



Zionism and Anti-Semitism

Max Nordau and Gustav Gottheil

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Max Simon Nordau and Gustav Gottheil

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ZIONISM

and

ANTI-SEMITISM



Zionism

AND

Anti-Semitism

BY

MAX NORDAU

AND

GUSTAV GOTTHEIL

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ZIONISM

BY

MAX NORDAU

ZIONISM

[ToC](#)

Among the persons of the educated classes who follow with any attention all the more important movements of the times, it would now be difficult to find one to whom the word "Zionism" is quite unknown. People are generally aware that it describes an idea and a movement that in the last years has found numerous adherents among the Jews of all countries, but especially among those of the East. Comparatively few, however, both among the Gentiles and the

Jews themselves, have a perfectly clear notion of the aims and ways of Zionism; the Gentiles, because they do not care sufficiently for Jewish affairs to take the trouble to inform themselves at first hand as to the particulars; the Jews, because they are intentionally led astray by the enemies of Zionism, by lies and calumnies, or because even among the fervent Zionists there are not many who have probed the whole Zionist idea to the bottom, and are willing or able to present it in a clear and comprehensible fashion, without exaggeration and polemical heat.

I will endeavor to furnish readers of good faith, who are not biased, and have no other interest than that of gaining authentic information about a phenomenon in contemporary history, as concisely and soberly as possible with all the facts, as they really are, not as they are reflected in muddled brains, or distorted and falsified by calumniators.

I.

Zionism is a new word for a very old object, in so far as it merely expresses the yearning of the Jewish people for Zion. Since the destruction of the second temple by Titus, since the dispersion of the Jewish nation in all countries, this people has not ceased to long intensely, and hope fervently, for the return to the lost land of their fathers. This yearning for, and hope in, Zion on the part of the Jews was the concrete, I might say, the geographical, aspect of their Messianic faith, which in its turn forms an essential part of their religion.

Messianism and Zionism were really, for nearly two thousand years, identical conceptions, and without caviling and hair-splitting interpretation, it would not be easy to make a distinction between the prayers for the appearance of the promised Messiah, and those for

the not less promised return to the historical home,—both of which stand side by side on every page of the Jewish liturgy. These prayers were, until a few generations ago, meant literally by every Jew, as they still are by the simple believing Jews. The Jews had no other idea than that they were a people which as a punishment for its sins had lost the land of its forefathers, which was condemned to live as strangers in strange lands, and whose great sufferings would first cease when it was again assembled on the consecrated soil of the Holy Land.

This gradually changed about the middle of the eighteenth century, when enlightenment first began to find its way into Jewdom, in the person of its first herald, Moses Mendelssohn, the popular philosopher. The faith of the Jews became more lukewarm; the educated classes, where they did not simply convert themselves to Christianity, began to regard the doctrines of their religion in a rationalist manner; for them the dispersion of the Jewish people was a final and unalterable fact; they emptied the conception of the Messiah and of Zion of every concrete meaning, and arranged for themselves a singular doctrine, according to which the Zion promised to the Jews was to be understood only in a spiritual sense, as the setting up of the Jewish monotheism in the whole world, as the future triumph of Jewish ethics over the less sublime and less noble moral teaching of the other nations. An American rabbi reduced this conception to the striking formula, "Our Zion is in Washington." The Mendelssohn teaching logically developed in the first half of the nineteenth century into the "Reform," which deliberately broke with Zionism. For the Reform Jew, the word Zion had just as little meaning as the word dispersion. He does not feel himself in any diaspora. He denies that there is a Jewish people and that he is a member of it. He desires only to belong to the people in whose midst he lives. For him Judaism is a purely religious conception which has nothing whatever to do with nationality. The land of his birth is his fatherland, and he will know of no other. The idea of a return to Palestine excites him either

to indignation or to laughter. He answers it with the well-known, silly, would-be witticism, "If the Jewish state is again set up in Palestine, I will ask to be its ambassador in Paris."

The thinking Jew did not fail, however, to perceive, in the course of time, that Reform Judaism is a half measure, a compromise, which like every compromise, contains the germ of destruction, as it cannot for one instant resist logical criticism. Whom shall the Reform Judaism satisfy? The believing Jew? He rejects it with the greatest abhorrence. The unbelieving Jew? He despises it as hypocrisy and phrase-mongering. The Jew who really desires to break with his national past and to be absorbed by his Christian surroundings? For that Jew, Reform Judaism does not suffice; he goes a step farther, the step that leads to the baptismal font. Still less does it satisfy the Jew who desires to guard Jewdom against destruction and to preserve it as an ethnical individuality. For to him an openly expressed abandonment of all national aspirations is synonymous with a self-condemnation of the Jewish people to a perhaps slow, but sure, death. Reform Judaism without Zionism, that is to say, without the wish and the hope for a reassembling of the Jewish people, has no future. At the best, it can only be regarded as a somewhat crooked path that leads to Christianity. He who desires to reach that goal can find straighter and shorter routes.

II.

And so it has come about that the generations which had been under the influence of the Mendelssohnian rhetoric and enlightenment, of reform and assimilation, have, in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, been followed by a new generation which seeks to take up a standpoint other than the traditional towards the question of Zion. These new Jews shrug their shoulders at that twaddle which has

been the fashion among rabbis and *literati* for the last hundred years, and which boasts of a "Mission of Jewdom," said to consist in this, that the Jews must live forever in dispersion among the peoples in order to act as their teachers and models of morality, and to educate them gradually to pure rationalism, to a general brotherhood of mankind, and to an ideal cosmopolitanism. They declare the mission swagger to be either presumption or foolishness. They, more modest and more practical, demand only the right for the Jewish people to live and to develop itself, according to its abilities, up to the natural limits of its type. They have become convinced that this is not possible in dispersion, as, under that condition, prejudice, hatred, and contempt continually follow and oppress them, and either stint their development, or force them to an ethnical mimicry which necessarily makes of them, instead of original types with a right to existence, mediocre or bad copies of foreign models. They therefore work methodically with a view to rendering the Jewish people once more a normal one, which lives on its own soil, and accomplishes all economical, intellectual, moral, and political functions of a civilized nation.

The goal cannot be reached at once. It lies in a future more or less near. It is an ideal, a desire, a hope, as the Messianic Zionism was and is. The new Zionism, which has been called the political one, differs, however, from the old, the religious, the Messianic one, in this,—that it disavows all mysticism, no longer identifies itself with Messianism, and does not expect the return to Palestine to be brought about by a miracle, but desires to prepare the way by its own efforts.

The new Zionism has grown in part only out of the internal impulsions of Judaism itself, out of the enthusiasm of modern educated Jews for their history and martyrology, out of the awakened consciousness of their racial qualities, out of their ambition to save the ancient blood, in view of the farthest possible future, and to add to

the achievements of their forefathers the achievements of their posterity.

On the other hand, Zionism is the effect of two impulses which came from without,—first, the principle of nationality, which for half a century ruled thought and feeling in Europe, and governed the politics of the world; secondly, Anti-Semitism, from which the Jews of all countries have more or less to suffer.

The principle of nationality has awakened self-consciousness in all the peoples; it teaches them to regard their peculiarities as qualities, and gives them a passionate desire for independence. It could not, therefore, pass over the educated Jews without leaving a trace. It induced them to remember who and what they are; to feel themselves, what they had unlearned, a people apart; and to demand for themselves a normal national destiny. This slow and painful work of the recovery of their national individuality was rendered easier by the attitude of the peoples, who eliminated them from among themselves as a foreign element, and put stress, without consideration or courtesy, on the real and imaginary contrasts, or at least differences, between themselves and the Jews.

The principle of nationality has, in its exaggerations, led to excesses. It has been led astray into Chauvinism, abased to idiotic hatred of the foreigner, degraded to grotesque self-worship. From this caricature of itself the Jewish nationalism is safe. The Jewish nationalist does not suffer from self-inflation; he feels, on the contrary, that he must make tireless efforts to render the name of Jew a title of honor. He modestly recognizes the good qualities of other nations, and seeks diligently to acquire them in so far as they harmonize with his natural capacities. He knows what terrible harm centuries of slavery or disability have done to his originally proud and upright character, and seeks to cure it by means of intense self-training. If, however, nationalism is on its guard against all illusions as to itself, this is a natural phase in the process of development from barbaric

selfish individualism to free humanism and altruism,—a phase the justification and necessity of which can only be denied by him who has no comprehension whatever of the laws of organic evolution, and is totally lacking in the historical sense.

Anti-Semitism has also taught many educated Jews the way back to their people. It has had the effect of a sharp trial which the weak cannot stand, but from which the strong emerge stronger or more confident in themselves. It is not correct to say that Zionism is but a "gesture of truculence" or an act of desperation against Anti-Semitism. It is true that more than one educated Jew has been moved only by Anti-Semitism to throw in his lot again with Jewdom, and he would again fall away if his Christian fellow-countrymen would receive him anew in a friendly spirit. But, in the case of most Zionists, Anti-Semitism only forced them to reflect upon their relation to the nations, and their reflection has led them to conclusions which would remain a lasting acquirement of their mind and heart, even if Anti-Semitism were to disappear completely from the world.

Be it well understood; the Zionism analyzed above is that of the educated and free Jews,—the Jewish élite. The uneducated mass, clinging to the old traditions, is Zionist without much reflection, from feeling, from instinct, from distress, and yearning. They suffer too much from the hardships of life, from the hatred of the peoples, from legal disabilities, and social outlawry; they feel that they cannot hope for any lasting amelioration of their situation so long as they must live as a powerless minority among a hostile majority. They desire to become a nation, to rejuvenate themselves by close contact with mother earth, and to become once more the masters of their destiny. This Zionist mass is still in part not quite free from mystical tendencies. It allows its Zionism to be pervaded, to a certain extent, by Messianic reminiscences, and blends it with religious emotions. They have certainly a clear idea of the aim, the reassembling of the Jewish nation, but not of the means. Still, even they have realized

already the necessity of themselves making efforts, and there is a vast difference between their active readiness for organization and their spirit of sacrifice, and the pious, prayer-indulging passiveness of the purely religious Messianist.

III.

The new or political Zionism has had here and there forerunners, whose first appearance dates back to the early half of the nineteenth century.

In the beginning of the eighties terrible persecutions broke out in Russia without any apparent reason, persecutions which cost hundreds of Jews their lives, destroyed the prosperity of thousands more, and induced tens of thousands to turn their backs on the land of their birth. This calamity brutally aroused the Jews from their hundred-year-old illusions and brought them again to a sense of reality. A Russian Jew, Dr. Pinsker, at that time wrote a small pamphlet entitled, "Auto-Emancipation," which was already a prelude to the modern political Zionism, and sketched all its motives without however developing them symphonically. He, at any rate, it was who gave its watchword to the whole movement: "The Jews are no mere religious community, they are a nation. They desire again to live in their own country as a united people. Their rejuvenation must be at the same time economical, physical, intellectual, and moral."

The Jewish youth of the middle schools and universities of Russia were profoundly affected by Pinsker's arguments. They began to found national Jewish societies. A number of students who studied at foreign universities became in their new surroundings apostles of Dr. Pinsker's idea, and found adherents here and there, for the most part among the young Jews of Vienna. Others preferred action to word, example to sermon, abandoned their studies, and emigrated to

Palestine in order to become peasants there,—Jewish peasants on historically Jewish soil. Deeply moved by this idealism of a peculiarly enthusiastic élite, cooler headed Jews in Russia and Germany began also to form societies in order to support from a distance the Palestine settlements of the Jewish pioneers. This took place without any combined plan and with no clear notion of the aim and the means. The societies were not conscious of the fact that they felt and acted as Zionists. They did not perceive the connection between the Jewish colonization of Palestine and the future of the whole Jewish nation. It was in their case rather an instinctive movement in which all kinds of obscure feelings are dimly discernible,—piety, archæological-historical sentimentality, charity, and pride of pedigree. At any rate, the minds of the Jews were prepared, the feeling was in the air, Jewdom was ripe for a change.

As is always the case in such historical moments, the man also appeared whose mission it was to express clearly the ideas obscurely felt by many, and to proclaim loudly the word they were waiting to hear. This man was Dr. Theodor Herzl. He published in the autumn of 1896 a concisely written booklet, "Der Judenstaat" (The Jewish State), which proclaimed, with a determination that till then had no precedent, the fact that the Jews are a people who demand for themselves all the rights of a people, and who desire to settle in a country where they can lead a free and complete political existence.

"Der Judenstaat" has become the real starting point of political Zionism,—the starting point, not the programme. Herzl's book is still the subjective work of a solitary thinker who speaks in his own name. Many details in it are literature. It is not easy to draw a sharp boundary line between the sober earnest of the social politician and the imagination of the prophetic poet. The real programme had to be a collective work which was certainly based on Herzl's book, and inspired by Herzl's visions of the future, but which rid itself of all fantastic details, and was built up solely from the elements of reality.

Herzl's book was at once greeted by tens of thousands of Jews, chiefly the young, as an act of redemption. It was not to remain merely printed paper, but should be transformed into a practical creation. New societies were founded everywhere, no longer with a view of the slow, petty settlement of Palestine by means of groups of Jews creeping surreptitiously as it were into the country, but by the preparation for an emigration "en masse" into the Holy Land, based on a formal treaty with the Turkish Government, guaranteed by the Great Powers, by which the former should accord the new settlers the right of self-government.

The premises of political Zionism are that there is a Jewish nation. This is just the point denied by the assimilation Jews, and the spiritless, unctuous, prating rabbis in their pay. Dr. Herzl saw that the first task he had to fulfil was the organizing of a manifestation which should bring before the world, and the Jewish people itself, in modern, comprehensible form the fact of its national existence. He convoked a Zionist congress, which in spite of the most furious attacks and most unscrupulous acts of violence,—the Jewish community of Munich where the congress was originally intended to be held protested against its meeting in that town,—assembled for the first time in Basel, the end of August, 1897, and consisted of two hundred and four selected representatives of the Zionist Jews of both hemispheres.

The first Zionist congress solemnly proclaimed in the face of the attentive world that the Jews are a nation, and that they do not desire to be absorbed by other nations. It vowed to work for the emancipation of that part of the Jewish race which is deprived of all rights, and which is dragging out its existence in undeserved misery, and to prepare for it a brighter future. It puts its aims on record in a programme unanimously adopted with the greatest enthusiasm. This ran as follows:—

"Zionism works to create for the Jewish people a home in

Palestine guaranteed by public law

"For the reaching of this goal the congress proposes to adopt the following means:—

"(1.) The well-regulated promotion of the settlement of Palestine by Jewish agriculturists, artisans, and manufacturers.

"(2.) The organization and knitting together of the whole Jewish community by means of proper local and general institutions, in accordance with the law of the different countries.

"(3.) The strengthening of the Jewish self-respect and national consciousness.

"(4.) Preparatory steps for obtaining the consent of the governments, which is necessary for the achievement of the aims of Zionism."

IV.

The first congress did not separate without having created a lasting organization. It elected a "Great Committee of Action," in which all countries with a somewhat considerable Jewish population are represented, and which in its turn selected a smaller "permanent committee" with its headquarters in Vienna, under the presidency of Dr. Herzl. It was followed in the three ensuing years by three further congresses, in 1898 and 1899, again in Basel, and in 1900 in London. The number of the delegates rose in 1898 to two hundred and eighty, in 1899 to three hundred and seventy, and in 1900 to four hundred and twenty. At every succeeding congress the regulations for election were more strictly enforced, the mandates more closely examined, and at the present moment the congress, which has become a permanent institution of the Zionist Jewdom, and which met for the fifth time in December, 1901, again in Basel, can with

justice claim to be the real representative of one hundred and eighty thousand electors.

He who desires to know what the Jews who have been represented at the congress have done up to the present time to realize the programme of Zionism drawn up by the first congress, has only to compare the various points of this programme with the facts we are going to record.

"(1.) The well-regulated promotion of the settlement of Palestine by Jewish agriculturists, artisans, and manufacturers."

Zionism rejects on principle all colonization on a small scale, and the idea of "sneaking" into Palestine. The Zionists have therefore devoted themselves preëminently to a zealous and tireless advocacy of the uniting of the already existing Jewish colonies in Palestine with those who until now have given them their aid and who of late have inclined towards the withdrawal of their support from them. The Zionists have also prepared the way for founding factories in the Holy Land, which will give employment to the Jewish workmen there, and have assured, by according a yearly subvention, the future existence of the model Hebraic school in Jaffa, which was about to close its doors for want of funds. They take care that the existing and promising beginnings of a Jewish colonization shall be looked after and maintained till the movement will be possible on a large scale.

"(2.) The organization and knitting together of the whole Jewish community by the means of proper local and general institutions in accordance with the law of the different countries."

The Zionist Jewish community is at present organized in both hemispheres in about nine hundred societies, which display great activity. In the matter of organization covering the whole of Jewdom, Zionism possesses national federations of its societies,—the "great" and the "smaller committee of action," and the congress which maintains a permanent secretarial office in Vienna. The cost of this

apparatus is covered by the voluntary yearly offerings of the Zionists, to which offerings the name of the old Jewish coinage is applied, and which accordingly are known as "shekels,"—their amount being in America forty cents, and in Western lands a unit of the coinage (one mark, one franc, one shilling, etc.). The payment of the shekel gives the right of vote for the congress. Zionism possesses its official organ, "Die Welt," published in German in Vienna. Its ideas are further set forth in about forty other periodicals in the Hebrew, German, Russian, Polish, Italian, English, French, and Roumanian languages, and in the Jewish-German and Judeo-Spanish jargons. Its American organ is the periodical, "The Maccabæan." It has founded numerous schools, Toynbee Halls, and educational institutes, and has recently begun to acquire a share in the administration of the Jewish communities, in order to devote their resources, more than has heretofore been the case with the anti-national or unthinking leaders, to the promoting of national Jewish instruction, education, and culture.

"(3.) Strengthening of the Jewish self-respect and national consciousness."

The Zionist societies use every effort that the members and the Jewish masses in general may know the history of their nation, and become acquainted with the sacred and profane literature in the Hebrew tongue. They teach the Jews to hold their heads high, to be proud of their descent, and to despise the Anti-Semitic lies, calumnies, and insults. They care, in the measure of their strength, for the amelioration of the hygiene of the Jewish proletariat, for its economic improvement by means of association and solidarity, for well-directed education of children, and for the instruction of the women. They give the young students a goal for their efforts and an ideal in life. They preach the duty of leading a faultless, spiritual life, the rejection of a crude materialism, into which the assimilation Jews, on account of the want of a worthy ideal, are only too apt to sink, and strict self-control in word and deed. They found athletic societies in

order to promote the long neglected physical development of the rising generation. They give a new impulse to the celebration of Jewish historical feasts and memorial days. In many instances they even make themselves outwardly conspicuous by wearing insignia. The Zionist regards it as contemptible to conceal his nationality. He wishes to be recognized as a Jew, and as he always behaves himself in a natural, unaffected way, plays no comedy of imitation, wishes to deceive nobody about his extraction and identity, intrudes upon no one under a false flag, his relations to his Christian neighbors and fellow-countrymen are sounder, truer, more frank and dignified than those of the assimilation Jew, who makes painful and useless efforts, which disgust every Christian possessing a modicum of good taste, to hide the fact that he is a Jew.

"(4.) Preparatory steps to obtain the consent of the governments necessary to achieve the aims of Zionism."

Several of the governments whose opinion will eventually be decisive in the matter have been, by means of memorials, reliably informed of the aims of Zionism; and there has been no want of very important encouragements and promising expressions of sympathy with its tendencies.

For the moment the committee of action is trying to obtain from Turkey a charter for the colonization of such land in Palestine as can be disposed of, and which at present is lying waste, and for the opening of its neglected resources. The exploiting of such a charter is not possible without considerable sums of money. In order to be armed financially for the time that Turkey will accord such a charter, the second Zionist congress (1898) decided to found a national Jewish bank institute, the "Jewish Colonial Trust," with its headquarters in London. This resolution was carried out the following year (1899). The bank has been brought into being. Its capital in shares is two million pounds sterling. It can, by the statutes, start business when one eighth of this capital, two hundred and fifty

thousand pounds sterling, has been actually paid up. This has already been done.

Another financial instrument of Zionism is the "National Fund," created by the fifth congress (1901), which is raised by voluntary subscription and which is to amount to two hundred thousand pounds sterling. The half of this sum is to be devoted to the purchase of land in Palestine, the other half to remain an intangible common property of the Jewish people, which will by means of compound interest and gifts continually increase, so that at important junctures the interest may be used for great national purposes.

V.

I have taken pains to show, in as brief and as objective a manner as possible, what Zionism is, what it desires to do, how it came into being, and how it has developed up to the present. I have also repeatedly mentioned that its most violent opponents have arisen from the Jewish community.

Many of them content themselves with libeling and insulting the leaders of the Zionist movement. This kind of hostility they who are vilified can afford to despise. Men who, without expecting the slightest advantage to themselves, out of the purest, most unselfish love for the unhappy ones of their race, out of reverence for their forefathers, out of a general spirit of philanthropy, have made the greatest sacrifices in money, time, strength, and health, in order to elevate their people and to free millions of innocent, persecuted men from the bitterest misery, have the right smilingly to shrug their shoulders when irresponsible fanatics or pitiable paid scribes reproach them with self-interest or with vanity.

Besides these opponents of a lower type, there are others who do

not merely lie and slander, but also seek to argue. They delight in comparing the apostles of Zionism with the false Messiahs like the notorious Sabbathai Levi, who have appeared only too often in Jewish history, and who have always done the greatest mischief to the Jewish people they have deceived. To compare Zionism with the vagaries or impostures of false Messiahs of the Sabbathai Levi kind presupposes great foolishness or great bad faith. Zionism is precisely characterized by the complete absence of any mystical element. It promises its adherents no miracles; on the contrary, it continually impresses on them that their emancipation from a situation they find intolerable can only be the result of their own work, the fruit of their long, strenuous, and combined efforts.

People declare Zionism to be a dream, and deny that its practical realization is possible. To objections of this category the Zionists have a hundred times given a sufficient answer. This simple negative criticism can be passed over. Its only real refutation is in deeds, such as the Zionists have already performed and as they intend further to perform.

The one point which probably forever excludes the possibility of an understanding between Zionist and non-Zionist Jews is the question of the Jewish nationality. Whoever maintains and believes that the Jews are not a nation can indeed be no Zionist; he cannot join a movement which is only justified when it is admitted that it desires to create normal conditions of existence for a people living and suffering under abnormal conditions. He who, on the contrary, is convinced that the Jews are a people must necessarily become Zionist, as only the return to their own country can save the everywhere hated, persecuted, and oppressed Jewish nation from physical and intellectual destruction.

Many Jews, especially those of the West, have, in their heart of hearts, completely broken with Judaism, and they will probably soon do so openly, and if they do not break away, their children or

grandchildren will. These desire to be entirely absorbed by their Christian fellow-countrymen. They resent it as a great annoyance when other Jews proclaim that they are a people apart, and desire to bring about an unequivocal separation between themselves and the other nations. Their great and constant fear is to be denounced as strangers in the land of their birth, of which they are free citizens. They fear that this will be more than ever the case, if a large section of the Jewish people openly claim for themselves rights as an autonomous nation, and still worse, if anywhere in the world a political and intellectual center of Judaism should really be created, in which millions of Jews would be grouped together, united as a nation.

All these feelings on the part of the assimilation Jews are comprehensible. From their standpoint they are justified. These Jews, however, have no right to expect that Zionism should for their sake commit suicide. The Jews who are happy and contented in the land of their birth, and who indignantly reject the suggestion of abandoning it, are about a sixth of the Jewish nation, say two millions out of twelve. The other five sixths, or ten millions, feel themselves profoundly unhappy in the countries where they reside, and they have every reason for doing so. These ten millions cannot be called upon to submit forever unresistingly to their thralldom, and to renounce every effort for redemption from their misery, merely in order that the comfort of two million happy and contented Jews may not be disturbed.

The Zionists are, moreover, firmly convinced that the misgivings of the assimilation Jews are unfounded. The reassembling of the Jewish people in Palestine will not have the consequences which they fear. When there is again a Jewish country, the Jews will have the choice of emigrating thither, or of remaining in their present home. Many will doubtless remain, and will prove by their choice that they prefer the land of their birth to their kindred and to their national soil. It is barely possible that the Anti-Semites will still throw the scornful and

perfidious "stranger!" in their face. But the real Christians among their fellow-countrymen, those who think and feel according to the teaching and examples of the Holy Writ, will be convinced that they do not regard themselves as strangers in the land of their birth, and will then rightly comprehend the real meaning of their voluntary renunciation of a return to a land of the Jews, and of their fidelity to their homes and to their Christian neighbors.

The Zionists know that they have undertaken a work of unexampled difficulty. Never before has the effort been made to transplant, peacefully, in a short space of time, to another soil, several million people from various countries; never has it been attempted to transform millions of physically degenerate proletarians, without trade or profession, into agriculturists and cattle breeders, to bring townbred hucksters and trades people, agents, and men of sedentary occupation again into contact with the plough and the mother earth. It will be necessary to accustom Jews of different origins to one another, to train them practically to national unity, and at the same time to overcome the superhuman obstacles of difference of language, unequal civilization, and of the manners of thought, prejudices, likes, and dislikes of foreign nations, brought severally from the lands of their birth.

What gives the Zionists the courage to begin this labor of Hercules is the conviction that they are doing a necessary and useful work, a work of love and civilization, a work of justice and wisdom. They desire to save eight to ten millions of their kindred from intolerable suffering. They desire to free the nations among whom they now vegetate from a presence which is considered disagreeable. They wish to deprive Anti-Semitism—which everywhere lowers public morals and develops the very worst instincts—of its victim. They wish to make unquestionable producers out of the Jews at present reproached with being parasites. They desire to fertilize with their sweat and till with their hands a country that is to-day a desert, until it

is again the flowering garden it has once been. Thus will Zionism in an equal degree serve the unhappy Jew and the Christian peoples, civilization and the economy of the world; and the services which it can render, and wishes to render, are great enough to justify its hope that the Christian world, too, will appreciate them, and support the movement with its active sympathy.

ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE

BY

DR. GUSTAV GOTTHEIL



THE TRUE NATURE OF ANTI- SEMITISM IN EUROPE

[ToC](#)

Anti-Semitism would be simply ridiculous if it were not so terribly in earnest. People who make that word a war cry upon a whole race ought to know its meaning, especially if it is to express the chief

reason for their hostility. Before they prefix the "anti" to a word they should be sure that they understand the "pro," lest they be found to fight shadows merely, specters of their own creation. But how far is this the case? How many ever tried to learn the sense of the designation under which they have enrolled themselves? Suppose we ask, "What does Semitism mean?" Only this, must be our answer,—that it is a summing up of the ruling dispositions, habits, mental endowments, and moral peculiarities of all the races comprised under the name of Semites, so named from their supposed descent from the eldest of the three sons of Noah. So ineradicable are these features supposed to be that, no matter where the races have lived or are now living, no matter what stage of civilization they have passed through or have reached now, no matter what influence non-Semitic races have exercised upon them, they remain essentially the same. What are these features? Who will formulate the precise standard by which a descendant of Shem is unfailingly known and set apart from those of Ham or Japhet? When we consider that we are pointed back for the meaning of Semite to antediluvian times, that is to say, to one of the oldest myths of the world, we must admit that it would indeed be the wonder of wonders if a large section of mankind have a family likeness so clear that they are marked off from the rest. And this, despite the long ages that have passed since the supposed separation of the sons of Noah and their wide dispersion; despite their triumphs and defeats in wars, in state building, and church formation; despite the wide diversity between them in their literature, their philosophy, their art, their trades and industries. Are the Semites still characterized by the same gifts and tendencies of mind and heart, ruled by the same passions, subject to the same limitations, as were their ancestors in all their generations?

Among them there is a fraction, and that fraction again scattered over vast areas, in various states of civilization, and under diversified kinds of governments, enjoying liberty and rights of citizenship in the one, and groaning under relentless oppression in the other,—are they

still none other than Semites? Are they so permeated with Semitic features that they can never amalgamate with their surroundings and become full-weighted citizens of the state where they pitch their tents,—offer them what inducements you may,—but must be kept at arms length and treated as suspects? Has nature lost all her power in this instance and become faithless to herself? Will the Hebrew child not love the land of its birth and feel the kinship with the people whose language and mode of life become its own? But why heap up improbabilities and impossibilities? The designation fastened upon us as a stigma was a fraud from the beginning, a conscious fraud and a malicious invention. It was "conceived in mischief and brought forth in iniquity." What was meant was not anti-Semitism, but *anti-Judaism*; but that name had to be avoided because it implies hostility to a religion and a creed; and that, again, might be construed as springing from an awakened zeal for the instigator's own Church; a suspicion they could not permit to rest upon them. No, it is not the Jew's religion that makes him obnoxious and a danger to the state, but it is his descent from the eldest son of Noah. True, the Jews have at no time adopted it as a national name. "Semitic" is of comparatively recent date, an abstract word intended merely for scientific classification, never meant for discrimination of any portion of the Semitic races, or to become a hissing and a byword or a mask for robbers of human rights and destroyers of human happiness.

The victims of this crusade are not a nameless horde for whom a designation had to be coined; they are known to history for three thousand years as Hebrews, Israelites, Jews, and they have no mind to exchange these names for any other. But a new "Hep Hep" was wanted, and so "Semites" was hauled from the world of books, disfigured, and fastened upon the Jewish gabardine in noble emulation of the barbarism of the Middle Ages. The more senseless, the more welcome it was as a bugbear to frighten the populace and to stir into flames the sparks of fanaticism which are always smouldering in the hearts of the vulgar, whether of low degree or high

degree, worldly or ghostly.

The strangest thing, however, in this learned falsification is that it should have succeeded so well with people calling themselves Christians and clinging to that name often after they have given up all its historic substance. Is Christianity not purely Semitic at the core? Is it not based upon the Semitic conception of the relation between man and his Creator? The great efforts to liberalize and rationalize the Church which the last century witnessed, up to Professor Harnack's recent attempt to sum up "*Das Wesen des Christenthums*,"—what are all these but endeavors to free it from foreign accretions and envelopments and to bring its Semitic character into greater prominence?

It is the only Asiatic conception of religion that has subdued Europe and America, and that still holds undisputed sway over all its diverse nationalities. The very name which symbolizes to them all that is noblest, purest, and most blessed, points to that source as unfailingly as the needle of the compass to the poles. Harnack claims that Christianity is not one religion amongst others, but *The Religion*, the only one fulfilling all the conditions of its highest ideal. The Being in whom that fulness of light was revealed,—was he not a Semite of the Semites? Did he ever deny his origin? Christianity means *Messianity*, and the whole idea of a Mashiach,—the anointed, namely, anointed ruler,—is most intensely national and, therefore, intensely Semitic,—from which indisputable fact it follows that the loftiest conception of religion came to the world from that source. Thence came the Bible,—the book of the world which has been translated into every living tongue and dialect, and to the elucidation of which hosts of scholars still devote their lives. Painting, sculpture, music, poetry, have attempted their highest flights under its inspiration. From countless pulpits its moral and religious truths are expounded, week after week, and on every great occasion of national significance,—in whatever part of Christendom it may occur,—the

Songs of Zion are awakened as the fittest expressions of the prevailing sentiment. The Psalter is the most wonderful of existing books,—at home alike in the palace of the king and the cottage of the peasant, the inexhaustible theme of our masters of music. Noeldeke, Protestant professor at the University of Strasburg, one of the great lights of Semitic scholarship, declares that "by the side of the Psalms all other religious hymns appear as pale imitations merely." On that field were gathered the sheaves which a master hand has wound together into the One Universal Prayer, in which all Churches join with one accord. And the Universal Day of Rest,—that one sure blessing of the laboring man,—whence did it come? What other legislator had the divine audacity to make its observance one of the foundation laws of his constitution, and to give it precedence, even over all moral enactments?

Professor R.F. Grau of the conservative school of theology writes: —

"God is a living, holy, loving Being. He is not first and foremost to be scientifically comprehended, but worshipped and revered in the heart, and because He is such a Being, the Semites had to be chosen as His apostles to the whole world. For they had a heart for Him in the beginning.... The Semite has the religion of the Infinite, and as this is the perfect religion, ... the Church, as the Community of Christ, has sprung from the Semitic mustard seed, although at present myriads of Indo-germanics dwell under the branches of the tree."

In the face of admissions like these by men who have a right to be heard in the matter, and considering that the tree can never change the nature of the root from which it sprang, the conclusion is not unwarranted that "anti-Semitic" is a synonym for "anti-Christian."

Its success is due to the still persistent prejudice against the Jews among so many Christians,—all their professions to the contrary notwithstanding. And it continues for several reasons. One is its long

duration; it has lasted for ages and is ingrained in their feelings and ideas. What if it be shown ever so clearly that it is unjust, unreasonable, yea, even unchristian!—that will not materially change the temper of the great masses of the people. The common man is rarely swayed by the force of arguments; the power of a principle, so weighty with the thinkers, is of no consequence to him. He belongs to the material world, and to make good his place in it is the aim toward which all his energies are bent. For things spiritual he has neither time nor capacity. He is ruled by the sentiments which were implanted in him in his youth and by his immediate surroundings. All thinking must be done for him; all new ideas must be presented to him, as it were, ready made and in tangible form. He does not push himself forward, but must be led onward by hands that understand him and his ways. But in this instance, his guides are not particularly anxious to bring about a change for the better,—even if we suppose that they consider the liberation from prejudice against the Jews a betterment. They have their own theological difficulty to contend with. The Jews are still unconverted, and the missions established and maintained for the purpose of winning them over can show no better results now than in the past. The chief controversy between the Church and Israel stands to-day where it stood when it was first raised at Jerusalem eighteen centuries ago. A judicial sentence of a court at Jerusalem has grown into a pivotal point on which, as the Church declares, turns the salvation of mankind for time and eternity; and if she is right, the Jews must be wrong. Since that fatal occurrence, Christianity, in one form or another, has conquered Europe and America, and has planted outposts in almost every part of the earth, but has not been able to subdue the Jew. Every conceivable means to make him surrender has been tried, including that of the jailor and the executioner and all the horrors that lie between them,—expulsion, pillage, social degradation, impaling in ghettos, and what not—but in vain. The same policy is continued to this day as far as the present more civilized state of the Christians permits; but still in vain. So far are

their persecutors from having brought the Jews to their knees, that the self-consciousness of the race, as a whole, has deepened; and their advance in general culture enables them to measure swords, intellectually, with their accusers and to give a reason for the faith that is in them.

All the conditions of this interminable conflict are against them. In numbers they are a vanishing minority, and still more weakened by their dispersion over the face of the earth, unorganized, without any ecclesiastical authority in their Church that could direct them or act in their name. Every individual Jew must face the world's hostility single-handed, and be, religiously, his own priest, his own pope. Allies he has none, advocates of his cause are few and far between. The favors of his friends are often more humiliating than the attacks of his enemies. Still he holds his own, and if for the last century or so he has carried on a reformation of his ancient rituals, he has done so from his own initiative and in his own way, which is not that into which it has been tried so long to force or to lure him. At the same time a revival of Jewish literature has taken place which not only has brought to light the long-forgotten treasures of the past, but has shown the large part the Jews have in the general progress of mankind. The ecclesia triumphant has no victory to record in this section of her battlefields, and it is not in ordinary human nature frankly to admit a defeat in such an unequal struggle. Only one had a right to expect that a Church that claims to have regenerated the human race and to have lifted the slave of his blind instincts into "the glorious liberty of the children of God" would have risen superior to the common weakness. Instead of that, almost throughout Christendom, the crusade against the Jews is being preached and the policy of repression loudly demanded.

On what ground? It is said that they dominate everywhere—in finance, in law courts, in politics, in art, in literature, in the press, in trade and manufacture. But how do they achieve this astounding feat? How do the Jews succeed in so lording it over the immense majority?

By witchcraft? Is it by magic that a few bankers and brokers keep all their competitors in subjugation and handle them at their will and to their own profit? Is it by sorcery that they force their way to the universities and academies? Are they in possession of secret formulas by which they can direct the currents of trade at their will? Recently, loud complaints were raised in several of the German state parliaments that there were too many Jewish judges and lawyers in their lands, and the governments were exhorted to put an end to the scandal. No charges of incompetency or exploitation were raised against the Hebrews that "handle the law." Only it was declared that a Christian shrunk from taking an oath at the hand of a Jewish lawyer. If this be so, how is it that the people go to them in numbers that excite the envy of their non-Jewish colleagues? All the statements about the alleged power of the Jews are ridiculous exaggerations, trumped up to scare the imagination of the thoughtless, as has been proved over and over again. But even reduced to their true measure, they prove, not the possession of magic, but of soundness of mind, of unimpaired energy, and of all the other needful conditions for success, which the Jews have kept intact despite all the attempts made to crush the unbelievers into the dust. The outcry against them is their vindication; people do not fear weaklings, do not raise alarms against perils which can be pushed aside by an effort of the will. The few must own inherent sources of strength if the many resort to the coward's weapon of lies and slander. And in this instance the admission of the truth is an implied homage to the religion which the victors in the unequal struggle profess and defend. For it is indisputable that this is the source to which the formation of the Jewish mind and heart must be attributed. Let me cite, for one proof, the admission of the most persistent and most powerful oppressor of the Jews, the procurator of the Russian synod. Half the number of all Hebrews are subjects of Russia. They came under her dominion when she conquered and incorporated the Polish provinces; they are kept there under the most stringent laws, and life is made to them as burdensome as possible.

"The Pale" is a gigantic ghetto where the oldest form of rabbinism prevails to this day. Yet the same fear of the superiority of the Jewish mind haunts the government; it is the alleged reason for practically closing up all the avenues of the higher education for them. Only *three per cent* of the total number of students are admitted to the universities and to the technical schools. But more than a hundred thousand common soldiers are drafted from the Jews into the armies and sent to all parts of the gigantic empire, kept there during the best part of their lives, without any prospect of promotion, and often going only to die in the defense of territories which, if they were civilians, they would not be permitted to enter. The Russian Torquemada, not long ago, openly declared that not a single Jew should be permitted to settle amongst the peasantry, even within the Pale, because he would be the only sober man amongst a population that cannot resist the temptations of strong drink. Strange spectacle indeed! Men banished from places where they wish to live because they are too good for their surroundings! forced to remain where they can hardly eke out a miserable living. The question, surely, is justified. How did that poverty-stricken mass of oppressed people succeed in preserving its freedom from a national vice in a country where its ancestors have dwelt for long generations? Can a great virtue be maintained by sorcery? The common experience is that of the poet—

"Misery doth bravest mind abate."

What but their religion made them proof against the arrows of a fate which, for duration and cruelty, is without a parallel in history! This conclusion is further corroborated by the fact that the same virtue of sobriety characterizes them everywhere, and makes them an object of envy to their non-Jewish neighbors,—nay, forces the honest temperance advocate to hold them up before his Christian audiences as examples to shame them into going and doing likewise; rather, let me say, into staying at home and doing likewise. For one of the witchcraft mysteries of Judaism is that its home is not in the church,

but that the church is in the home. The Jew's salvation is in nowise dependent upon rabbi and synagogue, but upon wife and children. They are his congregation to whom he ministers as priest in fulfilment of the great charter word of dedication, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The deepest roots of the Jewish faith rest and are nourished in the domestic soil. The synagogue has nothing to offer to the faithful which he cannot find in his own tent. Ten men gathered together with a Sepher Tora (scroll of the Mosaic law) in their midst, form a Kahal Hakodesh (sacred body). No man becomes a drunkard with wife and children and aged parents near him for guardian angels. The greatest difficulty the Jewish reformation has to face is what to substitute for the old ceremonials where they have become impracticable, and thus to preserve the essentially domestic character of the ancient faith. Is it thinkable that the Jew would be less objectionable to his surroundings were he to lose his sturdy horror of intemperance, and thus "assimilate" more freely with his neighbors of different faiths? It is not thinkable when we consider the great efforts made by Christians everywhere to redeem their people from their bondage to strong drink and the misery resulting from it. The Jew is the *natural ally of the temperance advocates*; and if he is not found in their ranks, it is simply because he never knew from experience the need of that reformation.

And never will he know, as long as his passionate fondness for home and his longing for family love abide within him. At present, this, generally speaking, is still the case; the poorest and least cultivated classes are not excepted; nay, just in that class it is one of the most noteworthy features. If the uncouth immigrant from Eastern Europe stoops to the lowest kinds of peddling, or, for a mere pittance, wastes his life in the stifling sweatshop; if he is not very scrupulous in his dealings with his transient patrons, and does not hold city ordinances as inviolable as those of the "Shulchan Aruch" (code of ceremonials), the central motive is his ever present thought of his family; even when he has not yet scraped together enough pennies to pay for their fare

to the new home, they are constantly with him in his mind. This is not offered as a defense for over-reaching and cannot be allowed by a magistrate as a plea for law-breaking; but it is offered to the unprejudiced reader in compliance with Spinoza's golden rule: Human errors must not be ridiculed and condemned, but *understood*. *Si duo faciunt idem, non est idem*. This wise caution is the more to be heeded in the present instance, as, from the same source, devotion to home life, springs another fine feature of Jewry; go down in the scale as deep as you may, they are an industrious, toilsome class of people, often turning their narrow homes into workshops where old and young ply a handicraft from early morn to the late evening hours. Hundreds of men and women, arriving in this country after they have passed the middle life, learn trades and work at them till their trembling hands can hold the tools no longer or the light fades from their overstrained eyes. Among them there are not a few that have seen better days at their native places, or are deeply learned in the Law. They are quick in seizing the secret of a successful trade of paying manufacture, and not rarely better the instruction; a skill for which they are hated and despised by their own aristocracy in the markets, and branded as spoilers of every good thing as soon as it appears. If this aptitude and eagerness for trade be a fault, the Christians have themselves to blame for it. Even a superficial glance at the history of Israel proves that as long as the people lived on their native soil, and could live out their own lives, they showed neither skill nor desire for mercantile pursuits; that their legislation, their religion, their poetry and prophesying, and their ethical ideas presuppose a nation of shepherds and tillers of the soil. For the great change in the ruling disposition of the Jews, since their dispersion, those alone are responsible who now reproach them for it. The first Christians were Jewish ploughmen and herdsmen; the Apostles mostly Judæan peasants and fishermen. The finest parables and similes in the speeches of Jesus are taken from the peasants' occupation and experience. And even to this day thousands of the scattered race are

ready to seize again the plough and the spade, if they are given a chance, and not a few have done so even under the most disheartening conditions. The fact is, the pagan Mercury proved a more merciful god to the Jews than the Christian Jesus, as he was taught and practised by the mediæval Church. He gloated over the sufferings of those who were of his own flesh and blood. No wonder they sought refuge under the wings of the heathen deity and became adepts in the art which he symbolized.

But suppose it were true that all the Jews dote on traffic as their dearest occupation,—what of it? The British have the nickname of "a nation of shopkeepers" fastened on them; yet they were and are the greatest benefactors of the human race, carrying the blessings of civilization to half the peoples of the globe. Commerce has done more for the peace of the world than all the preaching, praying, and prophesying taken together. A great railroad, a steamship line, a cable or a telephone wire, a commercial treaty, a tariff convention,—these are the modern bonds that hold the remotest parts of the earth together, and make them equally abhor war and its ravages. A falling off in the exports, a shrinking of the value of investments, an unforeseen competitor in the markets of the world, cause the rulers of the most civilized nations more anxiety than any adverse political combination. For the former threaten the peace and welfare of the home life of the people, on whose contentment they rely for the defense of their claims in all their political intricacies. A class of people credited with the mastery of the art of buying and selling should, therefore, be welcome to every country and given the amplest freedom and encouragement to ply their skill, provided, of course, they do not carry their hoarded profits out of the country and enrich other nations by them. But where do the Jews think of such a thing? Their own country, if Palestine may still be so denominated, is one of the poorest in the world, and what little revival there has lately been perceptible is due to the colonies established there by Jewish peasants who, under most trying conditions, labor to restore the soil

to its ancient fertility, after the long sleep into which it has sunk. Jewish wealth can be enjoyed, and is being enjoyed, in no other way than non-Jewish. Its owners are charged by its religious teachers with being only too willing to imitate the luxuries and extravagances of their neighbors. The same snares are spread for the feet of their offspring as for those of Gentile birth; the tempters that lie in wait for them are liberal enough to ignore distinctions between the various creeds. I will not stoop to any defense of my race from the vulgar charge that they are cheaters; that each and all will always try, right or wrong, to secure the best of any bargain into which a poor Gentile may enter with them. Those whom the commercial standing of the Jews, here and elsewhere, has not yet cured of this slanderous prejudice will not be converted by my pleading. Envy is an incurable disease; jealousy makes blind, and the common saying is surely true, that none are so blind as those who will not see. But neither have I the least desire to hide or gloss over our real failings and shortcomings. Those who cannot rest on their own real merits and accept the blame for their undeniable demerits must not dare to challenge the judgment of the world. The Jew does dare it, and all he asks of his critics is fairness, impartiality, justice. What I have said to his praise and for his defense was intended solely to assist the fairminded reader in forming a just opinion of an agitation which in Europe embitters, cripples, and darkens thousands of lives, which, under better treatment, would be spent in contentment and general usefulness.

It is for this purpose only that I will briefly add two more traits of the Jews, equally valuable and undeniable. One is their charity; they care for their poor, their sick, their aged, if destitute, as the numerous institutions prove, found in every place where they dwell in sufficient number to maintain them. Ungrudgingly they assume the heavy burdens which this "exclusiveness" imposes upon them. Blame them for it who may; the right-minded will not, especially when assured that this feeling of pity is not the privilege of the well-to-do among them only. The working classes have always something to spare from their

scanty earnings for "Z'dakah," the religious term in common use for charity, which, significantly enough, in biblical Hebrew means "justice." The idea that charity is an essential part of worship has been bred into them by long tradition, and continues to be regarded as such, wherever rabbinical Judaism survives in full force. From childhood every Jew knows the saying of Simon the Just, one of the last men of the Great Synagogue:—

"The whole world rests on these three pillars;
Law, Worship, and Charity."

The other trait is their zeal in the education of their children.

One of the standard objections to the Hebrews is their "forwardness"; socially, it is a disagreeable and annoying fault, but otherwise a gift of no little value. Forwardness is the soul of all progress and advancement. Call it that, call it self-help, call it energy, call it self-reliance, call it by the popular name of wide-awakeness, and you transfigure the fault into a merit. How the Jew was able to preserve it in any one of its forms is one of the many miracles of his history, seeing that the world has left nothing untried to cast the Jews backward to the last depth of self-despair. An exhibition of his forwardness might be seen at the doors of the public schools in the lower districts of the city, notably at the time of admission of new pupils. The poorest of the Jewish fathers and mothers would be seen wrangling for the registration of their little ones, as if it were for their daily bread. And may this not also serve for a proof that the parents are willing to surrender their offspring to the influence of these schools, and see them thoroughly Americanized?

By these signs ye shall know the Jews, wherever ye find them; they

may, therefore, be called racial. In every other respect they are neither better nor worse than other people of the corresponding stages of life. Every variety of character is found among them; virtue and vice are distributed among them. Let Americans not stigmatize them as "undesirable immigrants," and close their hospitable gate upon them. They bring with them qualities which are an ample compensation for their defects, and their well-to-do brethren are not behindhand in seeing to it that they become no public burden. The American people have repeatedly shown the door to those who came hither for the purpose of preaching anti-Semitism, thereby publicly testifying that they would have none of that disgrace to our age. What exists of it in social life is not worth arguing against. It will and must disappear in a country, the civil order of which is based upon the principle of equal rights to all law-abiding citizens, to whatever race or religion they may belong. "A fair field and no favor." This good old saying comprises all our demands.

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