protection, and “these infectious poisonous worms” must prepare for forced labor or ultimate expulsion. In this book Luther even seems to advocate their murder, when he writes: “We will be guilty of not destroying them.” This type of argument is adopted terminologically and in its almost totality, by German Nazism. All of this predates Voltaire’s secular anti-Semitism.

3. I think that in calling the aggression of Hitler and Nazism against the Jews a “monstrous crusade” Professor Blamires incurs a double conceptual contradiction. If your basic argument is that Hitlerian Nazism was in turn anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic because Judaism and Catholicism represented the central cultural base of the West, even if you use the qualifier “monstrous,” the use of the term “Crusade” is an oxymoron. On the other hand, the Crusades, and especially the First Crusade, were implicated in the massacres of Jews throughout the Rhine Valley and Europe and culminated in the massacre of all Jewish – and also Muslim – inhabitants of Jerusalem, who, in July of 1099, defended this city against the attack of Godfrey of Bouillon and the Christian host that had come to liberate the Holy Land and the *Umbilicus mundi* – Jerusalem – from Muslim rule.

4. It is true that many Christians and among these, many Catholics – 3 million non-Jewish Poles, the vast majority Catholics – were murdered by the Nazis in their attempt to turn this nation into a slave people and purge the living space to the East of Germany of its original inhabitants – suffered Nazi persecution. However nothing was similar to the final solution of the Jewish problem – *Endlösung der Judenfrage* – was acted out or planned – as it was done with respect to the Jews in the Madagascar Plan based on an 1878 idea of the German Orientalist and anti-Semite Paul Lagarde in his *Germanic Writings – Deutsche Schriften*. This idea was re-adopted by the Polish government in 1937 to achieve Jewish emigration to this island or to Africa, in cooperation with the British to liberate Poland – and Europe – from its Jewish

population. It was discussed by the Nazi hierarchs in 1938 and drafted by Franz Rademacher, head of Jewish affairs at the German foreign ministry in 1940, after the surrender of France to Germany, and later, after the invasion of the Soviet Union, with the Wannsee conference of January 1942 at which the Nazis decided to annihilate the Jewish people, throughout Europe and beyond this continent in the event of a military victory over the Russians and their Western allies.

Yehuda Bauer, the great Israeli Holocaust researcher, argues that while there have been genocides, none take on the proportions of the Holocaust, in which Nazi Germany planned the elimination of ALL Jewish people and began to execute it on the basis of its racial theory about the superiority of the Aryan race and the sub-humanity of the Jewish race. To this I would like to add a point that emerged in the 1988 discussion between Holocaust historians and Ernst Nolte, the author of *Three Faces of Fascism*. Nolte holding that the Holocaust was a genocide more similar to others that happened in the twentieth century, our answer was that for the Jew, locked in an inescapable racial category that came to include two generations of ancestors – parents and grandparents – when it came to German Nazi racism, the only way out was death, that is, extermination. And that was the reality of the Holocaust. One could escape from the Catholic category through conversion, atheism, affiliation and action within Nazism – and many were the German Catholic Nazis and even more the Austrians, where the majority of the population, unlike Germany, professed Catholicism during the Nazi years. The Jew could not renounce being a Jew because he had been locked into an inescapable biological racial category.

5. I believe that Hitler's main propagandist was Dr. Joseph Goebbels. It should be noted that the relations between Nazi Germany and the Catholic Church were regulated by the *Reichskonkordat* (officially, the Concordat between the Holy See and the German Reich; in German, *Konkordat zwischen dem Heiligen Stuhl und dem Deutschen Reich*). This was a concordat

signed on July 20, 1933, still in force, between Nazi Germany and the Holy See, which establishes conditions of religious freedom for the Catholic Church. It was signed by the then German President Paul von Hindenburg – Adolf Hitler being Chancellor, through Vice Chancellor Franz von Papen – and Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli (the future Pius XII), on behalf of Pope Pius XI. The central articles of this concordat established that:

- The right to religious freedom (Article 1).
- The concordats with the States of Bavaria (1924), Prussia (1929) and Baden (1932) remain valid (Article 2).
- The Catholic religion can be taught in certain schools (Article 21) and teachers assigned to teach religion can only be approved by the bishop of the corresponding diocese (Article 22).
- The protection of Catholic organizations and religious freedom are guaranteed (Article 31).
- Due to the tension experienced in Germany, no member of a clerical or religious order may belong to a political party (Article 32).

It is true that Hitler, as Nazi leader and also as German Chancellor, made circumstantial political compromises, but the relations between the Catholic Church and the states that made up Germany, the Second Reich and Nazi Germany were not circumstantial. Despite the fact that Hitler and the rest of the Nazi hierarchs manifested their animosity towards the Catholic Church and towards Christianity on multiple occasions, as pointed out by Professor Blamires and despite the pagan elements that German Nazism contained, neither the Catholic social base, nor even the Protestant Christian one in Germany was openly opposed to Nazism. Most of the anti-Nazi activists were socialists and communists, and among them also Jews associated with these

political currents. Most of these activists were exterminated by Nazism yet not because they were Catholic or Christian, but because they were opponents of the regime.

6. The hypothesis of Professor Blamires about the fact that the Jewish problem was a part of the Christian-Jewish problem, due to its civilizational connotations, will never, fortunately, be corroborated historically. This is because Nazi Germany was defeated – in December 1941 against Moscow, in October 1942 at El Alamein, and in early 1943 at Stalingrad – with everything that followed until the fall of Berlin and the German surrender in May 1945. It is also highly unlikely that German Nazism and its allies – some of them downright Catholic, like the majority of the population of fascist Italy, Franco's Spain, Father Tiso's Slovakia, Horthy's Hungary and others – would have accompanied the persecution of Catholicism and Christianity by German Nazism.

There is no doubt about the anti-Jewish racial hatred that the Holocaust produced. The rest remains for the history of ideas.