



Mosaic Religion and the Religious Mosaic An Approach to the Jewish Community for Christian Seminarians

Script 24: Antisemitism 201: Myths and Modern Times

Antisemitism takes many forms. Like racism and other types of hatred, antisemitism is found in words, actions, or both. It can be overt and intentional, or subtle and unintentional, often without people realizing how antisemitic tropes have become interwoven into the fabric of their community.

The term “antisemitism” can be applied to a wide range of actions against the Jewish community as a whole or against individuals. An example of an antisemitic action against the Jewish community is the infamous blood libel leveled against various European Jewish communities. This began to emerge in the twelfth century. The blood libel was an allegation that Jewish communities ritually murdered Christian children and used their blood for the baking of Passover matzah and for the performance of other Jewish religious rituals. A related lie was that Jews routinely poisoned wells in Christian communities and desecrated the host in Christian churches to interfere with Christians taking communion. These libels continue to emerge in various parts of the world to this day.

This is one image of what antisemitism looks like:



These 18th-19th century European walking cane handles portray a Jewish male face. This image plays on the stereotype that all Jews have big noses. These canes were very popular in their time. Another place in which we see the “big nose” stereotype is in the classic portrayal of the Jewish character Shylock in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. This play was first performed in England in 1605. Another antisemitic stereotype that reinforced the image of Shylock as a villain is the idea that Jews are money-grubbing people who are unscrupulous in their business dealings. This antisemitic stereotype portrays Jews as people who try to employ hair-splitting logic to defeat honest, law-abiding Christians.

Historic antisemitic tropes that continue to this day include:

Demonization of Jews: Early Christian teachings associated Jews with the devil and/or with demonic elements. Jews in the Middle Ages were styled as children of the devil and were often portrayed with horns and bulging eyes. These teachings also linked Jews with Satanic attributes like arrogance and devious logic. This explains why Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* is portrayed with these characteristics.

Dirt and Disease: The term “dirty Jew” reflects the antisemitic attitude that Jews are carriers of disease and have physical defects or deformities--thus the long-nose stereotype. Often linked with these ideas is the concept that Jews are ugly, weak, and dirty. Oversexualization of women--as in the stereotype of the “Jewish American Princess”--and emasculation of Jewish men, often depicted as weak, pale and lacking “masculine” physicality are also related to this antisemitic concept.

Money and Criminality: This is the idea that all Jews are wealthy, powerful, menacing, and inclined toward criminal behavior. The corollary is that Jews have no conscience and are capable of literally and figuratively sacrificing others to satisfy their own greed. This concept also comes to us from the medieval period during which Jews were very limited in terms of available professions. As a result, many Jews served as money lenders, a profession forbidden for many Christians.

The Global Jewish Conspiracy: This is also known as “Jews run the media, financial institutions, governments, and health care organizations.” This idea has its foundation in the early centuries of the Common Era. It was first presented to the modern world in 1903 in the form of a literary hoax created by the Russian secret police called, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The original purpose of these “Protocols” was to portray Jews as enemies of the Russian state.

“Protocols” describes a worldwide Jewish conspiracy to destroy Christianity and rule the world. The document claimed to be the record of a secret meeting of multinational Jewish leaders who were planning to enslave all the peoples of the world, destroy Christianity, and subvert all “decent” Christian values. Terms like “Jewish lobby,” “Jewish interests,” and “Zionist conspiracy” are all terms that refer to this idea.

Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Company, was also the publisher of the *Dearborn Independent* newspaper. A rabid antisemite, Ford printed the “Protocols” in his newspaper in ninety-one consecutive issues beginning in 1919. The articles were then bound into four volumes titled, “The International Jew,” and distributed to the newspaper’s subscribers and all Ford car dealerships. Throughout his life, Ford continued to spread antisemitic lies about Jewish people, so much so that Adolph Hitler complimented him by name in *Mein Kampf*. He is the only American to be “honored” in this way.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion was discredited early in its publication history. However, it has continued to be a “bible” for antisemitic and other hate groups around the world. The “Protocols” has been translated into dozens of languages. Today, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is widely circulated across the globe in printed editions and on the Internet.

The misuse of media to successfully spread antisemitic ideas and actions is well documented and is abundantly evident in modern society. The proliferation of publicly accessed platforms for disseminating information has enticed many groups around the world to spread their antisemitic ideas. The spread of access to media in the last decade has encouraged some elected officials, white power groups, and media outlets to go public with their antisemitic messages.

For example, on August 11-12, 2017, Charlottesville, Virginia, was the scene of a large, violent “Unite the Right” rally that brought together a variety of white nationalist, white supremacist, racist, and antisemitic groups. Among the racist and antisemitic chants heard at the rally were “Jews will not replace us” and “blood and soil,” echoes of chants and slogans used in Nazi Germany. Many gave Nazi salutes during their march through Charlottesville, and violence directed at counter-protestors culminated in tragedy when a car plowed through the crowd and left one dead and nineteen wounded.

On January 6, 2020, large numbers of people who participated in the Washington, DC rally and assault on the US Capitol Building wore tee shirts with the slogan, “6MWE.” The letters mean “6 Million Weren’t Enough,” a direct reference to the Holocaust. This insidious slogan refers to the 6 million Jews who were killed by the Nazis in the Holocaust. Pictures of people wearing this tee shirt went viral.



In November 2018, Marjorie Taylor Greene, a member of Congress, posted a comment that asserted that California wildfires had been started by PG&E, Pacific Gas and Electric. She offered the contemptible theory that PG&E acted in conjunction with the Rothschilds and used a space laser to clear room for a high-speed rail project. Representative Greene has also said that Zionist supremacists are secretly masterminding Muslim immigration to Europe in a scheme to outbreed white people.

Lest we think that the infamous blood libel is a thing of the past, *Al-Meshwar*, a Canadian Arabic newspaper, published an article in March 2020 titled, "The Abuse of the Martyrs and the Manipulation of Their Bodies Are Jewish Commandments and Israeli Directives." The article was written by former Hamas official Dr. Mustafa Yusuf al-Lidawi, who has a track record of making false claims of blood libel against Israel.

Like racism and other forms of group-based hatred, antisemitism is extremely toxic to any society in which it is permitted to flourish. Antisemitism has been called the "canary in the coal mine" of hatred and bigotry. It affects not only Jews, but ultimately all people who wish to live in peace with their neighbors.

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