



The young Lessing and the Jews

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The young Lessing and the Jews

by Colin Walker

It is for me a great honour and pleasure to have been invited to give this lecture, especially in view of my many years of friendship with Dr Scheyer's daughter and her husband, Renate and Robert Weil. I also regret that I did not know Dr Scheyer: I should have had so much to learn from him. I have learnt a lot about him from Renate and Robert Weil, and I have been grateful for the opportunity to read some of his published and unpublished papers.

I have been impressed by his strong assurance, especially as a young man, that he could harmonize his German and his Jewish heritage. As a student he was a member of a Jewish fraternity, which was affiliated to the central organization of Jewish student societies, the 'Kartell Convent deutscher Studenten jüdischen Glaubens' ('KC' for short). The KC was set up in 1896, and its founders proclaimed that it stood firmly on the foundations of patriotic German ideology. Its declared aims were to combat antisemitism among German students, and to educate its members to become self-confident Jews who would know that through their historical, cultural and legal bonds they were inseparably united with the German fatherland.¹ When we consider the Holocaust that was to come these aims may seem tragically idealistic, yet until the rise of Hitler they would have been shared by most German Jews who went through university.

Some Jews, such as Karl Emil Franzos or Ernst Lissauer, reacted against antisemitic accusations that Jews were unpatriotic by displaying a strident chauvinism, which won them few friends amongst those they were trying to impress, but generally Jews gloried less in German military exploits than in German 'Bildung', above all in what was seen to be the great humanist tradition of Lessing, Herder, Kant, Goethe, Schiller, Hegel. The list could be a long one. In their writings Dr Scheyer and many Jews like him found living ideals that men could live by.

Yet the only one of the writers I have mentioned who was fairly consistently pro-Jewish was Lessing. His pleas for sympathy and understanding for Jews culminated in the classic drama of tolerance *Nathan der Weise* in 1779. This began five of the most eventful years in the history of Jewish emancipation (though it was not called 'emancipation' for about another forty years). In 1781 the great

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Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, who was Lessing's truest friend and, it is thought, the model for Nathan, inspired another mutual friend Christian Wilhelm von Dohm to the classic apology for Jewish emancipation: *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*. At the end of that year and in early 1782 the Emperor Joseph II instituted some civic rights for Jews in his Habsburg realms. This was the first significant measure of Jewish emancipation in eighteenth-century Europe. 1783 saw Mendelssohn's treatise *Jerusalem*, which defended a rational Judaism and advocated that Jews should play a full part in gentile society, though that participation was not to be bought at the price of deviation from the Jewish law. It was partly thanks to the campaigning of Mendelssohn that Louis XVI granted some relief to the Jews of Alsace in 1784. Unfortunately Lessing did not live to see the developments he had done so much to promote, for he died in 1781.

He certainly gained the gratitude of German Jewry — gratitude and adulation. When the 1812 Emancipation Edict in Prussia required the Jews to register a surname some adopted the name of their gentile hero. In a celebratory speech in 1879 Emil Lehmann even saw Lessing as a Christ-like victim, as one who died not upon the cross, but tormented by the fanatical persecution which befalls the prophet and proclaimer of the truth: 'Aber er ist auferstanden, und wird fortleben in uns und für uns, so lange Menschen menschlich fühlen, so lange Deutsche deutsch denken, so lange Juden ihr Judentum hochhalten.'² Above all Lessing was hailed as a liberator. Michael Friedländer wrote in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* in 1904: 'It was really Lessing who opened the doors of the ghetto and gave the Jews access to European culture.'³

At the same time Lessing, with his reputation as the founder of modern German literature, caused some embarrassment to Germans who would have preferred those doors to remain shut. In the view of Wilhelm Marr, who coined the term antisemitism, Lessing the great German writer had treated Jewish toleration as a philosophical abstraction. He would have retreated, said Marr, in dismay, with outraged aesthetic sensibilities, if he had been able to foresee the practical results of the cause he had championed.⁴ On the other hand Eugen Dühring, another fierce anti-Jewish polemicist of the late nineteenth century, did his best to denigrate Lessing on all counts. Only a Jewish-dominated press could have given Lessing such an inflated reputation, he alleged. For of course — Lessing had 'Jewish blood'⁵

It is not my purpose now to consider the reception of Lessing in

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Germany, nor to attempt another well-deserved panegyric to the humanitarianism of *Nathan der Weise*. Rather I should like to go back thirty years to the beginning of Lessing's career as a writer, to the period 1749-1754, when he first advocated Jewish toleration, long before most other German authors concerned themselves with the question. And in particular I should like to explore with you some of the implications of his one-act comedy *Die Juden*, which was written, Lessing tells us, in 1749, and was published in Berlin in 1754.⁶ It was slightly revised in 1767. Of the seven comedies Lessing had written by the time he was twenty this was the one which aroused most public controversy and had the most lasting impact, though few scholars would concur with Michael Friedländer that in this play Lessing went 'further than any other apostle of toleration before or after him'.⁷

This play is less well known than *Nathan*, so I shall give you a brief summary of the plot. Before the stage action begins the steward of a country baron and an accomplice have conspired to disguise themselves as Jewish bandits (by wearing false beards) and to ambush and rob their employer. Their plot failed when the Baron was rescued by a passing traveller armed with a pistol, though the two villains made their escape unrecognized. As the play opens the Traveller is unsuspectingly discussing the episode later with the steward. The Traveller does not at this stage reveal to anyone, not even to the audience, that he is a Jew. A complicated and conventional comic intrigue, in which the Traveller plays an important though rather passive role, leads to the unmasking of the two culprits, and I shall spare you the details. The Baron, who has been full of gratitude towards his rescuer, but also full of anti-Jewish prejudice, offers a reward to the Traveller, the hand of his daughter in marriage — not so much of an offer, really, for she is a silly little creature who set her cap at the Traveller as soon as she clapped eyes on him. At this stage, as the Traveller politely declines the reward, he is obliged to reveal that he is a Jew. The only reward he looks for is that henceforth the Baron should judge Jews more favourably and in less general terms. The Baron is mortified at what he has said earlier, and he goes a little way towards rewarding the Traveller in his final comment: 'O wie achtungswürdig wären die Juden, wenn sie alle Ihnen gleichen!' — with the perhaps unintended implication that unfortunately the Traveller was an exception. To which the Traveller replies with his usual courtesy, though rather drily: 'Und wie liebenswürdig die Christen, wenn sie alle Ihre Eigenschaften besäßen!' (i,414).

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In many ways Lessing's Jew is exceptional, not least in the history of literature up to this point. Jews were usually treated as stock subsidiary functional characters endowed with the conventional alleged Jewish vices — avarice, deceitfulness, cowardice, lechery. They were usually figures of fun, occasionally of satiric ridicule. One could think of Isaac Rapine in Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748), or the converted Jew Isaac Mendoza in Sheridan's *The Duenna* (1775). But in the latter part of the eighteenth century there also emerged the stock figure of the 'honest Hebrew' — Smollett's Joshua Manasseh Joshua in *The adventures of Count Fathom* (1753) or Sheridan's Moses in *The school for scandal* (1777) are good examples. Lessing was a pioneer in this development. His most important predecessor was Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, whose *Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G . . .* (1747-48) depicts in a minor character a Polish Jew who is a model of probity and generosity. Lessing's Nathan was to provide a further model for such figures, who became commonplace in popular drama towards the end of the century, until in Richard Cumberland's play *The Jew* (1794) we have an 'honest Hebrew' who seems to live only to demonstrate that he is a paragon of all the virtues.⁸

But generally these figures make no secret of the fact that they are Jewish, and they are treated as such for good or ill. Until he gets the offer of marriage Lessing's Traveller remains incognito, though it must be admitted that most of the other characters are extraordinarily unobservant and dimwitted. In the literature of the mid-eighteenth century he is therefore exceptional in that he is to some extent, by the standards of his time, an assimilated Jew.

It is very difficult to generalize about the conditions of Jews in Germany at this period, for the regulations which governed their rights, obligations and privileges varied considerably even within the three hundred-odd territories of the Holy Roman Empire.⁹ Their fortunes depended often merely on the whim of the local ruler or town council.

Frankfurt for instance, like Prague, had a ghetto, which Goethe has described so vividly in his autobiography.¹⁰ Jews were locked into the ghetto at night, on Sundays, on religious festivals, or when the town was putting on a coronation or execution. In Leipzig only about half-a-dozen families were allowed to live permanently, although hundreds of Jews crowded in for the trade fairs. Jews who died there had to be taken to Dresden for burial. The town of Ulm allowed no Jewish residents at all. 1750-1780 was a period in which enlightened opinion turned in favour of the Jews, yet in many areas

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they faced increasing restrictions and increasing financial and legal obligations. The Empress Maria Theresia, whose religiously motivated fear and hatred of Jews was so intense that she would converse with them only from behind a screen, stipulated as late as 1764 that no Jew might appear on the streets of Vienna before noon on Sundays or holy days, or at any time if a religious procession were in the offing. All Jewish married men and widowers had to have beards. And she tightened up: she insisted that the distinctive yellow armband, which her ancestor Ferdinand I had introduced in 1551, should be worn by Jewish men at all times. In Prussia, the benevolence of Frederick the Great towards the Jews varied in direct ratio to their ability to pay taxes, and his mercantilist policy towards them was imitated by many other rulers. In general Jews in Germany were restricted to certain trades and could not enter trade guilds. They were usually not allowed to own land, to employ Christian servants, or to wear swords. When passing from one territory to another they had to pay a head-tax, or 'Leibzoll'.

Yet Jews were not the most degraded members of society in Germany. Most German Jews had greater freedom and were probably better housed, fed and educated than those peasants, especially east of the Elbe, who were still held down by feudal obligations. Jewish communities still had considerable judicial autonomy. The legal restrictions on Jews were not always enforced, such as the rule in Frankfurt that Jews should not walk more than two abreast. Also, Jewish men were not subject to recruitment into the various armies, though Jewish communities usually had to pay a tax in lieu. As time passed many Jewish leaders came to see exclusion from army service as a form of *negative* discrimination.

In the eighteenth century Jews were not often physically endangered, though they could not feel wholly secure. Twelve people were killed in the anti-Jewish riots in Vienna in 1700, and there was a serious riot in Hamburg in 1730. In 1744 Maria Theresia had the Prague community expelled — because of alleged collaboration with the enemy Prussia. Their expulsion damaged the Prague economy so severely that she had to allow them back in 1747.

There were also wide social differences within the Jewish communities. The vast majority of Jews were small businessmen, petty traders (often in second-hand goods), cattle-dealers, inn-keepers, or pedlars. In some areas they were allowed to work on the land. A few were manufacturers, and a very small minority, the 'Hof-faktoren' or court factors (often simply called 'court Jews') had gained considerable wealth and influence as bankers, mintmasters,

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army purveyors, even as civil contractors or diplomats. The princes who employed them gave them special privileges, and in the splendour of their dress, homes and way of life they vied with the German nobility. The favour they enjoyed was precarious, however. One of the most famous of them, Joseph Süß Oppenheimer ('Jud Süß'), the court factor of the Duke of Württemberg, fell from grace and was executed just eleven years before Lessing wrote *Die Juden*. At the other end of the social scale were the itinerant beggars, some of whom lapsed into crime, which ranged from petty thieving to banditry.

In 1749 Lessing's traveller is also an exceptional Jew in that he develops a friendship with a gentile, just as later the close comradeship between Lessing and Mendelssohn was unusual in the 1750s. There are indeed records of cordial relationships between Jews and gentiles in certain areas, but as a rule they kept apart. It is doubtful whether at this time Jews in Germany could strictly speaking be termed Germans, except in so far as they lived on German territory. Some of them could speak or even write German for commercial purposes, but their mother tongue was Yiddish, with Hebrew as their language of worship. In their culture, dress, food, daily customs, and above all in the religion which determined all these, they were generally quite different from their gentile neighbours. The barriers of ignorance and prejudice which had sometimes been broken down by philosemitic Pietists a couple of generations before were now much more secure. It is true that secular learning, that is especially study of classical literature and philosophy and of the natural sciences, was becoming more common amongst a small intellectual minority of the Jews, but it was only in the 1750s that this scholarship began to be regarded as a pathway out of the ghetto. The religious leaders of both communities did their best to maintain this *apartheid*.

It must be stressed that the mistrust and hostility between Christian and Jew throughout Europe at this time was rooted in religious intolerance. A typical instance is to be found again in Smollett, this time in *The adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), where Peregrine's tutor Jolter says with reference to a Jewish traveller

that the judgement of God was still manifest upon their whole race, not only in their being in the state of exiles from their native land, but also in the spite of their hearts and pravity of their dispositions, which demonstrate them to be the genuine offspring of those who crucified the Saviour of the world.¹²

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Here is the basic cause of anti-Jewish feeling in Europe until racist antisemitism began to predominate at the end of the nineteenth century — the belief among Christians of most shades of opinion that the Jews were cursed by God as the deicide people who rejected the true Messiah.¹³ Admittedly this libel did not feature so prominently in anti-Jewish polemic in the eighteenth century as in the nineteenth century (at the time of the ‘Hep Hep’ riots in the Restoration period,¹⁴ for instance, or in the preachings of Adolf Stoecker in the Second Empire).¹⁵ It was still prevalent in our own century: even one of the most outspoken and courageous Christian opponents of Hitler, Pastor Martin Niemöller, was still saying in 1935 that the reason for the obvious punishment which the Jews had undergone for thousands of years was that they had brought the Christ of God to the cross.¹⁶ And it took the Holocaust and Vatican II to expunge such teachings from the Catholic Church.¹⁷ The deicide libel is one of the fundamental propositions in the most influential antisemitic book produced in Germany in the eighteenth century, a work which was still being quoted in the Third Reich, Johann Andreas Eisenmenger’s *Entdecktes Judentum* (printed 1700, published 1711). Here the Jews — ‘jederzeit ein halsstarriges und bößhaftes Volck’ — are depicted as having persecuted and killed not only God’s messengers, the prophets of old, but also the Son of God. Their hatred of Christ, Eisenmenger contended, was just as prevalent now.¹⁸ Only conversion to the Christian faith could release them from their hardness of heart and spiritual blindness.¹⁹

By contrast another large-scale study, containing a much more favourable view of the Jews, though still by no means a philosemitic one, was produced by the philosopher and playwright of the Danish Enlightenment Ludvig av Holberg, whose *Jødiske Historie* (Copenhagen, 1742) appeared in German translation shortly before Lessing wrote *Die Juden*.²⁰

Like Holberg, Lessing clearly rejected the charge of deicide made against the Jews. In 1751 he wrote with reference to Klopstock’s *Messias* that the Jewish people of Christ’s time could not have rebelled against Christ as the Son of God because they did not know him as such (iii,315), and in *Rettung des Cardanus*, written in 1748 and published in 1754, Lessing presented sympathetically a Jewish view that God had preserved rather than rejected the Jewish people (vii,22f.).

But it is above all in his play *Die Juden* that Lessing attempts to

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root out anti-Jewish religious prejudice, and the articulator of Lessing's message is often the Jewish Traveller himself.

One cannot tell in which area of Germany the play is set. We learn that the Traveller and his servant Christoph have come from Hamburg, and that Christoph was engaged as his servant there four weeks before. (In Hamburg it was legal for Jews to employ Christians, and vice versa.) We are not told that either lives in Hamburg, and Christoph, seemingly a footloose character, probably does not. If the Traveller is a Hamburg resident he could well be one of the wealthy Sephardic community, who in their way of life, speech and dress were much more akin to the gentiles than were their Ashkenazi brethren.²¹

The revelation at the end of the play that the Traveller is a Jew comes as a shock to the other characters, not least to his servant, but not to the audience, who will have guessed his identity some time earlier. It seems clear why Lessing chose to keep his Jew incognito for so long. He wrote in a preface in 1754 that with this play he was trying to show virtue where it was quite unsuspected — that is, in a Jew (ii,645). But coupled with this was undoubtedly satire directed against antisemitism. The audience had to appreciate the irony of the position of the gentile characters as they unwittingly pour anti-Jewish slander into the ears of a noble and generous Jew. Thus the slander is *demonstrated* to have no general validity. And the audience could appreciate with not wholly innocent pleasure the discomfiture of the gentile characters when the Traveller's true identity is revealed. The Traveller explains his reticence by saying that he valued the Baron's initial offer of friendship. He feared that if the Baron knew he was a Jew he would no longer treat him as a friend or indeed as an individual, but as a representative of the Jewish people. In the event, of course, when the Baron learns his identity he treats him as an unrepresentative Jew.

The Traveller looks and talks like a member of the wealthy bourgeoisie — that class which was the goal of Jewish assimilationists by the end of the eighteenth century. He has no beard, apparently, for he holds up to his face the false beard which was Krumm's 'Jewish disguise' and asks if it makes him look like a Jew (i,405). The lack of a beard, and of distinctive Jewish clothing, would support the possibility that he is a Sephardic Jew. The Traveller points out that the bandits who attacked the Baron spoke the local peasant dialect (i,380). They were therefore not likely to have been Jews, who would have spoken Yiddish. He himself speaks perfect German, like most of the 'honest Hebrews' who were to

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succeed him on the German stage, and on the road to assimilation he may well have left Yiddish behind him, though again if he is a Sephardi, the descendant of Spanish or Portuguese Jews, Yiddish would not have been his mother tongue.

The Traveller is the only character of any refinement. He even goes so far in his sophistication as to voice a conventional lament over the hypocrisy and dissembling to be found in the cities, as opposed to the natural way of life enjoyed by country folk (i,386). He is thereby being polite to the Baron, though there may be some irony in the fact that he is inveighing against urban artificiality at a time when he feels obliged to conceal his own identity. Not that he goes out of his way to do this. It is made clear at the end that he is loyal to the God of his fathers, that he performs his daily devotions (the 'Alfanzereien' to which his servant Christopher refers), and that he observes the dietary laws, at any rate to the extent of abstaining from pork (i,413), though he has infringed those laws by sharing a meal with the Baron and his family (i,383).²²

It is only when he is faced with the prospect of a mixed marriage with the Baron's daughter that he is forced to admit that he is a Jew. The girl herself is the only one who is unconcerned by this news: 'Ei, was tut das?' — and her maidservant Lisette whispers to her: 'Ich will es Ihnen hernach sagen, was das tut' (i,413). It has been suggested that the natural, undefiled feelings of this young girl are now going to be sullied by Lisette's antisemitic prejudices.²³ But Lisette, who is one of the less obtuse characters, shows no sign of antisemitic feelings, and this suggestion relies on the assumption that Lessing believed that intermarriage was indeed desirable for both Jews and Christians. I can find no evidence for such a view. I doubt if Lessing would have been outraged by the legalization of mixed marriages in the way Goethe was in 1823,²⁴ and it may well be that he was opposed to the ban on mixed marriages which Frederick the Great included in the restrictions he placed on Jews in 1750, but I cannot share the view of a number of critics that Lessing is hinting at opposition to such state interference when he has the Baron agree that the marriage is impossible: 'So gibt es denn Fälle, wo uns der Himmel selbst verhindert, dankbar zu sein' (i,413). Nor can I agree with these critics and deduce from the Baron's comment that Lessing is obliquely advocating civic rights for Jews.²⁵ Lessing certainly did support these rights, as I hope to show, but the Baron's statement surely means in effect simply that there are insuperable *religious* barriers to a marriage between a Jew and a Christian. (And these barriers were formally erected not by

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Frederick but by the council of Elvira in about 306; these were given civil status by the Emperors Constantius and Theodosius I.²⁶ On the Jewish side of course one can go back to the seventh chapter of Deuteronomy.)

The Traveller may well be thanking Heaven that he has an excellent excuse for not marrying the Baron's daughter. He is so obviously her superior in every respect (except aristocratic lineage). Lessing presents him as a brave, chivalrous, cultivated man. Yet we should be careful not to think of the Traveller as a model Jew, as a paragon of virtue. Even the young Lessing is too subtle and realistic a dramatist for that. The Traveller can be naive and is too prone to jump to conclusions. He does little to check the flow of insults directed against his co-religionists. Although he objects to bigoted generalizations about national or religious groups he himself is guilty of prejudice when he says (in the 1754 version) that if Jews cheat, no-one considers that the Christians have forced them into it. He doubts whether one Christian can boast of having dealt honestly with a Jew.²⁷ In the 1767 version this is toned down somewhat, when the Traveller says that if a Jew cheats then seven times out of nine a Christian has perhaps forced him into it. And he doubts whether many Christians can boast of having dealt honestly with a Jew (i,382). These are still sweeping statements, but there is no longer the glaring discrepancy between precept and practice. Some may doubt, however, whether Lessing would have faulted him for this comment (even in its 1754 version). It was a common enough sentiment among those who sought sympathetic understanding of the Jews.

Some so-called Christian attitudes towards the Jews are expressed by the rascally steward, the servant Christoph, and by the Baron. Their words lend support to the Traveller's contention that for Christians persecution of the Jews can be 'ein Religionspunkt, und beinahe ein verdienstliches Werk' (i,382). Lessing does not spell out why it is almost a meritorious act, but the implication is clear: to persecute the Jews is to participate in the divinely-ordained retribution against the deicide people. That was how Ludvig Holberg saw this form of prejudice: 'Die Christen glauben, daß Juden alle Wiederwärtigkeiten, welche sie erfahren, mit Recht erdulden, weil ihre Vorfahren Christum gekreuziget; ja einige halten es so gar für eine Pflicht, und für ein Verdienst, die Juden aus dieser Ursache zu verfolgen.' He added however that there were many Christians who abhorred such cruelty.²⁸ Here as so often Holberg was following Basnage: 'le Chrétien, animé par un faux Zèle, a cru faire un Acte

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de Religion, d'immoler à sa Fureur la Postérité la plus éloignée des Meurtriers de Jésus-Christ.²⁹

The steward Krumm uses religious antisemitism as a means of throwing suspicion on to the alleged Jewish bandits, and the audience can enjoy the irony that this very man should denounce the Jews as swindlers, thieves and highwaymen, without exception. That, says Krumm, is why God has cursed the Jewish people (i,380). There is no mention here or later of a divine curse upon the Jews because of the crucifixion — clearly Lessing did not want to introduce such a sensitive religious theme into a stage comedy. But the idea that the Jews are cursed because of their immorality is not original to Krumm. As an adjunct to the deicide charge anti-Jewish polemicists in the Early Church chose the imprecations of ancient prophets such as Isaiah and Nehemiah against Jews of their own times, took them out of that context, and presented them as proof of God's judgement on the criminality of Jews throughout the ages.³⁰ It seems indeed that Krumm has derived his antisemitic ideas from his local church, though it is doubtful if he has derived much else. He points out that on the previous Sunday the parson preached that the disproportionately high number of Jews killed in a recent accident in Breslau was a sign that God hated the Jewish people (i,380f.). It is no wonder that the Traveller wishes that Krumm's vicious words were the language of the rabble alone (i,381).

Another representative of the 'Christian rabble' (to quote the Traveller) (i,413) is his ignorant and inattentive manservant Christoph. When he learns that he has been employed for four weeks by a Jew he is highly indignant, and asserts that the whole of Christianity has been insulted, and he threatens to go to court. He claims that according to the Bible the Traveller should have been serving him (i,413) — which shows that he does have some inkling of the ancient Christian doctrine, now discredited and abandoned, of 'servitus Judaeorum' and its interpretation of Genesis 25.23, where the Lord said to Isaac's wife Rebecca:

Two nations in your womb,
two peoples, going their own ways from birth!
One shall be stronger than the other;
the older shall be servant to the younger.

On this reading the descendants of Esau, the Jews, were destined to be subservient to the Christians, who were the descendants of

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the younger brother Jacob. There was a related teaching, which was based on St Paul and favoured by St Augustine, and which went back a generation to Abraham, whereby the Christians were the descendants of Sarah, and the Jews were the offspring of the slave-woman Hagar.³¹ In the medieval church the concept of the 'servitude of the Jews' was also based on the doctrine of the deicide people, and especially on the incident in Matthew's account of the trial of Jesus, when the crowd called out to Pilate 'with one voice': 'His blood be upon us, and on our children' (27.26). This verse was used repeatedly to justify the permanent subservience of the Jews, and of course to deny them civic rights, most notably by Pope Innocent III.³² Eisenmenger cited Innocent III's injunction against the employment of nurses or other Christian servants by Jews, and he argued indeed that in his day the increasing failure of Christian authorities to enforce such a ban was allowing Jews to become ever more unruly:

Wann die Christen durch ein nochmaliges scharffes Verbot/ von allen Judischen Diensten abgehalten würden/ wie bald würden die von stinckendem Hochmuth aufgeblasene Juden/ ihren Hoffart fallen lassen/ und darauff betrachten/ daß der Fluch Gottes über ihnen sey/ und nachdenken/ warum solches geschehe/ auch durch nachsinnen zur Bekehrung bewogen werden.³³

Christoph, at any rate, is quickly mollified by the Traveller's magnanimity and decides to stay in his employ: 'Nein, der Henker! es gibt doch wohl auch Juden, die keine Juden sind' (i,414).

This qualification of antisemitic prejudice is rather similar to the Baron's final attitude, but his prejudice does not *appear* to be a religious one. In the past he has been cheated by a Jew, and that incident alone has convinced him that by inclination Jews in general are mercenary and dishonest. He even goes on to claim that there is something unbecoming in the Jewish face. He tells the Traveller that the Jews' malice, unscrupulousness, egotism and deceit can be read in their eyes — and then he wonders why his new friend turns away in embarrassment (i,388). The Baron's comment seems to be downright racist. Although racist antisemitism was not totally unknown in the eighteenth century it is much safer to see the Baron's remark simply as another received idea, and to relate it to a specific Christian anti-Jewish tradition, according to which God had cursed the Jews with a spiritual blindness, a darkness of the soul which was manifest in the eyes.³⁴

Again Lessing makes no mention of the crucifixion. It is clearly

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much easier for Lessing to have these antisemites come to make an exception of this one Jew if they do not have to set aside a curse which is a blanket condemnation of all Jews as a result of one historical incident. But what marks off the Baron from this whole tradition in the end is that he is prepared to recognize in his new Jewish friend a man of virtue. For the Baron, and of course for Lessing too, virtue is not the prerogative of Christianity. In Lessing's 1754 preface he asked why we should doubt that virtuous men could emerge from a people that once produced so many heroes and prophets (ii,645).

In a review of the play the Göttingen theologian Professor Johann David Michaelis argued however that in modern times the Jewish people had become so morally degraded through persecution and enforced commercialism that the Traveller was a highly implausible figure (i,416). To refute this assertion Lessing pointed, without naming them, to the examples provided by his Jewish friends Moses Mendelssohn and Aron Gumpertz, who, he said, had attained virtue and scholarship without the benefit of wealth (i,422) (though it must be admitted that Gumpertz, who had employed German professors to teach him Latin and philosophy, did not have the wolf at the door). Lessing quoted with approval a letter from Mendelssohn to Gumpertz, which took issue with the attacks by Michaelis on Jewish moral standards (i,418-22), and Lessing added that more Jews would follow the pattern set by Mendelssohn and Gumpertz if only Christians would allow them to lift their heads (i,422).

It would be possible to put a rather misleading interpretation on Lessing's remarks here. It might appear that he is linking virtue with secular scholarship. What then of virtue acquired and displayed through the faithful observance of Jewish law? It would be quite wrong to suggest that the young Lessing undervalued that virtue. His Traveller does not seem to be turning his back on his ancestral faith. In the *Rettung des Cardanus* (1754) Lessing presents sympathetically a view of the Jewish religion where its survival, in the face of all attempts by its enemies to extirpate it, is seen as evidence that it is still pleasing to God (vii,22f). Nevertheless Lessing does appear to have believed that over the centuries of discrimination and persecution Jewish religious teachers had made Judaism into a defensive and inward-looking faith, a faith for survival, which helped to maintain the ghetto walls which Christians had erected. He deplored the spirit of persecution which, he said, Jews directed

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against Mendelssohn and other co-religionists who explored non-Jewish, secular culture (ii,646). That culture was for Mendelssohn and his friends an avenue leading out of the ghetto, for it was a culture which Jews and Christians could share without renouncing their allegiance to their respective faiths.

The young Lessing's most forthright appeal for Jewish emancipation comes in a review dated 4 August 1753 of a recently published pamphlet, *Schreiben eines Juden an einen Philosophen, nebst der Antwort*. The first edition of this pamphlet has not survived, and I shall be referring to the second edition, which was published in Hamburg in 1759.³⁵ It seems likely that the pamphlet was written by one man, a non-Jew, someone in Lessing's circle in Berlin, for it was published by Christian Friedrich Voß, who also published the journal in which Lessing's review appeared, and who also published Lessing's collected works in 1754. Several comments in the pamphlet are very similar to views which Lessing had expressed or was to express, and in his review he gave it warm support. The Israeli historian Jacob Toury has drawn attention to the importance of this neglected work.³⁶ There had been some academic apologies for Jewish toleration earlier in Latin, but this was the first German one.³⁷ It should be added that just as Basnage had supported the case for Jewish civic rights as put forward by John Toland's *Reasons for naturalizing the Jews* (London, 1715),³⁸ so Holberg had argued:

Wenn man die Juden mit den andern Unterthanen gleich hielte, so ist es glaublich, daß sie auch im Handel und Wandel billiger und gerechter verfahren würden. Denn die Bosheit rührt oft von der Gewalt und Unterdrückung her, und ein Bedienter, welcher übel gehalten wird, ist seinem Herrn niemals richtig gewogen. Die Erfahrung zeigt, daß die Bosheit und Gottlosigkeit unter den Juden im Orient, wo sie als Sklaven gehalten werden, weit größer ist, als in Europa, und daß sie die Christen weit mehr in europäischen Landen betrügen, als in England und Holland, wo sie einer vollkommenen Freyheit genießen.³⁹

(Though with his customary inconsistency Holberg had also said that some people felt that the Dutch had gone too far in the freedoms granted to Jews.)⁴⁰

The pamphlet had very little impact, for the tide was not yet beginning to turn in the Jews' favour as it was when Dohm published his treatise in 1781. Also the author based his claim for civic rights for German Jews on the example offered by the English Jew Bill of 1753⁴¹ — a measure which in fact offered only limited opportunities

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for naturalization, and which was doomed to be repealed shortly after it was enacted.

In the pamphlet both the Jew and the Philosopher emphasize how advantageous it would be to the state, socially and economically, if restrictions placed on the Jews were to be lifted. The Philosopher emphasizes that the Jews, whom he calls the Huguenots of Europe (T, 280), are regarded as miscreants merely because they cannot believe what to them is incredible (T, 276). He urges an enlightened monarch to act in the name of justice in opposition to popular prejudice, which depicts even the Jews' misery as a crime (T, 280). He argues that churchmen will say that it is not right for a prince to put an end to the misery of a people which according to God's intention should serve Christianity as an object of scorn and mockery (T, 280), though like Lessing he does not explain that the derision was based on the charge that the Jews bore guilt for the death of the Messiah whom they rejected.

In his brief review Lessing touches only on some of the arguments presented in the pamphlet, but he endorses the main thesis: that it accords with justice and with the advantage of a ruler to end the misery of the Jewish people. Lessing quotes with approval the Jew's last two sentences, in which he hopes for a prince

der die größte Stärke des Geistes mit der höchsten Gewalt vereiniget, der eine Nation, die eben so edel als alle andern, jetzo aber durch Armut, Unwissenheit, Verachtung und eine Art von Sklaverei unterdrückt ist, davon befreiet. Sollte solches geschehen, so bin ich versichert, daß ihre Ehrfurcht gegen diesen Fürsten die gehoffte Ankunft eines Messias in seiner Person erfüllt zu sein glauben, daß ihre Emsigkeit reiche und unaufhörliche Opfer zu seinen Füßen legen, und daß ihre Dankbarkeit ihm in dem Andenken der Nachkommen und in der jüdischen Historie ein ewiges Denkmal stiften werde (iii,176).

Lessing is here taking up what was to become a crucial point in the debate over Jewish emancipation,⁴² and is pointing forward to that secularization of messianic belief which enabled many Jews in the nineteenth century to discover the long-awaited Messiah in the process of emancipation itself or in the fatherland in which they had now been granted citizenship.⁴³ It would seem indeed that Lessing, like the pamphlet he quotes, is not seriously contending that the Jews would actually treat their liberator as *the* Messiah, but that their loyalty to him would divert them from their traditional hope of return to the Promised Land. Lessing is therefore expecting Jews to set aside one of the central tenets of their faith. Clearly

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Lessing did not see it as such, and he did not expect enlightened Jews to cling to it.

The messianic hope was considered by many to be the chief obstacle to the granting of civic rights to Jews. Holberg, like Eisenmenger before him,⁴⁴ argued that modern Jews tended to have a debased view of the Messianic age: 'Denn sie glauben, daß Ihre Glückseligkeit in fleischlichen Wollüsten und in der blutigen und gänzlichen Ausrottung anderer Nationen, bestehen wird.'⁴⁵ He held that nothing had brought greater suffering and oppression upon Jews than the hopes placed in false Messiahs who had led them into rebellion and further dispersion:

Wenn demnach die Juden diese thörichte Einbildung nicht so oft mit einem solchen Eifer auszuführen gesucht hätten, und sich nicht durch diese falsche Hoffnung so oft blenden lassen, so würde man sie an vielen Orten nicht so hart gehalten, sondern ihnen eben dieselben Freiheiten, wie den übrigen Unterthanen verstattet haben.⁴⁶

Still in 1799 Friedrich Schleiermacher was deriving all of the Jews' disabilities and alleged defects from their ultimate allegiance to a foreign fatherland.⁴⁷ A similar view to Holberg's was put forward by Johann David Michaelis in his objections to Dohm's *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*:

Ein Volk, das solche Hofnungen hat, wird nie völlig einheimisch, hat wenigstens nicht die patriotische Liebe zum väterlichen Acker, ja steht, wenn es besonders wohnete . . . gar in Gefahr, einmal von einem Enthusiasten aufgewiegelt, oder vom Hamelschen Rattenfänger in die Irre geführt zu werden.⁴⁸

Mendelssohn dismissed Michaelis argument, saying that the hope of a return to Palestine had not proved a problem in those areas where the Jews had been tolerated, and that anyway such religious views were 'für die Kirche und die Gebetsformeln verspart'.⁴⁹

Lessing took up the only other reference in the pamphlet to belief in the Messiah, where the Jew praises the Philosopher as one who will not raise objections to the Jewish religion, for to the Philosopher 'die, welche an den gewesenen, und die, welche an den zukünftigen Messias glauben, gleich angenehm sind' (T, 271). Here Lessing departs slightly from his source. He speaks of the Philosopher as one in whose eyes 'die, welche an den gekommenen Messias und die, welche an den noch zukommenden glauben, wenig oder nichts unterschieden sind' (iii,175). Although the 1759 editor deprecated

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the original comment for its 'Gleichgültigkeit gegen Wahrheit und Irrtum',⁵⁰ it does contain a sympathetic understanding of the adherents of two distinctive messianic beliefs. But as Lessing presents the Philosopher as blurring or even negating the distinction between the adherents the messianic beliefs in themselves become devalued. It would seem that it was not a constant or essential item in the creed of the young Lessing that Jesus was the Messiah,⁵¹ and that like most eighteenth-century advocates of Jewish emancipation he anticipated that likewise Jews would not wish to cling inflexibly to *their* traditional forms of messianic faith.

For the sake of completeness it would be well to mention that in 1753 Lessing published a satirical epigram, written in 1751, which depicted a Jew who was very different from his virtuous Traveller — a Berlin banker named Abraham Hirschel, who came off second best in an unsavoury financial deal with Voltaire (i,45f). In the first instance Lessing portrays Hirschel according to the current stereotype of the avaricious Jewish swindler, but the point of the epigram, in the last line, is that Voltaire was a greater scoundrel than he was. The non-Jew, that is, was even more like the Jewish stereotype than the Jew was. Lessing may indeed have felt later that the poem could be interpreted as anti-Jewish, and he did not re-publish it in the 1771 collected edition of his works, but the poem does support Lessing's constantly repeated admonition to avoid general judgements.

There can be little doubt, however, that Lessing, as well as Holberg, Gellert, Dohm, and indeed Mendelssohn, did believe that a large proportion of Jews were engaged in practices which were, to say the least, not conducive to moral purity. Lessing contrasted Jews like his virtuous Traveller with 'dem lüderlichen Gesindel, welches auf den Jahrmärkten herumschweift' (i,418). Lessing and other contemporary supporters of the Jews differed from the anti-semites in that they did not attribute the 'moral degradation' of Jews to the Jewish religion, or to anything inherent in the Jewish character, or to divine retribution — rather to centuries of Christian oppression. The answer to the problem was to lift the oppression (i,416ff.)

Lessing accepted that his nobly virtuous Jew, the Traveller, was an exception amongst Jews, but he was quick to add that a man of such character would be very rare amongst Christians (i,417). For all Lessing's optimism about the ultimate moral development of humanity he had a low opinion of man's current achievements. But

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at least he gave Jews the excuse that their development had been impeded by Christian oppression. What excuse did Christians have? As Wilfried Barner has recently argued, Lessing's goal in *Die Juden* was to 'rescue' Jews from prejudice and daily discrimination, and that necessarily meant accusation of the Christian majority,⁵² for whom, as the Traveller says, discrimination was almost a meritorious religious deed (i,382). Yet like other philosophers of the Enlightenment who followed him, both Christian and Jewish, Lessing was clearly reluctant to expose and cut away the roots of Christian antisemitism — the doctrine of the 'deicide people', and Christian outrage at the Jews' refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah. On the evidence of the writings we have considered Lessing appears to have believed that the cause of toleration could best be served by attenuating differences of religious and doctrine observance, indeed by diverting attention away from metaphysical problems to relatively straightforward questions of human relationships and human rights. The young Lessing's chief concerns were immediately practical ones: to demonstrate that his fellowmen of the Jewish faith were suffering grievous wrongs, and to advocate that those wrongs should be righted — not to delve into the theological reasons for the injustice, nor at this stage to provide theological or philosophical arguments for toleration. And this is in keeping with the young Lessing's insistence on 'das praktische [sic] des Christentums' (III, 54), untrammelled by what he saw as theological dogmatism and sophistry. He wrote in 1751 in a review of Friedrich Eberhard Rambach's *Sammlung auserlesener Abhandlungen ausländischer Gottesgelehrten*: 'Nicht die Übereinstimmung in den Meinungen, sondern die Übereinstimmung in tugendhaften Handlungen ist es, welche die Welt ruhig und glücklich macht' (III, 55), and in the previous year, in his earliest theological work, the unfinished 'Gedanken über die Herrnhuter', which he left unpublished, he asked with reference to the Reformers: 'Was hilft es, recht zu glauben, wenn man unrecht lebt?' (III, 688).

Eleonore Sterling has written of the 'Verschiebung der theologischen Begriffe in die Sphäre der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Theorien' at the beginning of the nineteenth century,⁵³ while Uriel Tal has referred to a stage in the latter part of the century 'in which the theological significance in the reciprocal relation between Christians and Jews was transferred to a secular sphere'.⁵⁴ Lessing was participating in that process already in the 1750s. The removal of religious prejudice, such as the allegedly 'biblical' teaching that Jews were to be subservient to Christians, was indeed a necessary

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stage in Jewish emancipation. In *Die Juden* Lessing did not choose to tackle that prejudice head on, or attempt a straightforward theological refutation. Rather he demonstrated the futility of that prejudice by portraying a noble and virtuous Jew who was superior in every way to the Christians who would discriminate against him. The audience were to do as Christoph does, and simply forget about religious injunctions against Jews. Immediate personal experience should supplant impersonal 'Biblical doctrine'.

The religious disputation we have considered all relates to differing interpretations of the life, ministry, and death of Jesus. If the young Lessing had taken it upon himself to broach these religious questions directly, and especially if he had attempted systematically to refute the calumny that the Jews were a deicide people, he would have been probing such sensitive areas that he would have unleashed upon himself (and perhaps on German Jews) a storm of controversy which would have been even more furious than the one he braved in 1770s, when he published writings of Reimarus. But let us not underestimate the boldness which the young Lessing did display in adopting the cause of a shunned minority, in demanding that Jews should be treated without prejudice, and with decency and respect, in calling on rulers to rise above the prejudices of their subjects to grant to the Jewish people freedom and justice — and particularly in publishing his appeals in Berlin. Jacob Toury has pointed out that it required considerable courage on the part of the author of *Schreiben eines Juden . . .* to appeal for Jewish civic rights just three years after Frederick's highly discriminatory and restrictive regulations were introduced.⁵⁵ Lessing, who after all published his play and its appended comments under his own name, was just as undaunted by the power and influence of the Prussian king.

In his last years Dr Scheyer broadcast regularly to Germany on the RIAS Berlin service. His themes were the political, social, economic and cultural affairs of the people of Ireland. His aim was to promote understanding and friendship between his new homeland and the homeland where once he had been rejected and reviled. One broadcast, dated 16 December 1956, had several notable items. Dr Scheyer spoke of Ronnie Delaney's Olympic Gold Medal, and referred tactfully to the Republic of Ireland's defeat of the West German football team ('on the unaccustomed Irish turf'). In this broadcast Dr Scheyer also paid tribute to the achievements of the then Lord Mayor of Dublin Mr Robert Briscoe (who was Dublin's first Jewish Lord Mayor in this century). He quoted the motto which Mr Briscoe had adopted for his mayorial coat of arms:

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Saoirse — Cothrom — Foidnheamh. And Dr Scheyer gave his own warm personal endorsement to these ideals of freedom, justice and tolerance, which should be guiding principles, he said, for our own times especially. I cannot quite associate Lessing with an heraldic shield, but surely no more fitting motto for the young Lessing could be imagined, especially when one thinks of his courageous and comparatively lonely efforts to gain freedom, justice and tolerance for German Jews.

Notes

This paper is a revised and expanded version of a lecture delivered at Trinity College on 10 November 1983 to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Dr Ernst Scheyer, who was a lecturer in German at the College for twelve years. Most quotations have been changed to the language of the original texts, and account has been taken of research published since 1983, and particularly of Wilfried Barner's fine essay, 'Vorurteil, Empirie, Rettung. Der junge Lessing und die Juden', in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts*, no. 69 (1984), pp. 29-51.

1. See Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised land. The dilemma of the German Jew. 1893-1914* (Ann Arbor, 1975), p.32.

2. Emil Lehmann, *Lessing in seiner Bedeutung für die Juden. Vortrag am 21. Januar 1879 auf Anlaß des Mendelssohn-Vereins zu Dresden* (Dresden, 1879), p. 3.

3. Michael Friedländer, 'Gotthold Ephraim Lessing', in *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 12 vols (New York and London, 1896-1905), vol. viii (1904), p. 14.

4. Wilhelm Marr, *Lessing contra Sem*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1885), especially pp 19 ff.

5. Dr. E. Dühring, *Die Überschätzung Lessing's und dessen Anwaltschaft für die Juden* (Karlsruhe and Leipzig, 1881), especially pp 82 ff.

6. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Werke*, ed. Herbert G. Göpfert *et al.* 8 vols (Munich, 1970-78), i, 357-414. Unless where otherwise stated, all subsequent references to Lessing's writings relate to this edition and are incorporated in the text.

7. Friedländer, *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, viii, 14.

8. See Helmut Jenzsch, *Jüdische Figuren in deutschen Bühnentexten des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Dissertation, Hamburg, 1977), especially pp 131-50; Hans Günther Klemm, 'Der Topos vom guten Juden. Beobachtung zur Bühnenfigur des Juden in den Dramen Schröders, Ifflands und Kotzebues', in *Theokratia*, 2 (1970-72), pp 340-71.

9. See Jakob Katz, *Exclusiveness and tolerance* (London, 1961), especially pp 131 ff.; Raphael Mahler, *A history of modern Jewry 1780-1815* (London, 1971); Jakob Katz, *Out of the ghetto. The social background of Jewish emancipation, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973); *Judentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung, 4 (Wolfenbüttel, 1977); *Deutsche Aufklärung und Judenemanzipation*, ed. Walter Grab, *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte*, Beiheft 3 (Tel Aviv, 1980).

10. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811-14), 1. Teil, 4. Buch, in *Goethes Werke*, Hamburger Ausgabe, 14 vols (Hamburg, 1948-60), ix, 149 f.

11. See Isaac Eisenstein-Barzilay, 'The background of the Berlin Haskalah', in *Essays on Jewish life and thought*, ed. Joseph L. Blau, *et al.* (New York, 1959), pp 183-97.

12. Tobias Smollett, *The adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, ed. James L. Clifford (London, 1964), p. 284. See also H.R.S. van der Veen, *Jewish characters in eighteenth-century English fiction and drama* (Groningen, 1935, reprinted (New York), 1973), p. 39, and *passim*.

13. On the origins and development of Christian antisemitism see James Parkes, *The conflict of the church and the synagogue. A study in the origins of antisemitism* (London, 1934); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and fratricide. The theological roots of anti-semitism* (New York, 1974).

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John G. Gager, *The origins of anti-semitism. Attitudes towards Judaism in pagan and Christian antiquity* (New York and Oxford, 1983).

14. See Eleonore Sterling, *Judenhaß. Die Anfänge des politischen Antisemitismus in Deutschland (1815-1850)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), especially pp 58 ff., 171.

15. Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany. Religion, politics and ideology in the Second Reich* (Ithaca and London, 1975), pp. 257 f. See also Stefan Lehr, *Antisemitismus — religiöse Motive im sozialen Vorurteil. Aus der Frühgeschichte des Antisemitismus in Deutschland 1870-1914*, *Abhandlungen zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog*, 5 (Munich, 1974), especially pp 13 ff.

16. Martin Niemöller, *First commandment*, trans. Jane Lymburn (London, 1937), p. 247. See also Eberhard Busch, *Juden und Christen im Schatten des dritten Reiches. Ansätze zu einer Kritik des Antisemitismus in der Zeit der Bekennenden Kirche* (Munich, 1979), especially pp 13 ff.

17. See 'Declaration on the relationship of the church to non-Christian religions' ('Nostra Aetate'), in *The documents of Vatican II*. ed. Walter M. Abott, S.J. (London and Dublin, 1966), pp 660-68.

18. Johann Andreas Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judentum*, 2 vols (Königsberg, 1711), i, 61 ff.

19. Eisenmenger, ii, 1030.

20. Ludvig Holberg, *Jüdische Geschichte von Erschaffung der Welt bis auf gegenwärtigen Zeiten*, trans. Georg August Detharding, 2 vols (Altona and Flensburg, 1747). Holberg is obviously indebted to Josephus, and to Jacques Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs. Depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu'à present*, revd. ed., 15 vols (The Hague, 1716). (This was originally *L'Histoire et la Religion des Juifs*, 5 vols (Rotterdam, 1706-07).) Yet Holberg has of course ideas and emphases of his own, and his comments on eighteenth-century Jewry deserve more attention than they have received from historians of this period. For his opposition to the persecution of the Jews because of their alleged responsibility for the crucifixion, and for his dismissal of the traditional charges of ritual murder and desecration of the Host see especially ii, 712-15.

21. On Hamburg Jewry at this time see Holberg, ii, 691-95.

22. See also Eisenmenger's insistence that it is wrong for a Christian to eat with a Jew (ii, 646).

23. See for example Ariane Neuhaus-Koch, *G. E. Lessing. Die Sozialstruktur in seinen Dramen*, AKML, 245 (Bonn, 1977), p. 203; Harvey I. Dunkle, 'Lessing's "Die Juden": An original experiment', in *Monatshefte*, 40 (1957), pp 323-29 (p. 328); Wolfgang Trautwein, 'Zwischen Typenlustspiel und ernster Komödie. Zur produktiven Verletzung von Gattungsmustern in Lessings "Die Juden"', in *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 24 (1980), pp 1-14 (p. 10); Kurt Levinstein, 'Lessings Jugendlustspiel "Die Juden"', in *Pädagogische Provinz*, 9 (1955), pp 120-28 (p. 125).

24. See Kanzler Friedrich von Müller, *Unterhaltungen mit Goethe*, ed. Renate Grumach (Munich, 1959), pp 85 f. (28 September 1823).

25. See Karl S. Guthke, 'Lessings Problemkomödie "Die Juden"', in *Wissen aus Erfahrungen. Werkbegriff und Interpretation heute. Festschrift für Hermann Meyer zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Alexander von Bormann (Tübingen, 1976), pp 123-34 (p. 126); id., 'Lessing und das Judentum. Rezeption. Dramatik und Kritik. Krypto-Spinozismus', in *Judentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp 229-71 (pp 239 f.); Neuhaus-Koch, p. 204; Trautwein, p. 9.

26. See Parkes, pp 174, 182, 390.

27. Lessing, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Karl Lachmann, 3rd ed. revd. Franz Muncker, 21 vols (Stuttgart, 1886), i, 380.

28. Holberg, ii, 712 f.

29. Basnage (livre vii, chap. 1), xi, 18.

30. See Ruether, pp 124 ff.

31. See Ruether, pp 133-35, 207-09.

32. See Solomon Grayzel, *The church and the Jews in the XIIIth century*, revd. ed. (New York, 1966), pp 126 f., also pp 116 f., 152 f., 198 f., 204 f., 210 f., 252 f.

33. Eisenmenger, ii, 1026.

34. For an early instance of the tradition of the Jews' spiritual blindness and iniquity see the words of a 'prince of the priests of the Jews' in 'The assumption of the Virgin: Latin narrative of Pseudo-Melito', xiii. 2: 'The enemy of mankind hath blinded our hearts, and shame hath covered our faces that we should not confess the mighty works of God; especially

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when we did curse ourselves, crying out against Christ: His blood be on us and on our children' (*The apocryphal New Testament*, ed. Montague Rhodes James, revd. ed. (Oxford, 1953), p. 214). This tradition, which probably goes back to Matthew 23: 13-16, found expression in the art of the medieval Church (see Wolfgang S. Seiferth, *Synagogue and church in the Middle Ages: two symbols in art and literature*, trans. Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald (New York, 1970), especially pp 29 f., 97-103). See also Peter de Blois' comment in his *Contra perfidiam Judaeorum*: 'We see the Passion of Christ, not only in their books, but also in their faces', cited by Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A social and religious history of the Jews* (New York and London, 1967), xi, 353. One of the most offensive pamphlets used in the campaign against the 1753 Jew Bill in England reads in part: 'You know a Jew at first sight. And what then are his distinguishing features? . . . Look at his eyes. Don't you see a malignant blackness underneath them, which gives them such a cast, as bespeaks guilt and murder? . . . A Jew . . . carries evidence enough in his face to convict him of being a crucifier' (cited in Thomas W. Perry, *Propaganda and politics in eighteenth-century England. A study of the Jew Bill of 1753* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), p. 93). That such malignancy did not end with the eighteenth century is shown by Stephen Dedalus's headmaster Mr Deasey (James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Penguin ed. (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 43).

35. *Schreiben eines Juden an einen Philosophen, nebst der Antwort. Mit Anmerkungen* (Hamburg, 1759). The only known extant copy of this pamphlet is in the library of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, and I am very grateful to the Public Services Librarian of the College, Mr. David J. Gilner, who provided me with a photocopy. See also Katz, *Out of the ghetto*, p. 229.

36. See Jakob Toury, 'Eine vergessene Frühschrift zur Emanzipation der Juden in Deutschland', in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts*, 12 (1969), no. 48, pp 253-81. Here Toury reproduces and comments in detail upon the 1759 text, though he does not reprint in full the notes of the anonymous editor. References in my text are to this edition by Toury, except where otherwise stated, and they are abbreviated to 'T' with the page number.

37. See Jakob Toury, 'Die Behandlung jüdischer Problematik in der Tagesliteratur der Aufklärung (bis 1783)', in *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte*, 5 (1976), pp 13-47 (pp 16 ff.).

38. Basnage, livre ix, chap. xxix, vol. xv, p. 1141.

39. Holberg ii, 716.

40. Holberg ii, 676.

41. See especially the 'Anhang, die in Engelland verstattete Nationalisierung der Juden betreffend' (T, p. 281).

42. See for example Jakob Katz, *Die Entstehung der Judenassimilation in Deutschland und deren Ideologie* (Dissertation, Frankfurt am Main, 1935), reprinted in Katz, *Zur Assimilation und Emanzipation der Juden. Ausgewählte Schriften* (Darmstadt, 1982), pp. 20 f.; Isaac E. Barzilay, 'National and anti-national trends in the Berlin Haskalah', in *Jewish Social Studies*, 21 (1959), pp 165-92 (pp 170. 188 ff.); Mahler, pp 175, 218-20. 223.

43. See Stephen Sharot, *Messianism, mysticism and magic. A sociological analysis of Jewish religious movements* (Chapel Hill, 1982), especially chap. 12: 'The secularization of messianism', pp 206-224; Alex Bein, *Die Judenfrage. Biographie eines Weltproblems*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1980), i. 198f., ii, 143, 262; Jakob Toury, *Die politischen Orientierungen der Juden in Deutschland. Von Jena bis Weimar* (Tübingen, 1966), pp 68 ff.

44. Eisenmenger, ii, 732-55.

45. Holberg, ii, 519.

46. Holberg, ii, 718.

47. 'Briefe bei Gelegenheit der politisch theologischen Aufgabe und des Sendschreibens jüdischer Hausväter', in *Friedrich Schlegelers Sämtliche Werke*: Pt. I: *Zur Theologie* (Berlin, 1846), v, 30.

48. See Christian Konrad Wilhelm von Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, 2 vols in 1 (Hildesheim and New York, 1973) (reprint of Berlin edition, 2 vols, 1781, 1783), ii, 43.

49. Dohm, ii, 74.

50. *Schreiben eines Juden* (Hamburg, 1759), p. 3.

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51. When reviewing Klopstock's *Messias* in 1751 Lessing argues from Klopstock's assumption that Jesus was the Messiah (iii, 315), but in his unpublished 'Gedanken über die Herrnhuter' of 1750 he sees him rather as 'ein von Gott erleuchteter Lehrer' (iii, 686).

52. Barner, p. 46.

53. Sterling, p. 78.

54. Tal, p. 16.

55. Toury, 'Eine vergessene Frühschrift', p. 261.