The Faith of Fallen Jews

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi
And the Writing of Jewish History

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32. Ibid., p. xv.
34. One small and random example will suffice. In Manasseh ben Israel’s Thesouro dos Preceptos we read: “E assi aquelle que está em terra donde ay Esmoga, e não entra has ve salom nella, se chama mão vizinho” (“and so he who is in a place where there is a synagogue and does not enter it, God forbid, is called a bad neighbor”). The phrase “God forbid” has been retained in Hebrew in the midst of the Portuguese sentence.
35. Fundamento sólido; baza y thypo de la Sacro Sancta y divina Ley, siendo doctrina legal y moral para instruir, enseñar, plantar, y raigar sus fundamentos, imprimiéndolos en los corazones del pueblo escogido de Dios, a fin de que mamen la leche de la doctrina de nuestros Santos Padres (Amsterdam, 1729).

9: ASSIMILATION AND RACIAL ANTI-SEMITISM
THE IBERIAN AND THE GERMAN MODELS

Named for the German rabbi and scholar, the Leo Baeck Institute, based in New York, is an organization devoted to the study of German-speaking Jewry. This article originated as the Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture that Yerushalmi delivered in 1982. In it, Yerushalmi drew a series of intriguing historical parallels between the experience of people of Jewish ancestry in medieval Spain and in modern Germany. Whereas chapter 8—“The Re-education of Marranos in the Seventeenth Century”—focused on the experience of the descendants of converts as they returned to Judaism, this lecture dealt with the experience of those converts who attempted to integrate fully into Christian society and religion.

Throughout the lecture, Yerushalmi acknowledged the somewhat unorthodox endeavor of comparing historical periods that are as different as “apples and pears.” He maintained, however, that just as apples and pears are both fruits, so the experiences of those who converted away from Judaism in medieval Spain and in modern Germany bear “phenomenological affinities” worth exploring. In particular, he was interested in the way in which each society, or elements within each, ascribed racial characteristics to groups of former Jews, asserting that they possessed biological qualities as Jews that lingered for generations after their abandonment of Judaism.

Given that the address was the Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture, and thus his audience was more familiar with modern Germany than with medieval Spain, Yerushalmi devoted the bulk of his remarks to a discussion of the latter. Around half of Iberian Jews converted to Christianity, mostly under extreme duress, during the course of the fifteenth century. When many of the conversos took advantage of the social mobility that came with their new religious identities, “the traditional mistrust of the Jew as outsider now gave way to an even more alarming fear of the converso as insider.” A backlash took place, which began with a series of popular riots from the middle of the fifteenth century. It spread to formal regulations that banned “New Christians” from many roles of authority and other socially significant positions. Because the people against whom these regulations were aimed were formally Christian by faith, they had to be differentiated by their ancestry. “Not religion but blood was their determining factor.” Thus, the regulations were known as estatutos de limpieza de sangre (statutes of purity of blood). Initially resisted in some quarters, they were eventually embraced by the crown and the papacy in the mid-sixteenth century and, in some places, remained in force well
into the modern period. The racial underpinnings of the attitude to "New Christians" embodied in these statutes (and in other sources that Yerushalmi discussed) came "perilously close" to the modern notion of race that anchored Nazism.

Yerushalmi used this comparison to interrogate a common historiographical distinction between medieval antisemitism, motivated by theology, and modern antisemitism, motivated by new sciences such as biology. In fact, one of the proponents of this distinction, the Israeli historian Uriel Tal, had delivered a lecture on that very topic at the Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture eleven years previously, entitled "Religious and Anti-Religious Roots of Modern Anti-Semitism." Yerushalmi's analysis indicated, however, that "the assumption of a total absence of racism in pre-modern anti-Semitism may yet have been too glib and facile." Racial anti-semitism did not mark a complete break with premodern attitudes to Jews, and "Secularism did not create modern racial anti-Semitism." Rather, racial antisemitism, based on the perceived "essential immutability" of Jewish biological characteristics, arose out of circumstances in which Jewish assimilation was possible or mandated, including in premodern times. This recognition led Yerushalmi to identify "an immanent dialectic in the process of Jewish assimilation into societies constrained by new circumstances to accept them, but conditioned by deeply ingrained attitudes to reject them."

Yerushalmi ended the lecture with a brief introduction to a related area of inquiry. He noted that in both medieval Spain and modern Germany, people of Jewish descent who had left their faith were often overrepresented in cultural fields that exhibited a "special creativity." He suggested that this was to be explained by the fact that assimilated Jews suffered "the anxiety of hovering between acceptance and rejection, integration and marginality" and "found release for their inner tensions and anxieties along paths that were somehow off the beaten track." Yerushalmi did not have the opportunity to expand on these comments in his lecture, but they contain the seeds of his later work on Sigmund Freud. Freud, after all, was the classic modern assimilated Jew situated on the border of acceptance and rejection, and he occupied Yerushalmi's scholarly attention for much of the 1980s.

The title of this lecture may have already forewarned you that I am about to make a foray into comparative history, in this instance—between certain tragic aspects of Jewish fate in pre-modern Spain and Portugal on the one hand, and in modern Germany on the other. I am quite aware that this can be a perilous venture since, initially at least, it may seem to violate the sacred injunction not to compare "apples and pears." That timid and intimidating cliché, however, has always puzzled me, for of course apples and pears can most certainly be compared. Despite their differences, they are, after all, both edible fruits that grow on trees and have cores and seeds within, and it is precisely the combination of difference and similarity that makes the comparison viable and possibly even instructive. At any rate, this homologous digression is only meant to ease us gently toward our theme. Should I require a closer warrant to bring Spanish perspectives to a lecture sponsored by an institute devoted to the study of German Jewry, I shall simply invoke the authority of Heinrich Heine who, albeit instinctively and poetically, already sensed certain more than vague affinities. One well-known poem is worth recalling. In the mandatorily ironic Donna Clara, that bigoted beauty is in the process of being seduced by a Spanish knight she has just met, and she swears she loves him by the Savior "whom the God-damned Jews once wickedly and maliciously murdered." When he asks her if she has not sworn falsely she replies:

Falsch ist nicht in mir, Geliebter, There is nothing false in me, beloved,
Wie in meiner Brust kein Tropfen Just as in my breast there’s
Blut ist von dem Blut der Mohren Not the slightest drop of blood
Und des schmutzigen Judenvolkes. Of Moors and the filthy Jewish people.

And when, just before they part, she begs him finally to reveal his name to her, the knight replies with this exquisite coup de grâce:

Ich Sennor, Ear Geliebter I, Senora, your beloved,
Bin der Sohn des vielbelobten Am son of the much-praised
Grossen, schriftgelehrten Rabbi Great and learned Rabbi,
Israel von Saragossa. Israel of Saragossa.

I need hardly remind this audience that the knight in the poem is but a mask for Heine himself, a German-Jewish convert in an age of conversions and other attempts at radical Jewish assimilation. The knight, be it noted, is not to be understood as a secret Jew, even though he is obviously aware of who his Jewish father was. The same is true of Heine’s other Spanish knight, the so-called "Don Isaac Abravanel" in The Rabbi of Bacharach ("I myself came from the House of Israel; my grandfather was a Jew, perhaps my father even . . ."), whose vestigial Judaism amounts to a fondness for Jewish cup and other Sabbath delicacies ("I love your
cooking much better than your faith"). What is interesting is the fact that Heine should sense in what had happened in Spain long ago a viable paradigm for his own existential situation and for that of others like him. Clearly, it is no longer Judaism that is at issue here, but the consequences of Jewish descent for those who are really no longer Jews and do not regard themselves as such. The humor and irony are a thin surface under which lurk darkness and pathos. And in the words given to Donna Clara (kein Tropfen Blut) there is even a passing but specific allusion to that Spanish preoccupation with "purity of blood" of which I shall yet have much to say.

To raise all the legitimate methodological questions and qualifications that my theme requires would, I fear, leave no room for the theme itself. Suffice it for me to state that in juxtaposing two obviously different historical settings I do not intend the analogies and parallels that may emerge to be considered as equations. Nor am I suggesting any historical continuity between the two. I merely propose that there are some phenomenological affinities between—the terms are anarchistic but unavoidable—assimilation and anti-Semitism in the Iberian Peninsula of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and in Germany of the nineteenth and twentieth; that such affinities are too striking to be ignored; and that the earlier phenomena can, in some ways, illumine the latter. But here I am already running ahead of myself. We have first to define the problem.¹

It is generally recognized today that anti-Semitism is not a monolith, that its historical manifestations differ from one period to another, that its varieties require special adjectives ("religio, "secular, "political," "racial," are some of the most common), and that even these can figure in various combinations and permutations. Viewed chronologically, there is at least a working agreement on an overall tripartite periodization of anti-Semitism: "Ancient-Pagan"; "Medieval-Christian"; and, finally, "Modern-Secular." It is natural, of course, that the roots of modern anti-Semitism should continue to generate the most intense debate, with widely diverging opinions as to its elements of novelty or continuity, and the relative importance of each. Such complex discussions need not be surveyed here. Of moment for us is the fact that, whatever their disagreements on other matters, there seems to be a virtual consensus among scholars that racial anti-Semitism is a peculiarly modern and secular, rather than medieval, phenomenon. Indeed, even those who insist most emphatically upon the Christian "teaching of contempt," not only as the decisive preparation for modern anti-Semitism, but as an ongoing and powerful stream within it, seem to accept the axiom that racial anti-Semitism per se is a uniquely modern development not to be found in medieval Christendom. Such a scheme seems at first glance to be entirely plausible. Even the concept of "race" as we know it did not exist in the Middle Ages, or so we are told. True, the more vulgar forms of medieval anti-Semitism did express themselves more than occasionally in sheer physical terms—the notion of a distinct Jewish odor (spositor judai-cus; a slur that is even older than Christianity),² or the so-called "Curse of the Twelve Tribes" which posited that, in perpetuum punishment for the Crucifixion, the Jewish descendants of each of the tribes of ancient Israel are born with physical defects so loathsome that I shall relegated them to a footnote when the lecture is printed rather than enumerate them here.³ But even these and similar manifestations do not really constitute racial thinking, for the same sources inform us that immediately after a Jew accepts baptism any such physical defect miraculously disappears. Here, surely, is the litmus test for non-racial thinking. Once baptized, a Jew is on a par with all other Christians. In other words, within the medieval frame of reference conversion is the portal to total assimilation into Christian society, if not for the actual convert, then at least for his descendants.⁴

And yet we seem to find disquieting exceptions to this reassuring norm. In the year 613 the king of the Visigoths ordered the forced conversion of all the Jews living at the time in a Spain that was not yet "Spanish" but from then until the Muslim conquest of 711 neither the converts nor their progeny disappeared as a distinct entity. On the contrary, to the very end of the Visigothic state, kings and church councils continued to enact special laws aimed at the descendants of the original converts, in a mounting crescendo of hysteria against "Jews baptized and unbaptized."⁵ In 1391, in the midst of a deep split within the papal curia, the majority elected Cardinal Petrus Pierleone as Pope Anacletus II, while the minority elected an anti-pope, Innocent II. In the controversy that erupted across Europe during the next decade there were a number of large issues involved, but it is significant that the enemies of Anacletus laid repeated stress on his Jewish origins (he was the great-grandson of a Roman Jewish convert in the first half of the eleventh century). No less a figure than St. Bernard of Clairvaux regarded the descendant of a Jew on
the papal throne as an affront to Christ. One writer depicted Anacletus physically as "dark and pale, more like a Jew or an Arab than a Christian," with a deformed body and "the bad odor of his ancestor who was a wicked money-lender." Again, in 1290 the Jews of Southern Italy were converted by force. Nevertheless, for the next two centuries the descendants of these Jews were still known as such and were referred to generically in official documents as Neofiti (neophytes) or Mercanti (merchants).²

All this would seem to indicate that not all of medieval anti-Judaism was merely theological or religious. Beyond that, however, the examples I have given are of limited value. We still know all too little about the realities of the convert's lives in Visigothic Spain; much of what occurred in Southern Italy after 1290 remains obscure; and the papacy, after all, may be considered too special a case to yield broad conclusions.

II

Such ambiguities recede when we turn to Spain and Portugal in the late Middle Ages. There Jewish conversion to Christianity took place on a scale unprecedented in earlier periods and unequaled in the rest of Europe, and it is from there that we possess a vast array of documentary and literary sources that bring the question of pre-modern Jewish assimilation and racial anti-Semitism into the sharpest focus.³

The mass conversions in the Iberian Peninsula occurred in four main stages. In 1391 anti-Jewish pogroms spread throughout Spain and into the Balearic Islands, in the course of which thousands of Jews accepted baptism rather than be slaughtered. Only two decades later, in 1413-14, the last great public disputation of the Middle Ages between Jews and Christians was held at Tortosa in Aragon. Barely recovered from the havoc and moralization of the pogroms, to many Spanish Jews it now seemed as though Judaism had been defeated decisively. A new wave of conversions ensued, with thousands more rushing voluntarily to the baptismal fonts. Throughout the fifteenth century Spanish Jewry was bifurcated, with Jews and conversos (conversos) coexisting side by side. Finally, in 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella gave the remaining Jews the ultimate alternative of conversion or expulsion. Many remained constant and chose the hard road of exile. Others, however, could not or would not leave Spain, and once again the convert ranks were swelled. The epilogue took place in Portugal. In 1497 the Portuguese king, Manuel, decreed the forced conversion of all Jews in the country, including those Jewish refugees who had crossed the border from Spain five years before.

We shall probably never know how many Spanish Jews were converted to Christianity between 1391 and 1492. There are indications that fifty percent may be a conservative estimate, and we must remember that we are speaking of what had been the largest Jewry in medieval Europe. Whatever one's conjecture in absolute figures, it is clear that within a relatively short span of time a large mass of Jews had entered, through conversion, into Spanish Christian society. To be sure, there were many who remained Jews at heart and lived the dual life of Marranos, secret Jews in one way or another. Many others, however, whether out of initial conviction or opportunism, became sincere Catholics, or at least rejected Judaism completely in favor of a functional adherence to the new faith. Modern Jewish scholarship has been preoccupied with the subsequent history of the crypto-Jews and has left it largely to Hispanics to explore that of the genuine converts. Our theme requires that we be concerned primarily with the latter.

In theory, nothing should have prevented the total absorption of the true converts, or at least their descendants, into Spanish society, and, in fact, during the first half-century following the conversions of 1391 the process of integration seemed well under way. Spanish Jews had traditionally performed a host of important economic and managerial functions as financial administrators, tax-farmers, and advisors to the royal courts of Castile and Aragon. Conversos continued and expanded these roles. But now, with the removal of the former religious bars to their further advancement, the Conversos expanded into new areas in which they displayed an extraordinary "upward mobility."⁴ Some became large-scale entrepreneurs, others entered the universities and the learned professions, of which hitherto only medicine had been open to Jews. In various cities and towns Conversos gained control of the municipal councils.⁵ Many flocked to important careers within the Church. We have only to cite the famous case of Pablo de Santa Maria, the former Rabbi Solomon Halevi, who converted voluntarily in 1390 and subsequently became Bishop of Burgos. His son, Alonso de Cartagena, who was baptized with him as a child, succeeded him in that high office and represented Spain at the Council of Basel in 1434.⁶ The powerful monastic order of the Jeronymites was filled with converts,⁷ as were some of the most important Cathedral chapters. Daughters of wealthy Conversos married with apparent ease into noble families, rejuvenating tired blood-lines and replenishing empty coffers. Some Conversos were themselves occasionally granted patents of nobility.⁸ There seemed to be no further obstacle to
the assimilation of those who, like Heine's knight, retained at most certain culinary predilections ("they never lost their Jewish tastes in eating"); the chronicler Andres Bernaldez observed sarcastically.  

Yet even as the converts and their children were energetically, and even aggressively, fulfilling new ambitions, in certain sectors of the old Hispano-Christian society a profound anti-Converso resentment was gathering force, and by the mid-fifteenth century it erupted into the open. This "backlash" first arose among the urban masses, who began to perceive the entire Converso class as rich and powerful usurpers of positions and privileges to which they themselves aspired, parvenus well on their way to dominating, not only the organs of municipal government, but perhaps the country as a whole. It did not matter that a good many Conversos were actually quite poor, or engaged in humble occupations; the swift ascent of so many others in so many fields was what caught the eye. This, it was felt, could only be explained on the assumption that, although baptized, the Conversos had retained the proverbially "Jewish" traits of cunning, sharpness, and a boundless lust for money and power defying all moral scruples.

Thus a mounting tension within Spanish society rapidly approached a point of genuine paradox. Throughout the Middle Ages the whole of Christian Europe had perceived its Jewish problem essentially in one dimension—as one of conversion. The Jews were a group apart because they stubbornly refused to accept the reagent Christian truth. Should the Jews be converted, they would disappear as a distinct entity, and the problem, by definition, would cease to be. Of all countries, Spain had now come closest to making this pan-European dream a reality. Ironically, only then did a growing number of Spaniards begin to feel, with a sense of shock, that far from having resolved the problem, the mass conversions of Jews had only exacerbated it. So long as the Jews had remained within their ancestral religion they could also be contained within well-defined limits through restrictive laws. Now, overnight as it were, the entire corpus of anti-Jewish legislation was no longer applicable to the huge Converso group. Technically and legally Christians, they could do as they pleased, and for many Spaniards that was intolerable. A critical juncture had been reached. The traditional mistrust of the Jew as outsider now gave way to an even more alarming fear of the Converso as insider.

Two texts, one from the mid-fifteenth century, the other from the mid-sixteenth, vividly conjure up the specter of subversion from within. The first is an anonymous satire against the Conversos (here called Marranos—a generic epithet that at first simply meant "pigs"), in the form of a royal privilege allegedly granted by King Juan II of Castile to a Christian nobleman also named Juan, descended from "pure Old Christians" (cris- tianos viejos lindos). At Juan's own request, the king grants him formal permission to live the life of a "Marrano," and to employ all their "subtleties, evils, deceits and flatteries" to his advantage. Like them, he is now permitted to acquire through duplicity such lucrative royal appointments as mayor (alcalde), magistrate, and public notary, enjoying the municipal rents; to enter the priesthood so that, listening to the confessions of Old Christians he can discover their secret delerelictions and denounce them to the courts; to become an apothecary, physician, or surgeon, in order to kill Old Christians, marry their wives, and acquire their property and offices while besmirching their pure lineage; to bring to church, instead of brevities, the account-books listing the rents and taxes farmed out to him, and to read these during the service while pretending to recite penitential psalms. The second text—the so-called "Correspondence of the Jews of Spain and those of Constantinople"—reflects a similar mentality, but in addition it evokes the notion of an international Jewish conspiracy that almost anticipates the modern "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Responding to a plea for advice from the alleged leader of the Spanish Jews, who are threatened by the king with conversion or destruction, the putative chief of the Jews of Constantinople responds that they should certainly become Christians and then wreak their revenge from within.
ambiguity of the situation and the elusiveness of the adversary—compenso, confeso, marrano, tornadizo [turncoat], cristiano nuevo [New Christian] or perhaps, indeed, alboreique [after the steed of Muhammad, which was neither horse nor male]. What was required was a new legal definition within which to curb the Conversos, and it was out of this need that the Spanish doctrine of limpieza de sangre—"purity of blood"—emerged and crystallized.

IV

Laws that came to be known as "Statutes of purity of blood" (estatutos de limpieza de sangre) were an attempt, filtering at first but ultimately successful, to bar Conversos from public offices, privileges and honors, now that the old laws that had been enacted against professing Jews were no longer applicable. These new statutes therefore mark the ironic retaliation of Iberian society against the intrusion of the Jew by means of a conversion toward which that same society had labored so long and so assiduously.

If new barriers were to be raised, however, they could no longer be based on a difference in religion which, formally at least, no longer existed. The only foundation remaining to justify special discriminatory legislation against the Converso and his descendants was necessarily a genetic one. Not religion but blood was to be the determining factor. Certainly there were secret Judaisers among the Conversos, and in order to discover and prosecute these heretics the Inquisition would be established in 1478. With a singular lack of foresight many Conversos seem even to have welcomed the idea of an Inquisition in the hope that, if the Judaisers could be weeded out, their own Catholic orthodoxy would no longer be impugned. It is therefore doubly significant that the statutes of purity of blood never made such distinctions. They were aimed, not at crypto-Jews, but at the entire Converso class. Anyone of known Jewish (or Moorish) ancestry, regardless of his personal Christian piety, would be subject to them automatically and perpetually. Purity of blood came to overshadow purity of faith.

Despite its alarm over the Converso threat, Spain did not easily accept the statutes of limpieza in the initial phases. When the first statute, the Sentencia-Estatuto excluding all persons of Jewish extraction from municipal offices in Toledo, was adopted some four months after the riots on June 5, 1449, the subsequent outcry caused it to fall into temporary abeyance. It was opposed by King Juan II of Castile, by Pope Nicolas V, and by prominent clergy and statesmen. For a religion that had come into the world proclaiming its indifference to the distinction between Jew and Greek—non est distinctio Judaei et Graeci—the theological objections were obvious. Moreover, some authorities sensed immediately the potential dangers of such laws for a land in which Christian, Jewish, and Moorish blood had mingled for ages. But although the controversy over limpieza de sangre was to continue for centuries in the Iberian Peninsula, the progress of the statutes was inexorable. The century after 1449 saw a gradual but definite spread of such statutes adopted sporadically by various corporate bodies and institutions.

The most serious impetus came in 1547, when a new statute, instituted by the archbishop Juan Martinez Siliceo, excluded all descendants of Jews from positions in the Cathedral Chapter of Toledo. Again, as had happened a century before, there was considerable opposition. But this statute was destined to endure, and, because of the primacy of Toledo in Spanish Christendom, to serve as a model and sanction for later ones. In 1555 it was ratified by Pope Paul IV and a year later it was upheld by King Philip II, thus setting the final seal of papal and royal approval upon a practice that, while already rooted in many places, was now officially legitimized. It is noteworthy that this occurred at a time when the last active vestiges of Spanish crypto-Judaism seemed to be disappearing, and the Catholic loyalties of most New Christians cannot have been in doubt. Yet from this point on limpieza de sangre rapidly became a requirement for entry into almost any important honor or office in Spain. As the network of statutes widened, it was hard to find a significant area of Spanish public life which did not require of the candidate elaborate "proofs of purity" (pruebas de limpieza), meticulously documented genealogies and testimonies of witnesses certifying him to be free of any trace of Jewish blood. From Spain the system passed over to Portugal. When Portuguese New Christians began to flow into Spain after 1540, they found the statutes rampant everywhere. By the seventeenth century the corporations with requirements of limpieza included the military orders; judicial tribunals; among them the Inquisition itself; cathedrals and chapters; the various monastic and religious orders; the powerful aristocratic colleges (colegias mayores) at the universities; certain entire provinces and towns which forbade New Christians to reside or marry in their midst; almost all public and municipal offices; brotherhoods and confraternities.

The statutes of purity of blood, and the mentality they represented, perpetuated the distinction between "New" and "Old" Christians for cen-
turies. That the original converts of the fifteenth century should have been considered literally as *cristianos nuevos*—"New Christians"—was perhaps appropriate and logical; that their known descendants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries should still have had to bear that label might seem absurd, were its consequences not so far-reaching and detrimental. Though some were able to hide their ancestry, falsify documents, or buy their certifications of purity through outright bribery, most could not. Often a Spaniard or a Portuguese who was totally unaware of his Jewish origins would apply for an official post, only to discover in the course of the mandatory genealogical investigations that there were indeed some Jews on remote branches or even twigs of the family tree. As a result he suddenly found himself not only ineligible for the position but, in a real sense, declassed. For "New Christian" was both a legal category and a social stigma, in a society whose preoccupation with purity of blood and lineage had become a fixation.

*Limpieza* was to have profound repercussions upon Spanish and Portuguese history and culture, and was to shape important aspects of literature and the peculiarly Iberian sense of "honor." However, we cannot concern ourselves here with the general aspects of the problem. The question for us is whether or not, within the developments I have sketched, we have an example of racial anti-Semitism.

Stressing the social and religious origins of these phenomena, misled, perhaps, by the theological rhetoric and rationales with which apologists for the statutes invariably embellished their arguments, or simply caught up in the conventional dogma that racial concepts are solely a product of the nineteenth century, some modern scholars have denied the racial character of *limpieza* altogether. Yet although we will certainly not find the distilled pseudo-scientific racial jargon of modern times in the Iberian Peninsula, the very fact that the consequences of Jewish ancestry, however remote, were considered by so many to be indelible, perpetual, and unalterable, is already sufficient to indicate the racial mentality at work. Indeed, it is worth noting that the Spanish word *raza* (race) was defined in the great Castilian dictionary of Sebastián de Covarrubias in 1614 by the following inverted but illuminating comparison: "Raza—the caste of pure-bred horses which are branded with an iron so that they may be recognized as such. *Raza* in [human] lineages is understood in a bad sense, such as having within oneself some of the lineage of Moors or Jews (tener alguna raza de moros o judios)." Other interesting terms and phrases crop up repeatedly in Spanish and Portuguese texts. Descendants of Jews are *maculados* ("tainted") because they have a "stain" (mala) in their blood. They are "impure" (*impuros*). By the end of the sixteenth century it is customary, when candidates seek honors or offices, to search for *limpieza de sangre de tiempo inmemorial* ("purity of blood from time inmemorial") and even an adverse rumor is enough to disqualify one. In 1621 the Portuguese Vicente da Costa Matos cries out: *Pouco sangue Judeu he bastante a destruir o mundo*—"A little Jewish blood is enough to destroy the world"—this, one hundred and twenty-six years after the original conversion of Portuguese Jewry.

Are these only rhetorical flourishes, is "blood" merely a loose metaphor intended to dramatize a suspicion that New Christians actually teach their children to Judaize in secret, or are they meant genetically and biologically? In a defense of the statutes of purity of blood published in 1637, Juan Escobar del Corro declares categorically that the foetus acquires the moral qualities of its parents at the moment of conception; therefore, if one member of a family sins, that proves that there is impure blood in the veins of all. Other texts speak even more eloquently and explicitly. In his *Centinela contra judios* ("Sentinel against the Jews") Fray Francisco de Torrecionillo offers a definition of "Jews" in 1673 that must bring a slight chill to a reader of our own generation: "To be enemies of Christians, of Christ, and of his Divine Law, it is not necessary to be of a Jewish father and mother. One alone suffices. It does not matter if the father is not [Jewish]; it is enough if the mother is. And even if she is not entirely so, half is enough; and even if not that much, a quarter is sufficient, or even an eighth. And the Holy Inquisition has discovered in our times that up to a distance of twenty-one degrees [of consanguinity] they have been known to Judaize. . . ." But Fray Francisco has another point to underscore which renders the biological element even more transparent.

In the palaces of the kings, and of many princes, the wet-nurses who are chosen to suckle their sons must be Old Christians (*cristianos viejas*) for it is not proper that the sons of princes should be suckled by Jewish vilenece, because that milk, being of infected persons [*personas infectas*] can only engender perverse inclinations. . . . In the city of Valladolid, about thirty years ago, they burned alive as a Judaizer Don Lope de Vera, a native of the town of San Clemente in La Man-
cha, who was verified to be of illustrious blood, but it was found that the nurse who had suckled him was of infected blood [era de sangre infecta; i.e. the nurse had been a New Christian].

Should this not be sufficient, we may turn to the biography of the emperor Charles V by Fray Prudencio de Sandoval, who, in 1604, actually compares Jewishness to Negritude:

I do not censure the Christian compassion which embraces all, for then I would be in mortal error, and I know that in the Divine presence there is no distinction between Gentile and Jew, because One alone is the Lord of all. Yet who can deny that in the descendants of the Jews there persists and endures the evil inclination of their ancient ingratitude and lack of understanding, just as in the Negroes [there persists] the inseparable quality of their blackness [negra]? For if the latter should unite themselves a thousand times with white women, the children are born with the dark color of the father. Similarly, it is not enough for the Jew to be three parts aristocrat [hidalgo] or Old Christian, for one family-line alone [sola una raza] defiles and corrupts him...

If, admittedly, we have not quite arrived at the modern concept of race, I submit that we have come perilously close.

V

Germans did not learn about "purity of blood" from the Iberian precedent. 

Limpieza de sangre in Spain and Portugal, and racial anti-Semitism in modern Germany, were independent and indigenous developments, the latter oblivious of the former. For that very reason the similarities are all the more significant.

But let us proceed cautiously. It will not do simply to draw up a list in two parallel columns, one Hispano-Portuguese, the other German, and to record: Toledo riots of 1449—"Hein-Hein" riots of 1819; exclusion of students from the colegios mayores—and from the nineteenth-century German student organizations [Burschenschaften]; the sixteenth-century Libro verde de Aragón or the Tzitz de la nobleza de España, both of which listed the names of Spanish nobles with Jewish blood in their veins—and the Semi-Goitha, which did the same for the German nobility in 1912; Torreoncillo's fractional definition of Jews—and the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. Such tantalizing lists could easily be expanded, and some specific parallels would certainly be striking enough to merit a fuller exploration. In the end, however, they remain matters of detail that point to deeper structures and larger patterns.

We shall be hindered from perceiving these only if we become entangled in the obvious but, for our present purposes, not really decisive, differences between pre-modern conversion and modern assimilation and emancipation (the apples-and-pears syndrome again). In order to focus on the essential, I should stress once more that, prior to modern times, the only possible road to the removal of all Jewish legal disabilities and to total assimilation into the dominant non-Jewish society, was through religious conversion. From this perspective the conversion of masses of Spanish and Portuguese Jews between 1391 and 1497 may be regarded on one level as an emancipation through baptism. This seemingly paradoxical formulation should not shock you, for it is meant in a very specific sense and is not an endorsement of apostasy. Functionally, the Iberian conversions and modern emancipation both entailed the elimination of prior legal restrictions against the Jews and the prospect, initially at least, of their integration under new conditions into the life of the majority. Thus, as the very core, we are confronted with two parallel problems—the absorption of "New Christians" and "New Germans" into their respective host societies.

Despite the manifold differences between those societies, they share a common pattern with regard to the entry of the Jews into their midst: a period (in Germany several periods) of sufficient acceptance to facilitate a growing assimilation and a significant influx into important areas of economic and civic life; a rising resentment against that very intrusion, in the course of which there surfaces an open and volatile racial hatred; racial discrimination, at first without the official sanction of the state, but ultimately institutionalized in law.

The critical element is, of course, the emergence in both instances of a racial conception of the Jews. But our comparison will still remain little more than historical play unless we are prepared to press its implications. The Iberian experience should not be regarded merely as an exotic admixture of the later development. It should shift our angle of vision and pose some new questions.

VI

 Virtually all scholarly discussions of the rise of racial anti-Semitism in Germany begin within the context of the rise of organized political anti-
Semitism in the 1870's and especially in the 1880's. The treatment is often more descriptive than analytic, concentrating repeatedly on such obvious apologetics of anti-Jewish racism as Wilhelm Marr or Eugen Dühring. Attempts to probe the question of origins tend to invoke essentially external influences, whether individual (Gobineau, Renan), or cultural—the general racial currents in contemporary anthropology, biology and even linguistics, which, once absorbed, were applied to the Jews. More penetrating inquiry has made a significant distinction between "Christian" and "anti-Christian" anti-Semitism in late nineteenth century Germany, with racial anti-Semitism placed squarely within the latter. Most concord that racial anti-Semitism is a consequence of secularization, not in the sense of a secularized metamorphosis of an earlier religious anti-Semitism (that is granted, if at all, for certain other aspects), but as a secular rupture with the past. Whatever the point of departure, the racial component is widely regarded as quintessentially modern, a radical break with the medieval Christian conception of the Jews, its very antithesis.

Precisely here, it seems to me, lies the value of the Iberian juxtaposition. Patently, none of the factors I have just enumerated had been operative in Spain and Portugal. In those profoundly Christian societies an avowed "anti-Christian anti-Semitism" was inconceivable, and, had a Marr or a Dühring arisen, he would have been burned at the stake. Secularism in the modern sense made no inroads until late in the eighteenth century, and even then it was limited to small circles of Francophiles. The nineteenth-century sciences and pseudo-sciences had not been born. Yet, even in the absence of all this, an anti-Semitism with distinctly racial overtones had developed throughout the Iberian Peninsula.

That this should have been so must surely suffice to shake at least some of the conventional wisdom concerning the development of racial anti-Semitism in modern Germany as well. It suggests, in the first place, that however important any of the aforementioned factors may have been, they may not have been decisive. Often lacking in the scholarly literature is a differentiation between causes and catalysts, and, above all, a sense of the dynamics in the process through which modern racial anti-Semitism evolved. By expanding our horizon from modern Germany to pre-modern Spain and Portugal we begin to detect an imminent dialectic in the process of Jewish assimilation into societies constrained by new circumstances to accept them, but conditioned by deeply ingrained attitudes to reject them. When, as happened in both cases, assimilation had become a sufficient reality (Catholic orthodoxy in the Iberian Peninsula, acculturation and the erosion of Jewish religious identity in Germany) the old religious definition of Jewry became a palpable anachronism and yielded increasingly to a racial one.

Still, the very fact that such a transition could be made in both instances is not so easily explained. Whatever the felt necessity, what made such allegedly radical shifts in mentality possible for so many? Did believing Christians, as we have been led to suppose, somehow first become less Christian? Were racial anti-Semites in Germany necessarily anti-Christian? Or should we not perhaps begin to ask whether the shift was so radical after all? The Iberian ease already indicates that the distinction between "Christian" and "anti-Christian," valid and fruitful for an understanding of two specific anti-Semitic trends during the Second Reich, may be too sharp and absolute to embrace the full historical reality of racial anti-Semitism. To ask whether the latter is a Christian or anti-Christian phenomenon, as though these were polar alternatives, may miss the historical point through a semantic evasion. It all depends upon what we mean by "Christian." If we have in mind the official teaching of the Church, the conclusion is obvious. But surely even the entire corpus of Christian dogma and theology does not express the full range of behavior, thought, and feeling of believing Christians, nor can it reveal the latitude of interpretation to which it is itself potentially susceptible. The statutes of "purity of blood" were opposed by some Spanish and Portuguese churchmen on the grounds that they were, in effect, anti-Christian, but they were supported by many others who felt no contradiction whatever. Indeed, the statutes were eventually ratified by several sixteenth-century popes. In nineteenth-century Germany such racial anti-Semites as Otto Gessler, Franz Perrot, and Rudolph Meyer, were by no means anti-Christian, to say nothing of those pretty bourgeoises, urban workers and peasants, who listened as avidly to racial demagogues as to their Christian pastors, and who, unlike the intellectuals, were not liable to lose much sleep over problems of consistency.

"Christian" and "anti-Christian" must finally lead us back to the related question of "medieval" and "modern." The Iberian example is sufficient to indicate that the notion that racial anti-Semitism represents, in and of itself, a total break with all past forms of anti-Jewish hatred, must be tempered, at the very least. Yet it will not suffice merely to concede that Spain and Portugal were the exceptions and to let it go at that, as though out of the whole of medieval Christendom only the Spaniards and Portuguese were somehow prone toward racism.

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In a passing footnote to his magisterial study of Bismarck's Jewish banker, Gerson Bleichröder, Fritz Stern makes this important and challenging observation: "Historians have always fastened on organized anti-Semitism; a comparative study of latent, informal anti-Semitism in different European countries would be a difficult but immensely rewarding venture." The same could be said for what I shall provisionally call latent racial anti-Semitism in pre-modern European Christendom. Obviously if this existed it did not label itself as such, for these terms are themselves entirely modern. But this does not mean that a fresh re-examination of medieval conceptions of the Jews would be a search for something entirely vague and amorphous. At the core, any hostile conception of the Jews which implies that their negative characteristics are permanent must already be considered as essentially, or at least potentially, "racial."

In this sense the assumption of a total absence of racism in pre-modern anti-Semitism may yet prove to have been too glib and facile. On the one hand it has rested on the uncritical assumption of an intrinsic incompatibility between Christianity and racial conceptions; on the other, it has been based upon the wrong kinds of evidence. The fact that, throughout the Middle Ages, individual Jewish converts were welcomed and absorbed into Christian society does not yet tell us how Jews as a whole were regarded in certain quarters. Yes, the individual Jew lost his odor and his other deplorabilities at the baptismal font, but what of the entire unwashed Jewish people that remained? Granted, again, that the Church firmly held to an ultimate conversion of the whole of Jewry at the end-time of the Second Coming, when everything, including the Jews, would radically change. However, except in moments of apocalyptic enthusiasm, the end of time was a very long way off. When the seventeenth-century English poet Andrew Marvell was trying to enter his coy mistress to bed and needed a metaphor for the infinity of time which he, being mortal, lacked for his enterprise, he wrote: "Had we but World enough and time... you should if you please refuse, till the Conversion of the Jews."

The real question, then, is how the Jewish people was regarded collectively, not within the official theology of a remote end of time, but within the long historical time stretching from the present "till the conversion of the Jews." Here centuries of Christian teaching had harped incessantly upon such enduring Jewish qualities as stubbornness, stiff-neckedness, obduracy, rigidity. The Jews were depicted, not only as unyielding, but as unchanged since the primal sins of their ancestors. Their physical attributes became stereotyped in art, folklore, and the popular imagination. The whole of Christian Europe had been conditioned in this way, and this cannot but have contributed profoundly to mold a mental conception of the Jews which Christian dogma did not reflect—one of their essential immutability. The eschatological conversion and metamorphosis of the Jews could be accepted safely as an article of faith which did not impinge on present reality, indeed so long as it did not become a reality. The fascination of what occurred in Spain and Portugal is that, there alone, what was expected elsewhere only at the end of time was realized to a large degree in the here-and-now. The rest of Europe could afford to postpone thinking of how they might receive a converted Jewry in the end of days. Only the Spaniards and the Portuguese were put to the immediate test, and they did not pass it. The racial potential that was already implicit everywhere, was actualized here for the first time.

Even when, toward the end of the eighteenth century, new currents of European thought and modes of political organization were preparing the way for modern Jewish emancipation, the long predisposition on the part of many Christians to regard the degenerate traits of the Jews as innate made itself felt immediately. The many debates over Jewish emancipation in France and then in Germany, like the earlier controversies over the statutes of purity of blood in Spain and Portugal, all revolved around a pivotal issue—whether or not the Jews are capable of a genuine and radical transformation. Those who opposed the enfranchisement of the French and German Jews, like those who had opposed the abolition of legal distinctions between "New" and "Old" Christians in the Iberian Peninsula, were convinced that no real change would result, for none was possible, and therein lay embedded a fundamentally racial conception.

In sum, a re-examination of racial anti-Semitism cannot be confined to late nineteenth-century Germany, nor even to Germany alone, but should include a renewed and meticulous scrutiny of the Christian Middle Ages as well. Whether we style this an investigation of latent anti-Jewish racism, or proracialism, or simply the prehistory of racial anti-Semitism, is not of immediate concern.

Far from glossing over the vital differences between medieval and modern, such an undertaking can only help to refine our perception of what is truly new in the latter. If I have myself stressed the affinities between the Iberian and the German models, I trust that the reasons
are manifest by now. But I am just as acutely conscious of how much they diverge, and I also know the difference between latent and explicit, potential and actual. Organized political anti-Semitism could not arise in Spain and Portugal, which did not know of politics in the nineteenth-century sense. The racismality behind the statutes of purity of blood was an obsession that had theoretical underpinnings, but it never had the all-embracing claims typical of modern ideologies. The Inquisition, for all its excesses, was not the Gestapo; Spanish and Portuguese anti-Semites were not Nazis. There is no genocide here. The most virulent theoreticians of limpieza never called for the physical extermination of the New Christians, only, at the most extreme, for their expulsion—an essentially medieval solution—and the state did not comply even with that.⁶⁶ Limpieza de sangre in the Iberian Peninsula reveals to us a society straining, as it were, to define itself racially, and the limits to which a pre-modern racial anti-Semitism could attain. We can see it, in retrospect, as though oscillating perpetually within the same fixed arc, capable of makings men miserable, incapable of moving beyond certain bounds. That this was due to the gravitational pull of a traditional Christianity to whose basic presuppositions an entire society was still, after all, committed, is not to be doubted. But, by the same token, this does not mean that the impact of modern secularization should be regarded as causal. Secularism did not create modern racial anti-Semitism. It did help to erode the restraints which Christianity, with its inherent ambivalence toward Judaism, had once been able to impose upon its own anti-Jewish animosities.⁶⁷ I need not spell out the catastrophic results.

VII

Through all our peregrinations this evening I am acutely aware that I have omitted one major comparative dimension between the Iberian and German experiences—the extraordinary contributions of "New Christians" and "New Germans" to their respective host cultures. Time for a detailed discussion is obviously gone, yet I should be remiss were I not to conclude, in a brief epilogue, with at least some indication of what is involved.

The strikingly disproportionate share of Jews in certain areas of modern German culture continues, justifiably, to draw attention, and is often described as unprecedented. There was a precedent, however, and we find it once more in the Iberian Peninsula. The congruence is not accidental. It points again to parallel forces at work in both places.
assimilated German Jews, is not to be attributed to some vague genetic endowment, but is to be explained primarily on sociological and psychological grounds. What we find in Spain was part of a wide spectrum of New Christian responses to life in a society where to be of Jewish ancestry was to carry a blench which, even if known only to oneself, might at any time be revealed to all. In the shadow of the Inquisition and the statutes of purity of blood some Conversos turned more zealously Catholic than many Old Christians. Others recoiled into crypto-Judaism and fled abroad to lead fully Jewish lives. But many sensitive spirits, believing Christians and loyal Spaniards, found release for their inner tensions and anxieties along paths that were somehow off the beaten track. The student of modern German Jewry who turns to the history of Spanish, New Christians will find characteristics that are familiar to him, and may feel almost an inverted sense of déjà-vu. The ambiguity and insecurity of the assimilated Jew, the anxiety of hovering between acceptance and rejection, integration and marginality—Jüdischer Selbsthaas—all are present there, albeit expressed in the vocabulary and under the conditions of another age and culture. Indeed, he will even find Converso poets and writers whose self-deprecating ironic humor marks them as curiously kindred spirits to Heinrich Heine.

However elusive the quest for the actual impact of the Jewish element, whether in Spanish civilization or in Wilhelminian and Weimar culture, it remains a striking fact that the larger society regarded certain qualities as distinctively Jewish, and this had repercussions of its own. Though Spain expelled all professing Jews in 1492, the Conversos remained, and the continuity of what Spanish Old Christians perceived as Jewish remained unbroken. Business and trade were “Jewish” occupations, and medicine a “Jewish” profession. Intellectuality as such was identified as Jewish, hence also suspect and dangerous. Even more ominously, as time went by, certain types of thought were labeled “Jewish” and therefore excluded. It is here, above all, that Spanish racism may have exacted one of its heaviest tolls from a great and talented nation. I leave you with two quotations widely separated in space and time, and I have chosen them deliberately from an unusual context—the physical sciences. The first is by Johannes Stark, one of the high priests of that “Aryan” physics which attacked not only Einstein and relativity, but contemporary theoretical physics generally, as Jewish and un-German, and revised the history of science accordingly. In 1937 Stark wrote: “It can be no accident that the great discoveries belonged almost exclusively to

the Germanic race (Galileo, Newton, Faraday, Rutherford, Lenard). They are all in accord in that they direct their attention upon the reality of Nature. . . . Opposed to this spiritual attitude stands the Jewish-dogmatic one.” The other is from an eighteenth-century Spain, where only Aristotelian physics was legitimate, and many Spaniards actually believed Aristotle himself to have been an “Old Christian.” In 1758 Xavier de Munibe, Count of Peñaflores, mocked the rampant obscurantism of his contemporaries, and summarized the prevailing Spanish attitude as follows: “Why does anyone have to pay attention to any heretical dogs, atheists, and Jews like Newton, who was a terrible arch-heretic? . . . [He] Galileo de Galleis, whose very name implies that he must have been an arch-Jew or proto-Hebrew, and others whose names cause people to shudder?” My epilogue has been only that. Like the lecture itself, it hardly begins to do justice to so large and complex a theme. If it has at all aroused your curiosity, perhaps you may one day allow me another occasion on which to try your indulgence.

NOTES

Every public lecture, I suppose, tries to imagine his audience long before he actually stands before it, and, in anticipation, shapes his materials accordingly. In preparing this lecture I had in mind a hypothetical audience which, assembled by the Leo Baeck Institute, would presumably be far more knowledgeable about the history of modern German Jewry than of the New Christians of Spain and Portugal. The seemingly disproportionate space allotted to details of the Iberian aspects of the problem is merely a reflection of this concern, and, as the reader should discover, not of the primary thrust of the lecture itself. The same is true of the notes that follow and the bibliographical references they contain. [N.H.Y.]

1. An initial attempt at a comparison between Spanish and German anti-Semitism was made more than four decades ago by Cecil Roth in his brief sketch of “Marranos and Racial Anti-Semitism: A Study in Parallels,” Jewish Social Studies, II (1940), pp. 33-48. Writing at a time when Hitler's Germany was at the height of its power, Roth was preoccupied with immediate parallels to the anti-jewish racial policies of the Nazis, and made no effort to bring a broader and more sophisticated conceptualization of the problem. Moreover, he did not yet have access to the wealth of information on the role of Conversos and of “purity of blood” in Iberian society that has since come to light. Roth's essay did stimulate some potential discussion as to whether Spanish anti-Semitism should be regarded as “racial” to begin with (see infra, n. 39), but its comparative dimension has hitherto not been systematically explored. In this respect, I find it curious that
Leon Poliakov has compared the Iberian phenomenon, not to German racial anti-Semitism, but to the Boer racism of South Africa as delineated by Hannah Arendt. See his *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, II: *De Mahomet aux marranes* (Paris, 1961), p. 281.


3. The following examples should suffice: Descendants of the tribe of Simeon annually develop bloody wounds on their hands and feet; Asher: their right hands are shorter than their left; Naphtali: they have four large teeth, like pigs, and pigs' ears; Levi: they cannot spit forward, and so the spitite runs down their beards; Joseph: after age thirty-three the women have live worms in their mouths when they sleep. (Trachtenberg, op. cit., pp. 51 ff). For variations, as well as the belief that Jewish males are subject to a menstrual flux, cf. Y. H. Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* (New York–London, 1971; 2nd ed., Seattle–London, 1981), pp. 126–33.


8. After surveying the favorable reception of Jewish converts outside the Iberian Peninsula, Browe writes (op. cit., p. 9): "Anders als im ibirgen Europa lagen die Dinge in Spanien. . . ." In fact, the bulk of Browe's article is devoted to anti-Convexo discrimination in Spain, but he draws no conclusions from his data.


13. For an example, see Francisca Vendrell, "Concesión de nobleza a un converso," *Sefarad*, VIII (1948), 397–401 (on the grant in 1416 of a patent of nobility to a Converso, Gil Ruiz Naiari, by Ferdinand I of Aragon).

14. Andrés Bermúdez, *Historia de los Reyes Católicos Don Fernando y Doña Isabel* (Seville, 1876), I, ch. 43, pp. 124 f. Among the Jewish foods, Bermúdez mentions alfajín. The same term appears also in a fifteenth century anti-Convexo satire (see infra, n. 15) published by H. Pflaum, who defines it as "un ragogli a consul e alcune all'epoca d'ogni prevaricato e qu'on garde sous la brûlure pour le samendi" (titre des études juives [hereafter: *RFJ*], LXXXVI, 146, n. 6). Bermúdez, in other words, refers to a lingering Converso fondness for tchokh, this very Schelet that Heine whimsically immortalized in his "Prinzessin Sabbath," and of which he has borne say "that the renegades who deserted to the new covenant need only smell a Schelet in order to feel a certain homesickness for the synagogue." See Ludwig Börne: eine Denkschrift, in Heinrich Heine, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. H. Kaufmann, VI (Berlin, 1963), p. 210.

15. The most thorough account of the Christian effort to convert the Jews in the Middle Ages will be found in Peter Browe, *Die Judenmission im Mittelalter und die Päpste* (Rome, 1942).

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25. This was emphasized in a memorandum attacking the Toledan statute that was drawn up almost immediately at the behest of Lope de Barrientos, bishop of Cuenca, by Fernando Díez de Toledo, himself a Converso. Referring to the Visigothic conversions he claimed that no Spaniard could now be certain that he was not of Jewish descent, and gave detailed examples of the admixture of Jewish blood among the nobility and even the royal family. The text is printed in Alonso de Cartagena, Defensorium, Appendix II, pp. 242–256.

26. Around 1472 the guild of stone-masons (pedreros) of Toledo forbade their members to teach the art to Conversos, and the province of Guadalaxara excluded them from residence or intermarriage with Old Christians (see Henry Charles Lea, A History of the Inquisition of Spain, II, New York, 1906, p. 183). The further progress of the statutes of purity of blood may be seen in their adaptation by the following: The Order of St. Jerome, 1486, rendered definitive in 1495; the colleges of San Bartolomé (Salamanca) and Santa Cruz (Valladolid), 1488, and San Ildefonso, 1519; the Dominican monastery at Ávila, 1496; other Dominican establishments from 1531; the Franciscans, from 1523; the cathedral chapter of Seville, 1515; and of Córdoba, 1530. The Inquisition itself did not have a statute of limpieza until the mid-sixteenth century, and the Jews alone in 1593. For details see Sicroff, Les controverses, ch. II, pp. 63–94.

27. Sicroff, op. cit., ch. III, pp. 95–139. It should be emphasized that in the century between 1449 and 1557 the statutes had neither emanated from the Crown nor were they necessarily approved by it. The impulses throughout this period came from below.

28. The basic premise behind the term “New Christian” is stated succinctly by Juan Escobar del Carro, inquisitor of Llerena, in 1633: “Appellatur etiam Christianas nos non tam quia de novo ad fidem Christi sit conversus, sed quia ab his descendi” (Tractatus dipartita de puritate et nobilitate probanda, cited by Caro Barja, Los judíos, II, p. 305).

29. Guido Kisch categorically denied any racial element in pre-modern anti-Semitism and sharply criticized Lea (Inquisition of Spain, I, 126) and Roth (supra, n. 1) for allegedly “reading modern racist conceptions into medieval sources.” See his “Nationalism and Race in Medieval Law,” Seminar: An Annual Extraordinary Number of the Juris, ’1 (1943), 71. While granting that medieval man did not have a conscious concept of race in its modern form, Salo Baron found Kisch’s position to be too extreme. See Baron, Modern Nationalism and Religion (New York, 1947), p. 276, n. 26, and his own reference to “manifestations of racism in the treatment of Iberian conversos,” ibid., p. 55. Kisch, in turn, held fast to his views and rejected even Baron’s relatively cautious approach (see Kisch, The Jews of Medieval Germany, Chicago, 1949, pp. 314–16 and 531, n. 6). For Baron’s more recent
formulation see SRH, XIII, pp. 84 ff., in which the section on *limpieza* is explicitly entitled: “Growing Racialism.”

Similar divisions of opinion will be found among Hispanists. Even so distinguished and perceptive a student of the Conversos as Francisco Márquez Villanueva has maintained that the problem of the New Christians was by no means a racial one; it was social and in the second line religious ("The Converso Problem: An Assessment," in Collected Studies in Honor of América Castro’s 80th Year [hereafter: *Castro Festschrift*], Oxford, 1965, p. 324). “The converso,” he continues, “did not carry in any moment an indelible biological stigma. Normally he could only be recognized as such through genealogical investigation or through the police action of the Inquisition . . .”—which simply means that the stigma of Jewish descent, unlike black or yellow skin, was not externally visible, an observation that is irrelevant both to the racial character of *limpieza* and to the indelibility of the Jewish stigma once it was discovered. Contrast Domínguez Ortiz who, although recognizing the religious and social dimensions of the differentiation between Old and New Christians, concedes that already at an early stage it acquired racial nuances (*Los Jueves conversos*, p. 77).


32. Vicente de Costa Mattos, *Breve discurso contra a herética perfidia do judeísmo* (Lisbon, 1623), fol. 31v.


35. Ibid., p. 214. The martyrdom of Don Lope de Vera was a cause célèbre in the seventeenth-century, precisely because he was not only a noble, but entirely of Old Christian stock. See Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court*, p. 450.


37. On the colegios mayores see Yerushalmi, op. cit., p. 87, and the bibliography cited there; on the German student organizations see Oskar F. Scheuer, *Burschenschaft und Judenfrage: Der Rassenantisemitismus in der deutschen Studienk schaft* (Berlin, 1927).

38. For the *Libro verde* (actually a number of such works had circulated widely under this title until their official suppression in 1623) and the *Tizón de la nobleza* (Blight of the Nobility), see the discussion and bibliography in Barón, *SRH*, XIII, pp. 99, 359, n. 43. The actual title of the "Semi-Gotha" was Weimarer historisch-genealogisches Taschenbuch des gesamten Adel jüdischen Ursprungs (Weimar, 1912; 2nd ed., Munich, 1913). It should be noted parenthetically that a similar work on the Provencal nobility entitled *Critique du Nobillarte de Provence* was composed at the end of the seventeenth century by Barcellon de Mauvais, a lawyer of Aix. See Armand Luneau, *Juifs du Languedoc, de la Provence, et des états français de pepe* (Paris, 1975), ch. IV, “Une noblesse de souche hebraique,” especially pp. 63 ff.

39. It would be superfluous to list here all the well-known works on German anti-Semitism, or modern anti-Semitism generally, in which this is the case. A notable exception is Eleanor Sterling’s *Er ist wie Du: Aus der Frühgeschichte des Antisemitismus in Deutschland (1815–1850)* (Munich, 1956; 2nd ed. retitled *Judenhaus: Die Entstehung des politischen Antisemitismus in Deutschland (1815–1850)*, Frankfurt a. M., 1969), pointing to anti-Jewish racial attitudes in Germany before the mid-nineteenth century (see Judenhaus, pp. 67, 86 f., and especially 125–29). P.G.J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (New York, 1964), begins his discussion of “Racialism” (ch. 6, p. 49) with the laconic statement that “racial anti-Semitism had appeared in 1848 and even earlier,” and then proceeds directly to a discussion of Wilhelm Marr. One of the many merits of Jacob Katz’s recent *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980) is his demonstration of the continuity and transmission of many anti-Semitic ideas from early modern times to the eve of the Nazi era. Yet even he does not refer directly to anti-Jewish racial thinking in Germany until the appearance of J. Nordmann’s *Die Juden und der deutsche Staat* of 1861 (see Katz, pp. 243 f).

In this respect the testimony of Moses Hess in *Rome and Jerusalem* is pertinent. Although the book appeared in 1862, Hess’ characterization of German racial anti-Semitism does not present itself as a discovery of something newly arisen, nor as a reaction to individual anti-Semitic thinkers, but as a summary of broad and long standing observations and experiences from which he generalizes: “Keine Reform des jüdischen Kultus ist dem gebildeten deutschen Juden radikal genug. Selbst die Taufe erlösst ihn nicht von dem Alpdruck des deutschen Judenhasses. Die Deutschen hassen weniger die Religion der Juden als ihre Rasse, weniger ihren eigentümlichen Glauben als ihre eigentümlichen Nasen [my italics]. Weder Reform noch Taufe, weder Bildung noch Emanzipation erschliesst den deutschen Juden vollständig die Pforten des sozialen Lebens . . . Die jüdischen Nasen werden nicht reformiert, und das schwarze, krause jüdische Haar wird durch keine Taufe in blondes, durch keinen Kamm in schlichtes verwandelt . . .”

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(Rom und Jerusalem, die letzte Nationalitätsfrage, Leipzig, 1863, Vierter Brief, p. 14. d. also pp. 34, 204). As Hess indicates in a short Nachschrift placed at the beginning of the book, he did not even become aware of Nordmann's anonymously published pamphlet until his own book was already in printer's proofs and it was too late to deal with it.

It is neither by accident nor oversight that the origins and development of the racial component in modern German anti-Semitism do not figure among the major issues in scholarship analyzed by Haran Schorsch in his lucid and penetrating survey of "German Antisemitism in the Light of Post-War Historiography," Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook, XIX (1974), 257–71. Nor has the situation changed within the last decade. The question has simply been foreclosed prematurely, or else absorbed and obscured in the general concentration on political and other organized forms of anti-Semitism in Germany.


41. Characteristically, in the collaborative Judenfundschaft: Darstellung und Analyse, ed. Karl Thieme (Frankfurt a. M. and Hamburg, 1963), there is a separate two-part essay by the editor on "Die religiös motivierte Judenfeindschaft," and another by Karl Kuller on "Die biologisch motivierte Judenfeindschaft," which opens (p. 160) with the declaration that "Der 'biologische' Aspekt der Judenfeindschaft ist ein Errungenschaft der Neuzeit. Er löste den konfessionellen Aspekt ab in der Mass, in dem die Konfessionen an öffentlicher Bedeutung zu verlieren begannen."

42. On the arguments employed to reconcile the statutes with Catholic theology see Sicciof, Les controverses, pp. 170–91. Among the popes, Alexander VI (himself a Spaniard) ratified the statute of the Dominicans in 1493; the statute of the Colégio de San Ildefonso was ratified by Clement VII in 1534; those of the cathedrals of Córdoba and Toledo by Paul IV in 1555. Cf. also supra, n. 36.


44. One need hardly speculate as to what would have occurred had German Jewry followed Theodor Mommsen’s friendly but naive advice that they accept (an admittedly diluted) Christianity and thus remove the presumed final barrier to their total assimilation. See Mommsen, "Auch ein Wort über unser Jüdendom" (1886), reprinted in Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit, ed. Walter Boeckl (3rd ed., Frankfurt a. M., 1965), pp. 225 ff.

45. From this perspective, a careful review even of fairly well-known works can be enlightening. To take but two examples: When we find that in 1791 the German anti-Semite Karl Gratzenauer published a work entitled Über die physi- sche und moralische Verfassung der heutigen Juden, and stated that the baptism of Jews is as effective as "trying to wash a blackamoore white," we should be fully alert to the assumptions and implications of both the title and the comparison. The same is true of Fichte’s observation only two years later that "the only way to give them citizenship would be to cut off their heads on the same night in order to replace them with those containing no Jewish ideas." The brutal image has caught the attention of many, but it is the implicit conception of the Jews as unalterable that is of primary importance. I dare say that even a fresh re-reading of the Abbé Grégoire’s pre-Jewish Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des juifs (Mets, 1789) could be instructive if approached from a somewhat different angle than usual. An inverse reading, so to speak, would focus, not on the physical regeneration of the title, but on the current physical degeneration the phrase implies. Indeed, we find a rather appalling catalogue of Jewish biological defects enumerated in the book, doubtless revealing because they crop up so prominently within a passionate advocacy of Jewish emancipation. Grégoire, so be sure, was able to transcend (though not quite abandon) these particular prejudices and argue for the Jewish cause, trusting that ultimately the physical debilities of the Jews, along with their morals, could be positively transformed. Be that as it may, his championship of the Jews was idiosyncratic, while his biological prejudices were surely symptomatic of the views of masses of Frenchmen who shared neither his philo-Semitism nor his liberal optimism concerning a possible change in the Jews themselves.

46. By contrast, the Moriscos (Christians of Moorish descent) were expelled from Spain in 1609. Admittedly, their expulsion was facilitated by the fact that they lived together more compactly, were more easily recognizable, and were, on the whole, less important as a group than the New Christians of Jewish origin.


48. The re-evaluation of the Conversos may be said to have begun with the investigation of Manuel Serrano y Sainz of "The Aragonese Friends and Protec-
tor of Columbus" in his Orígenes de la dominación española en América (Madrid, 1918). Another landmark was the publication in 1937 of Marcel Bataillon's Erasm o y la España. However, the major impetus came with the appearance of Américo Castro's España en su historia en 1948 (Eng. tr.: The Structure of Spanish History, Princeton, 1954; revised ed. entitled La realidad histórica de España, Mexico, 1963). The central thesis of this seminal book, and others that followed, is that the history of Spain cannot be understood without taking full account of the interaction of Christians, Moors, and Jews in the Middle Ages, and of "Old" and "New" Christians from the fifteenth century onward. I cannot pause here to consider the controversy that continues to surround Castro's work, nor the occasional flaws in his own understanding of Jewish history and religion. The fact remains that in the Renaissance of scholarship on the Conversos, Castro's fruitful influence has been decisive, not only upon his disciples, but as a stimulant to others. For an overview of what had been achieved in the field up to 1975 see Antonio Domínguez Oría, "Historical Research on Spanish conversos in the last 15 years," Castro Festschrift, 63-82. For more recent bibliography see Robert Singerman, The Jews in Spain and Portugal: A Bibliography (New York-London, 1975), and the rich bibliographical notes to Baron, SHR, especially vols. XIII, ch. IV, XV, chs. 16-16.

49. Américo Castro was convinced that Cervantes was of Converso origin. (See in particular his Cervantes y los castizismos españoles, Madrid, 1975, pp. 73-264). Definite genealogical documentation for this is lacking, though there is some indirect evidence that cannot lightly be dismissed. Cf. the judicious summary of the problem by William Byron, Cervantes: A Biography (Garden City, N.Y., 1978) p. 24. Whatever his actual lineage is, it is clear by now that Cervantes was acutely aware of the tensions between Old and New Christians and of the obsession with limpieza in Spanish society, and that this consciousness is reflected significantly in his works.

50. Bataillon, Erasmo et l'Espagne (Paris, 1937); 2nd rev. ed., Erasmo y España (Mexico-Buenos Aires, 1958). Cf. Eugenio Ameño, "El Erasmismo y los cortesanos espirituales astusos: Conversos, franciscanos, italianizantes," Revista de filología española, XXXVI (1952), 31-99. Concerning Converso influence on reformist and spiritual tendencies in the Spanish religious sentiment of the sixteenth century Domínguez Oría observes: "Here one can be much more positive ... for how could a converse be a common Christian, a Christian of routine?" (Castro Festschrift, p. 79). Cf. Francisco Marquez (ibid., pp. 338 f.): "Whoever takes the trouble today to read with some understanding the writings of Santa Teresa, Fray Luis de León, Fray Diego de Estella, the Blessed Juan de Ávila, and so many others [of converso origin], will find there the same detestation of the ecclesiastical organization of the time, of imperialist policy, of violent conversions, of Caesarian, of limpieza de anore and of the Inquisition. ... All of them were feeling a painful longing for a society without caste, a state without violence, and for a spiritual church, free from the structure of social power."

51. Among the more impressive examples: "The Jewish origin of Santa Teresa of Ávila was documented through the discovery of a lawsuit filed at the beginning of the sixteenth century by members of her family, the Sánchez de Cepeda, claiming exemption from local taxes because they were hidalgos. In the course of the investigation it was revealed that their father (Teresa's grandfather Juan Sánchez) had been punished by the Inquisition of Toledo in 1485 for relapsing, by his own admission, into his former Judaism. Nevertheless, whether through bribery or benevolence, the court of appeals allowed his sons to retain their presumed hidalgía, and the denunciations of Juan Sánchez were brushed up. See Narciso Alonso Cortés, "Pleitos de los Cepedas," Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia, XXV (1940), 86–110, and cf. II. Sera, "Nueva genealogía de Santa Teresa," Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica, X (1956), 365–84. Perhaps even more dramatic are the facts which have emerged concerning Juan Luis Vives, whose Jewish origin was already suspected by Castro in 1948 (España en su historia, pp. 682–83). The inquisitorial records have since revealed that he was of Jewish extraction on all four sides, that until the age of ten he attended a clandestine "synagogue," that his father was burned alive as a Judaizer and the bones of his mother were exhumed and burned as well, and that his entire family was destroyed by the Inquisition. See M. de la Pinta Llorente and José M. Palacio, Procesos inquisitoriales contra la familia judía de Juan Luis Vives (Madrid, 1964). Though Vives' own Catholicism remained firm (he even wrote a theological polemic against Judaism), he understandably left Spain and never returned.

52. In other words, the mere fact that one's forebears were Talmudists does not, of itself, bequeath a "Talmudic mind," and while intelligence may be, in part, biologically inherited, its Jewish characteristics, if such exist, are not. Nor is the special creativity to which I allude to be identified as "Jewish" in content, or in the sense that it is necessarily nurtured by anything in Jewish religious or cultural tradition. I need hardly add that I do not propose to include Santa Teresa, or any of the other major Converso figures, in some pantheon of illustrious Jews, or in the often inflated roster of "Jewish contributions to civilization." It is not the fact of Jewish descent that is of moment for our purposes, but the inner and outer tensions it generates, and the manner in which these are expressed or resolved. Here, obviously, the conscious awareness of being of Jewish origin is decisive. For one exemplary approach to the treatment of the problem in its modern context see Isaiah Berlin's "Benjamin Disraeli, Karl Marx, and the Search for Identity," reprinted in his Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas, New York, 1950.
pp. 253–86). That the Conversos I have mentioned were indeed aware of their Jewish ancestry has been established by direct and indirect evidence. Concerning Fernando de Rojas, Vives, etc., there is no doubt whatever. As for Santa Teresa, in a fascinating passage in his *Espíritu de la beata Ana de San Bartolomé*, Teresa’s close friend Padre Jerónimo Gracián relates ingenuously that when he asked Ana about her family history she responded readily; but when he told Teresa of Avila that he had verified the nobility of both her family lines, the Ahumadas and the Cepedas, “she became very angry with me for dealing with this, saying that it sufficed her to be a daughter of the Church; and that it would grieve her more to have committed a venal sin than if she were a descendant of the vilest and lowest villains and confessors” (cited by Américo Castro, *De la edad confesiva*, 4th ed., Madrid, 1974, pp. 200 f.). Cf. also Castro, *Structure*, p. 565 (on Mateo Alemán, author of the famous picaresque novel *Guzmán de Alfarache*, who suppressed his mother’s surname when asked for his parentage in a public document, “because in Seville the name Inero smelled Jewish a hundred leagues away”).

53. Just as many assimilated Jews in Wilhelminian and Weimar Germany became stolid German bourgeois. This point, though quite correct in itself, has been overstressed by Peter Gay in his generally salutary effort to balance exaggerated claims that the avant-garde in modern German culture was predominantly a Jewish phenomenon. See, e.g., his “Encounter with Modernism,” as well as “The Berlin-Jewish Spirit” (Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture XV, 1972), reprinted in his *Proud, Jews and Other Germans* (Oxford, 1979). The fact that many German Jews were cultural conservatives or, conversely, that many German avant-garde artists were not Jews, helps to refine the problem, but does not cause it to disappear. Gay himself is careful to concede that “whatever hyperbole the skeptical historian detects and discounts, the Jewish share in German Modernism remains noteworthy” (ibid., p. 131). It is this, precisely, that still invites further investigation, and I suggest that the manner in which Castro and his followers have approached similar questions of the Converso factor in Spanish culture may well prove relevant and instructive.

54. These qualities are abundantly evident throughout the scholarly literature on the Conversos. The English reader will find a powerful portrayal and documentation of most of them in Stephen Gillman, *TheSpainofFernando de Rojas* (Princeton, 1972). As for Selbachus, it will suffice to cite an anonymous Franciscan who writes in 1581 that one would have to be blind not to see that there is no *confeso* in Spain “who would not prefer being descended from paganism rather than Judaism, and almost all of them would give up half their lives to have that pedigree ... for they abhor the lineage they have received from their parents” (Sigroff, *Les controverses*, p. 150).

55. See e.g., Caro Baroja, *Los judíos*, 1, 182–92, “El converso que se burla de su propia condición.”


This selection was initially delivered as a lecture in Hebrew at the Israeli Academy of Arts and Sciences in Jerusalem in May 1977, when Yerushalmi was spending a sabbatical year in Israel. It reveals his ongoing interest in themes central to his first book, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, namely, the Iberian Jewish experience and the condition of the crypto-Jew, or Marrano. At the same time, the lecture evinces Yerushalmi's concern for large questions about Jewish history, including the history of historiography, the nature of the secularization process, and the explanation for the Jews' surprising survival over millennia.

At the center of this set of overlapping inquiries stands the renowned philosopher from Amsterdam Baruch (Benedictus) Spinoza (1632–1677). The fulcrum of the lecture is Yerushalmi's new reading, against the grain, of Spinoza's views about the survival of the Jews expressed in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*. Yerushalmi drew on his textured historical knowledge of the Iberian context from which Spinoza drew and the Dutch context in which Spinoza dwelled, to tie together various facets of Spinoza's life and strands of Spinoza scholarship into a masterful synthesis.

He began the talk by identifying various stages of research into Spinoza. The shift toward a more a more historically sensitive approach to Spinoza, one that focused on his crypto-Jewish origins, began with the German scholar Carl Gehardt in the 1920s and was later taken up by the French scholar I. S. Révah. The historical approach gained considerable momentum in Yerushalmi's time, with the discovery of new documentary sources on the Amsterdam Jewish community, as well as on the history of New Christians in Spain, Portugal, and beyond. Notwithstanding this trend, Yerushalmi observed a lingering tendency among scholars to regard Spinoza in rather one-dimensional terms, as a pure "philosophical intelligence" who "sits alone in his room, grinds lenses, and ponders his ideas with a serenity of spirit so absolute that his thoughts have no origin beyond the pure spirit itself." By contrast, Yerushalmi proposed a more multidimensional historical approach that explored the way in which Spinoza's past figured in his thought.

He went about this task through the prism of an age-old question: What explains the survival of the Jews? In contrast to the competing (and, at times, overlapping) theological explanations of Jews and Christians, Yerushalmi pointed to Spinoza as the progenitor of a new, secular response to the question. It is, somewhat counterintuitively, the hatred of the Gentiles that explains the survival of