

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

"This is a large, complex, strongly argued book, which I found insightful and challenging. It is thorough and powerful and deserves a wide readership."

– Francis Elliott, in the *Canberra Times*

"Original and well balanced . . . Using contemporary documents throughout, Lindemann succeeds in destroying the erroneous view that somehow anti-Semitism is a mysterious eruption having nothing whatever to do with the presence and behaviour of the Jewish people themselves. . . . [but] it is clear that the author has enormous sympathy for the Jewish people and their history."

– Robert C. Grogan, in *Canadian Journal of History*

"Lindemann's comparative study of the rise of modern antisemitism in Europe and the United States in the period 1870 to 1939 is impressive in terms of both breadth and depth of coverage. He presents a nuanced survey of the sheer variety and impact of antisemitism, which neither seeks to explain everything in terms of monocausal factors, nor adopts a teleological approach which views nineteenth century antisemitism wholly in terms of Auschwitz."

– Tim Cole, in *Economic History Review*

"Most open-minded readers . . . will find *Esau's Tears* a well-balanced and very readable history of antisemitism prior to the Holocaust."

– Bruce F. Pauley, in *Journal of Modern History*

"The two unorthodox but original and often brilliant works by Albert S. Lindemann [*The Jew Accused* and *Esau's Tears*] . . . received the full treatment of hysterical abuse in *Commentary* and elsewhere."

– William Rubinstein, in *History Today*

"*Esau's Tears* merits an important place in any historical assessment of modern antisemitism, while the author deserves a medal for bravery in writing the book."

– William Rubinstein, in *History*, the journal of the British History Association

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Esau's Tears explores the remarkable and revealing variety of modern anti-Semitism, from its emergence in the 1870s in a racial-political form to the eve of the Nazi takeover, in the major countries of Europe and in the United States. Previous histories have generally been more concerned with description than analysis, and most of the interpretations in those histories have been lacking in balance. The evidence presented in this book suggests that anti-Semitism in these years was more ambiguous than usually presented, less pervasive and central to the lives of both Jews and non-Jews, and by no means clearly pointed to a rising hatred of Jews everywhere, even less to the likelihood of mass murder. Similarly, Jew-hatred was not as mysterious or incomprehensible as often presented; its strength in some countries and weakness in others may be related to the fluctuating and sometimes quite different perceptions in those countries of the meaning of the rise of the Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Esau's Tears

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Esau's Tears

*Modern Anti-Semitism and the
Rise of the Jews*

ALBERT S. LINDEMANN

University of California, Santa Barbara



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521795388

© Albert S. Lindemann 1997

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1997

First paperback edition 2000

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Lindemann, Albert S.

Esau's tears : modern anti-semitism and the rise of the Jews.

1870-1933 / Albert S. Lindemann.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Antisemitism - History. 2. Jews - History - 1789-1945.

3. Europe - Intellectual life - 19th century. 4. Europe - Intellectual
life - 20th century. I. Title.

DS145.L594 1997

909'.04924 - dc21

97-5882

CIP

r97

ISBN 978-0-521-59369-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-79538-8 Paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2009

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet websites referred to in
this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,
or will remain, accurate or appropriate. Information regarding prices, travel
timetables and other factual information given in this work are correct at
the time of first printing but Cambridge University Press does not guarantee
the accuracy of such information thereafter.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xxiii</i>
PART ONE: THE LONG-RANGE BACKGROUND	1
<i>Chapter 1. Anti-Semitism before the Modern Period:</i>	
<i>Overview and Definition</i>	<i>3</i>
Esau's Tears: The Deepest Roots of Anti-Semitism	3
The Rise of the Jews	20
The Origins, Evolution, and Ambiguities of the Term Anti-Semitism	23
"Classical Anti-Semitism"	26
Christian Anti-Semitism	29
The Church Triumphant; John Chrysostom	33
The Charge of Deicide; Jewish Survival	35
<i>Chapter 2. Modern Times (1700 to the 1870s)</i>	<i>40</i>
The Enlightenment	40
The French Revolution and the Jews	44
Napoleon and the Assembly of Jewish Notables	48
Contrasts between East and West	50
Trends within Judaism	53
Secularism and Divided Fidelities	55
The Liberal Years of Midcentury	56
Backward Russia and the Ostjuden	57
The Pale of Settlement	61
Russia's "Liberal" Experiment	64
Revolutionary Agitation and Tsarist Reaction	67
The Concept of Race	70
Blood Imagery	74
Racism and Anti-Semitism	78
The Evolution of the Vocabulary of Race	84
	v

vi CONTENTS

Racist Ideas among Jews	90
The Ambiguities of Non-Jewish Racism	92
PART TWO: THE APPEARANCE OF MODERN ANTI-SEMITISM (1870–1890) 97	
Chapter 3. <i>Germans and Jews (1870–1890)</i>	103
The German Problem; the Sonderweg	104
German Liberalism and the New German State	107
Junker Hegemony and the Jews	110
The Rise of the Jews in Germany	114
The Mittlestand and Modernism in Germany	116
The “Founding Years” and the Crash of 1873	118
The Press Campaign against the Jews	120
The Kulturkampf and the Jews	122
Bismarck’s Move to the Right	124
Chapter 4. <i>Anti-Semitic Ideology and Movement in Germany (1879 to the 1890s)</i>	126
Anti-Semitic Ideology: Wilhelm Marr	127
Anti-Semitic Ideology: Heinrich von Treitschke	131
Treitschke and Graetz	139
Anti-Semitic Ideology: Adolf Stoecker	142
Anti-Semitic Movement and Countermovement	147
Anti-Semitic Movement: The Peasants and Otto Böckel	152
Precursors to Nazism?	155
Chapter 5. <i>Socialists, Jews, and Anti-Semites</i>	158
Socialist Movement and Ideology	158
The Enlightened Tradition of Socialism	160
Marxian Socialism and the Jews	162
French Socialism and the Jews	166
Jewish Attitudes to Socialism	168
Social–Democratic Attitudes to Jews	171
Socialist Interpretations of Anti-Semitism	174
Jewish Socialists and Assimilation	180
Chapter 6. <i>Austria–Hungary: Radical Radicalism and Schlamperei</i>	182
The Polyglot Empire	182
Austria-Hungary: Between Germany and Russia	185
Liberalism and the Rise of the Jews	187
German Nationalism and Ethnic Insecurity	190
The Jewish Press and the Crash of 1873	193
Anti-Semitic Ideology	194
Catholic Antimodernism and Anti-Semitism	197

	CONTENTS	vii
Anti-Semitism and Humanitarian Idealism: von Schönerer	200	
The Disintegration of Democratic Radicalism	202	
Chapter 7. France: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity	206	
The Evolution of French Jewry in the Nineteenth Century	206	
The Third Republic and the Jews	211	
The Rise of the Jews and the Dilemmas of Modernism	212	
The Political Crises and Scandals of the 1880s	213	
Nascent Political Anti-Semitism: The Boulangists	215	
The Assumptionists	219	
Anti-Semitic Ideology and Movement: Toussenel, Barrès, Drumont	221	
A Gathering Storm of Anti-Semitism?	227	
The Dreyfus Affair	230	
A Dreyfusian Revolution?	234	
Chapter 8. A Sweet Exile?	238	
Jews in Nineteenth-Century Great Britain	239	
Jews in America: The Issue of Exceptionalism	251	
Racism and Social Conflict in the United States	261	
The Jews in Hungary	263	
PART THREE: THE BELLE EPOQUE (1890–1914)	273	
Chapter 9: The Failures: Russia and Romania	279	
Worsening Jewish–Gentile Relations in Russia	279	
The Paradoxes of Modernization in Russia; the Kishinev Pogrom	290	
Modern Anti-Semitism in Russia	300	
Nicholas II and the Power of International Jewry	301	
The Beilis Affair	305	
Romanian Anti-Semitism: “The Worst in Europe?”	306	
Chapter 10. The Ambiguities of “Failure” in the Belle Epoque: Germany and Austria	319	
The Appearance of Zionism	320	
Anti-Semitism and German Traditions	330	
The “Dormant Period” of Anti-Semitism in Germany	334	
Anti-Semitic Agitation in Austria: Karl Lueger	337	
The “Unpolitical” Germans: Langbehn, Lagarde, Chamberlain	347	
Chapter 11. The Ambiguous Successes: Great Britain and the United States	355	
Jews in Great Britain in the Edwardian Period	355	
The United States: Still “Exceptional”?	371	
The Leo Frank Affair	381	

viii CONTENTS

PART FOUR: A DECADE OF WAR AND REVOLUTION	
(1914–1924)	387
<i>Chapter 12. World War I</i>	391
The Mood of August 1914	391
The Expansion of Germany into Russia	395
The Beginning of Disillusionment in the West	398
The Peace Settlement	406
The Balfour Declaration and the Palestinian Mandate	413
<i>Chapter 13. Jews and Revolution (1917–1934)</i>	423
The Jew as Revolutionary: Fantasy and Reality	424
Russian Jews in Revolution: From March to November	436
The Red Terror – A Jewish Terror?	440
Stalin and Trotsky	448
 PART FIVE: THE FASCIST ERA:	
EUROPE BETWEEN THE WARS	457
<i>Chapter 14. Fascism and Anti-Semitism</i>	461
Defining Fascism	462
The Origins of Fascism: Mussolini, from Socialist Revolutionary to Il Duce	464
The Jews of Italy	471
The Italian Model of Fascism	477
The Establishment of the Weimar Republic	481
Hitler's Early Career; the Genesis of His Anti-Semitism	483
Hitler and the Nazi Party	498
 <i>Epilogue and Conclusions</i>	505
<i>Index</i>	547

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

The Jewish problem is one of the greatest problems in the world, and no man, be he writer, politician or diplomatist, can be considered mature until he has striven to face it squarely on its merits. (Henry Wickham Steed)

The Messiah will not come until the tears of Esau have been exhausted. [from the *Zohar*, a central work of the mystical *Kabbalah*]

The number of books devoted to the murder of Europe's Jews during World War II has expanded enormously in recent years, as have articles devoted to that topic in the popular and scholarly press. Novels, movies, plays, and television docudramas dealing with the Holocaust have also attracted unprecedented audiences and widespread discussion. Trying to understand why Jews have been so hated has obviously been a central issue in this outpouring, and many books, movies, and television programs have explored the nature and history of anti-Semitism – perhaps too many, especially since a large proportion of these explorations have been characterized by disappointing intellectual standards and doubtful conclusions. Many are little more than potted, encyclopedia-style narratives, whereas others, more sophisticated in some regards, still lack penetration in striking ways. A large number might best be described as cries of pain or expressions of indignation rather than efforts to understand.

An obvious and important example, from a somewhat earlier period but still widely read and influential, is Lucy Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews*,¹ which, whatever its overall merits, must be faulted for the dubious tenor and simplistic nature of its background chapters: As an impassioned recitation of

¹ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York, 1975; 10th anniversary ed., 1986, with new introduction).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)**x** PREFACE

the evils of anti-Semitism before the Nazi period, those chapters may be considered effective, but as scholarship, where balance and insight are the ideals, they fall short. Dawidowicz's curtness and disdainful tone in dealing with the work of other historians – revealing an imperfect grasp of some of the issues, especially notable in her Special New Introduction to the Tenth Edition – is further cause for concern, given the very large audience she has reached and the esteem her book continues to enjoy, at least with the general public and outside the historical profession.² A recent and even more impassioned work, also widely read and acclaimed outside the historical profession, Daniel J. Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (New York, 1996), is far more questionable and simplistic; he typically ignores, or is ignorant of, evidence that contradicts his by no means original reading of German history (that "eliminationist" anti-Semitism was embraced by most Germans and was the fundamental cause of the Holocaust, against which other explanations have little significance). Goldhagen's work might be described as a case for the prosecution, but a major problem is that few serious historians would want to present a case for the defense, with all that implies about one-sided marshaling of evidence; history should not to be written in the same way that cases are presented to a jury.

Scholarly works dealing with the history of anti-Semitism as such, not simply as introductions to the Holocaust, have also appeared recently in large numbers. Obviously, volumes of serious history can never aspire to the audiences drawn to more popular media, but some of those that have reached a wide audience, for example, Robert Wistrich's *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*,³ have suffered from defects similar to those in Dawidowicz's work, prominent among them a tendency to a colorful and indignant narrative, accompanied by weak, sometimes tendentious analysis. In Wistrich's case part of the problem is ostensibly that *The Longest Hatred* was first conceived as the background narrative to a television series – almost always fatal to nuance and complexity. He has published a number of other works of distinctly higher scholarly and interpretive standards. Dawidowicz, too, has accomplishments to her credit that I would be the last to denigrate, especially when they deal with the Jews rather than the enemies of the Jews. Nonetheless both of these widely read works are symptomatic of important problems, ones that may be less promi-

² The overall and recently much enhanced sophistication of the field of Holocaust studies is not the issue here; see Michael Marrus, "'Good History' and Teaching the Holocaust," *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter*, vol. 31, no. 5, May/June 1993, 1–12. His own *The Holocaust in History* (Toronto, Canada, 1987) is a model of scholarship, and even such efforts at reaching a popular audience as Ronnie S. Landau's *The Nazi Holocaust* (Chicago, 1992) strike a distinctly different tone – more balanced, thoughtful, and less polemical – than Dawidowicz's book.

³ Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York, 1991).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

nent now than when Dawidowicz's work first appeared but that nonetheless remain – the enthusiastic popular reception of Goldhagen's work suggests that they may even be reemerging.⁴

A large yet delicate issue is at stake, in that efforts to assess Jew-hatred carefully, as distinguished from impassioned descriptions and denunciations of it, are sometimes dismissed as dubious, even dangerous: Does such careful attention imply a degree of "sympathetic understanding" for anti-Semites, tending toward excuses rather than condemnations of them? As Robert Jay Lifton, who published a work on Nazi doctors, has commented, "Psychological study in particular [runs . . .] the risk of replacing condemnation with 'insights,'"⁵ at least, so he was warned by friends as he began his study.

The issue comes down in part to the purpose history is believed to serve. For many history is supposed to commemorate a glorious past, to honor their ancestors, or to rectify a previously unjust portrayal of those ancestors. On the Fourth of July, orators are not likely to dwell upon the defects of the Founding Fathers, and the goals of Black History Month are to honor famous or previously unrecognized African-Americans; balance and penetration are not the main concerns, except in the sense that polemical corrections of earlier bigoted accounts point to a more accurate and equitable kind of history. Much writing on the Holocaust, and on anti-Semitism, is characterized by a kindred tone and similar goals, prominent among them to denounce anti-Semites and to assure that the sufferings of past generations not be forgotten – or that the lessons of the past not be lost.

Most people recognize that one group's vision of "what actually happened" in the past is not the same as another's. One group's unassailable facts are another's slippery interpretations; one group's official narrative is another's erroneous rendition. Veterans of the front who claim a special understanding of war – beyond what scholars can achieve – must be listened to respectfully, as must the accounts of Holocaust survivors. Jews who have experienced anti-Semitism have an understanding of it that must be taken seriously by those who have not experienced it personally. But in none of these cases does direct experience translate into a monopoly on truth. Indeed, such experience sometimes is an obstacle to clear or fruitful thinking. Sacrosanct official narratives can lead and often have led to new tragedies for the groups that stubbornly insist that their vision of the truth remain untouchable.

There are certainly few topics more obdurate and tangled than the history

⁴ Again, I must emphasize that there are a few highly praiseworthy studies of modern anti-Semitism. Subsequent footnotes will amply illustrate my debt to them. At the most general level, Richard S. Levy's *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts* (Lexington, Mass., 1991) deserves mention not only for making available in English many previously unavailable texts but also for its unusually penetrating interpretive introduction.

⁵ Cf. Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors* (New York, 1986), xi.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)**xii** PREFACE

of anti-Semitism, few in which emotions and rationality seem to push so powerfully in opposite directions, few where insiders' experience and outsiders' ratiocination so agonizingly clash. Gavin Langmuir, in an erudite meditation on the nature and history of anti-Semitism as it emerged out of the Middle Ages, has remarked that "So long as memories of the 'Final Solution' remain vivid, the use of that special term of dark origin implies that there is something unusually and uniquely evil about any serious hostility toward all Jews."⁶ Jews have survived over the centuries in part by a tenacious sense of the justifying themes of their history and their separate identity; any questioning of those themes is likely to encounter an angry, indignant rejection. At the same time, negative perceptions of Jews are deeply imbedded in the culture of non-Jews, and for many of them that separate identity is often puzzling if not offensive. For either group, what has been termed the noble dream of historical objectivity may seem endlessly elusive.

The title of this volume, the many-sided implications of which will be more amply explored in the next chapter, hints at just such questioning, particularly in terms of how the relations of Jews and non-Jews are to be understood in history – and how realistic it is to hope that suspicion and hatred of Jews may be entirely banished if a separate Jewish identity is cultivated. A number of recently influential theoreticians have questioned the possibility of any historian's escaping the blinders of ethnicity, class, or gender. The ways that the older ideal of objectivity has been recently put into question have had a wide-ranging effect upon the way that history is currently written. This new variety of history, with its often crabbed and inelegant jargon (discourse, deconstruction, decentering), has reemphasized the familiar truth already alluded to, that objectivity, which as a matter of liberal faith should be within the grasp of all educated observers, easily escapes even the most sophisticated and carefully trained. Indeed, in the case of such observers the problem is in some regards greater because of their unjustified claims to being free of bias.

While I accept many of the points made by those who question whether it is possible to produce historical accounts untainted by ethnicity, class, gender, or many other blinding factors, I believe that there is still some point to writing a book like this – beyond simply offering one more opinion, as a kind of game. I retain an old-fashioned hope, in other words, that historical accounts can be so composed that differing groups will recognize them as at least partly valid and, more important, as contributing to a gradual process of mutual understanding, however laborious and disappointing in the short run. It is no doubt sometimes difficult to identify areas in which legitimate and productive debate may occur (as in exploring how much an especially virulent form of anti-Semitism led to mass murder in Germany), as distinguished from debate that is unproductive, even morally offensive (as in whether or not there was a mass

⁶ Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley, Calif., 1990), 314.

murder of Jews during World War II). Such issues arise in other areas, as for example, in the “creationist” challenge to the theory of evolution. However difficult, such choices must be made.

Several years ago, in a study of three famous anti-Semitic affairs in the generation before World War I, I set forth a number of theories about the nature of anti-Semitism.⁷ These were in no strict sense original; most built upon monographs and theoretical perspectives developed by a number of scholars, although I tried to synthesize materials from diverse sources and present them in a fashion that would reach a larger audience than works of scholarship usually do. In the next several years, in a number of articles and public lectures, I offered a range of related interpretations. The positive reception of those efforts, both in the scholarly world and among a more general educated audience, including students in the courses I have taught at the University of California at Santa Barbara, has encouraged me to expand upon them, although a few of the following chapters necessarily overlap chapters of that book.

My efforts have also met with criticism, which I hope I will be able to address productively here, too. I face that task with some optimism since most of that criticism has been constructive and useful to me. My main concern is to offer a more penetrating and sophisticated analysis of the emergence of anti-Semitism in modern times. I avoid the presumptuous term “objective analysis,” for I do not claim to be impartial and uniquely judicious in areas in which others have failed to be, but I do hope that readers will recognize in these pages a different tone – and a more productive one – than is to be found in many if not most previous studies.

The importance of Jew-hatred in the last hundred years is undeniable, the repercussions appalling. That I have devoted many years of study to anti-Semitism underlines how important I think it has been and is. Still, assertions about the significance of Jew-hatred in modern history have sometimes been exaggerated or crudely simplified, in ways that finally hinder rather than enhance our efforts to understand it. Similarly, the tendency to dismiss anti-Semitism as a bizarre hallucination, a fantasy of diseased minds, is undoubtedly justified in some instances but has also often been overdone and has thus hindered understanding, for Jews have been disliked for many reasons by a very wide variety of normal people, many of whom were neither emotionally unstable nor intellectually unsophisticated, and a few of whom were men and women of great ability (Wagner, Barrès, or T. S. Eliot, for example). It is far too easy, indeed, too reassuring, to describe anti-Semites as mentally deranged or morally flawed in all regards. The extent to which anti-Semitism was “normal” requires, in my opinion, a more serious and open-minded investigation, whether by scholars or the lay public.

⁷ Albert S. Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs, Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank, 1894–1915* (New York, 1991, pp. 1993).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)**xiv** PREFACE

The rapidly gathering interest in the Holocaust that has characterized the 1980s and 1990s, an interest that certainly must be considered positive in comparison to the relative silence about it in the first decades after World War II, has not always had a healthy influence on historical understanding in a broader and more rigorous sense. In particular the temptation to see all of European history as somehow building inexorably toward that terrifying climax has produced some oddly skewed visions of the past. Carelessly expressed and poorly thought-through claims that the Holocaust, and by extension anti-Semitism, are utterly beyond understanding have further muddled the waters.

Even in dealing with the history of the United States, where it is widely recognized by scholars and the general public that hostility to Jews has been less significant than in Europe, the legitimate concern to point out how Jew-hatred has been ignored or downplayed by some historians has led to overstatements, to elaborate and detailed attention to anti-Semitic figures with few followers, or to events with relatively little significance.⁸ There has been, similarly, a tendency to evaluate pre-twentieth-century realities with late twentieth-century standards – indeed, to hold up utopian visions of perfect toleration and mutual respect against which all flesh-and-blood human beings, in whatever historical period, are easily shown to have failed. How we interpret history is always powerfully influenced by the concerns and values of our own age, but it is finally misleading and unjust to single out and indignantly describe, for example, the racism of nineteenth-century Germans (“proto-Nazis”) without recognizing how much beliefs in ethnic or racial determinism were the norm in most countries and were to be found among oppressed minorities, Jews included, as much as oppressive majorities – were, in short, part of a shared intellectual world, a *Zeitgeist* – but did not lead to mass murder in every country.

Similarly, expressing irritation with Jews, as a number of prominent Germans did – and so did prominent figures, including Jews themselves, in nearly every country – is one thing; calling for their systematic murder is quite another. In many accounts (Goldhagen’s is the latest in a long series) such distinctions are blurred; some writers go so far as to condemn the distinctions as morally dubious, thus making any irritation with Jews or criticism of them “anti-Semitic,” a conclusion that takes on extraordinary dimensions when linked to such assertions as “all anti-Semitism is essentially the same” or “a little bit of anti-Semitism is as dangerous as a little bit of cancer.” In some studies it is argued that expressions of irritation or distaste, by contributing to the general temper of hostility to Jews, finally made mass murder possible and therefore must carry a major responsibility for it.

⁸ The most recent and scholarly of these, offering many qualifications, but still insisting, as is implicit in the title, on the point that anti-Semitism in America was stronger than previously realized is Frederick Cople Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994). His introduction discusses some of the other, less cautious works of the genre.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

I cannot accept such reasoning, which seems to me facile, especially insofar as it implies that Jews, unlike other human groups, cannot provoke legitimate irritation or that anyone expressing irritation about Jews, or criticism of them as a group, inexorably enters the moral realm of the Nazis. I most emphatically do recognize, on the other hand, that hatred of Jews was more dangerous in some countries than in others; the German case undoubtedly is one that requires special attention. And irritation with Jews, because of its potential to connect with myths of unusually malignant potential, may be appropriately considered more dangerous than many other kinds of irritation. Similarly, the status of Jews as a minority, often a very small minority, in all countries of Europe and America, has tended to make their situation especially perilous.

This volume offers a considerably broader canvas than my previous book, both in years and in nations covered. In examining some ten different countries I have tried to demonstrate the benefits of comparative history, since anti-Semitism has appeared in many different environments and has differed in striking and revealing ways. I made this point for a more limited number of countries and a briefer span of time (primarily France, Russia, and the United States in the generation before 1914) in *The Jew Accused*; my hope is that the comparative perspectives I present here for a larger number of nations and broader period, with Germany as a central concern, will lead to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of anti-Semitism in general. Again, I must emphasize my conviction that hatred of Jews is best understood in terms of a range of actual human examples in history, not some absolute, never-attained ideal, and that theories about the nature of Jew-hatred must be painstakingly checked in the historical record, rather than letting one country or a brief period serve as definitive evidence.

In this work, I try, to a more extensive degree than in my previous book, to evaluate how much “fantastic” images of Jews, especially those derived from Christian doctrine but also from racist and other political ideologies, explain anti-Semitism, as distinguished from factors that have to do with the kinds of normal frictions and tensions that nearly all groups experience when encountering one another. In a related way, this volume tries to analyze whether it is appropriate to consider anti-Semitism as somehow unique (an exceedingly slippery concept). Has hatred of Jews differed in some essential way from hatred of other groups? Most groups, after all, have experienced hatred for both fantastic and “real” reasons. And most hatred may be considered in some sense unlike other varieties of it. I find strained, unpersuasive, and finally counterproductive the arguments that hostility to Jews lacks revealing parallels. I am persuaded, to the contrary, that hatred of Jews helps us to understand other hatreds, and those hatreds help us to understand anti-Semitism.

Negative fantasies about Jews, now and in the past several thousand years, unquestionably connect with images generated from the nether realms of religion, although the nature of that connection and the meaning of “religion”

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi PREFACE

in this context are anything but clear, especially if the term refers to Christian religion, since hostility to Jews predates Christianity and is not and never has been limited to Christians. Similarly, many of the recurring themes of that hostility (for example, the Jews' alleged secret power, their arrogance and sense of superiority to others, and their repellent customs and rituals) also appeared before the advent of Christianity and have been picked up, into modern times, by those who have rejected Christianity or who were never Christians (the Japanese, for example, or much of the Muslim world, and, indeed, increasingly large numbers of the inhabitants of the world outside of Europe and the United States). Many of those themes, at any rate, hardly qualify as unambiguously religious, as the term is commonly understood; they might just as well be termed secular. The dividing line between what is religious and what is secular is anything but clear, and that blurred division has contributed to much confusion and muddled thinking. Most observers would not consider Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* or Dickens's *Oliver Twist* to be religious works, yet the image of the Jew in them has been undoubtedly influential, as indeed is the case for the novels and other writings of Benjamin Disraeli. Religion and secular culture blend in ways that are difficult if not impossible to untangle.

Since religious imagery is so many-sided and elusive, and since both positive and negative images of Jews emerge from Christian religion and the culture associated with it, tracing the influence of religion in given situations has been done mostly by those who in some sense knew what they were going to prove before they started their research. Without that emotional, preexisting "knowledge," the case for the role of Christianity lacks cogency and precision. One can unquestionably pinpoint Christian tendencies toward demonizing Jews, but such tendencies are balanced by others. The evidence is hardly persuasive that within Christian belief is contained a strongly determined predisposition, drawing in all Christians, to violent hatred of Jews. In modern times Christian peoples have differed enormously in their reactions to Jews, from mild philo-Semitism to murderous loathing. This range of sentiment cannot be convincingly connected to various traits within varieties of Christianity, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Greek Orthodox, sincere or lax, popular or elite. Catholic Poland tended toward hostility, Catholic Italy toward tolerance; Protestant Germany toward hostility, Protestant Holland toward tolerance; the relatively sincere Christians of the United States toward tolerance, the relatively insincere Christians in France toward intolerance.

These points will be amply explored in the main text; the point I wish to emphasize here is that religion, put forth in a large number of studies as the ultimate or fundamental source of anti-Semitism, is too elastic and ambiguous a category to offer much more than conjectural, ahistorical, and woolly explanations, in which the preconceptions and emotional agendas of the authors play a decisive role. Each of these countries was religious, but their reactions

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

to Jews were so different that one obviously needs to look to other factors than religion in explaining those reactions. Moreover, nonreligious explanations for Jew-hatred are frequently more plausible and certainly more measurable. It is my contention that those other explanations are distinctly more satisfactory than religion, although I am also persuaded that some of them, for example, racial stereotyping, have also not exercised the powerful determinism often attributed to them.

That said, I hasten to note that the next chapter begins with an exploration of the undeniable power of mythic imagery based in religion, and the next two chapters explore the related modern “myths” of race and nation. My position, then, is hardly that such imagery has no or even little power. Rather, I am objecting to the incautious and tendentious use of such imagery as an explanatory device. At any rate, this book is not primarily about mythic imagery; the realms of theology, literature, and the fine arts are not its main concerns. I do not ignore or denigrate them, but I am more inclined to believe that truth is in the details, as it were, with the more measurable particulars of historical development. Politics, the economy, social change, and the way with which they blend and alter mythic imagery will be my main concerns.

My position is that whatever the power of myth, not all hostility to Jews, individually or collectively, has been based on fantastic or chimerical visions of them, or on projections unrelated to any palpable reality. As human beings, Jews have been as capable as any other group of provoking hostility in the everyday secular world. This remark, which some will consider a platitude, is nonetheless forcefully, even indignantly, rejected by others. One often encounters pronouncements such as the following: “We all know that anti-Semitism really has nothing to do with Jews; it can flourish even in places where no Jews live.”⁹ Or, “the psychic needs of Christians – and not the actual character of Jewish life – give anti-Semitism its power and appeal.”¹⁰ “Jew-hatred is one-sided . . . [and] functions independent of its object.”¹¹ “Anti-Semitism is oblivious to Jewish conduct; it is independent of the very presence of Jews.”¹²

However, that purported unanimous agreement – what “we all know” – does not exist, and never has. Indeed, the opposite position, that Jewish conduct is the main cause for hatred of Jews, has been described by Edward Alexander [disapprovingly] as “an argument of wide and enduring popularity,”¹³ which it certainly is. It was even more popular in the nineteenth century

⁹ Susannah Heschel, “Anti-Semites against Anti-Semitism,” *Tikkun*, Nov./Dec. 1993, 52.

¹⁰ Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830* (Philadelphia, 1979), 95.

¹¹ Ruth Wisse, “The Twentieth Century’s Most Successful Ideology,” *Commentary*, vol. 91, no. 2, Feb. 1991, 33.

¹² “A Futile Fight” [editorial in] *The Jerusalem Post*, week ending Sept. 15, 1990, 24.

¹³ Edward Alexander, *The Holocaust and the War of Ideas* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1994), 50.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)**xviii** PREFACE

when it was almost universally assumed, by both Jews and non-Jews, that Jewish behavior was the all-too-obvious cause of the appearance of modern anti-Semitism. To look only at the opinions of Jews themselves, many Zionists have considered Jews in the Diaspora ("in Exile") to be "objectively detestable"; their obnoxious characters, deformed by their powerless and precarious existence among Gentiles, are the reason they have been hated – indeed the reason they have so often hated other Jews and even themselves. As the following chapters will amply illustrate, it became a very widely accepted axiom of the nineteenth century, robustly enduring into the twentieth, that if Jews would "reform," abandon their offensive habits, then anti-Semitism would vanish. The Zionist position was unique mostly in its insistence that anti-Semitism would not go away, although again "unique" may be a misleading term, since right-wing traditionalists, both in the Jewish and the Christian camps, also believed Jewish reform to be either impossible or undesirable.

I hasten to observe that I do not accept these positions, Zionist or otherwise, although I will try to show how the partial truth in them is cause for reflection. Undoubtedly, the intransigence, the overkill of the previously quoted pronouncements about Jews' having absolutely nothing to do with the hatred directed at them derives in part from the understandable exasperation of Jews who believe they are being unjustly blamed, who cite their own experience that, time and again, Jewish conduct has no effect on anti-Semitic conviction. The naiveté of nineteenth-century reformers – and the terrible price Jews eventually paid for the illusions they harbored about the eventual disappearance of anti-Semitism in Europe – is another reason that "blaming the Jews" is so emotionally and categorically rejected by many today. And yet another reason is their belief that Jews, even in Israel, are a people uniquely afflicted by a drive to destructive self-criticism.¹⁴ (The charge that Jews are uniquely inclined to destructive criticism of non-Jews rather than of Jews themselves is, however, and rather contradictorily, dismissed as an anti-Semitic fantasy.)

The following chapters will develop my own understanding of the peculiar and elusive interplay of fantasy and reality in anti-Semitism as well as my own firm rejection of the notion that exile has rendered Jews objectively detestable and invariably hated by any people among whom they live. At any rate, there is an important part of the truth in the assertion that autonomous psychic processes in non-Jews, ones that exaggerate reality or ignore it entirely, play a key role in anti-Semitism, as indeed they do in most hatreds, including those of Jews for non-Jews. Quite aside from strictly religious considerations, the position of Jews as long-term outsiders and dissidents in most societies has made them suspect and vulnerable in a myriad of ways, no matter what the actions or beliefs of individual Jews. But pushed very far, the position that

¹⁴ Alexander, *Holocaust*, esp. 95–106.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

hatred of Jews arises without their presence or activity approaches absurdity – anti-Semitism among the Jivaro, the Hottentots, or the Chumash?

Obviously we cannot expect to find Jew-hatred among peoples who historically have had absolutely no contact with Jews or Judaism, who have no idea who Jews are or what they represent. Similarly, if it is the psychic needs of Christians that give anti-Semitism its power and appeal, it would appear logical to expect the worst kind of anti-Semitic hatred among the most sincere Christians, but much evidence indicates that in modern times it was very often insincere, partial, or lapsed Christians, and even more those who mocked the ideals of Christianity, who manifested particularly virulent and violent forms of Jew-hatred. Similarly, can one seriously argue that Jew-hatred among Palestinians has *nothing* to do with the actions or attitudes of real Jews, whether Israelis or their Jewish supporters in the rest of the world, and is *entirely* one-sided, a Palestinian fantasy operating independent of its object? Is there evidence that Christian Palestinians hate Jews more than Moslem Palestinians? And if not, how is Christian religion to be considered a decisive factor?

In modern times, in particular the years examined most closely in the following pages (that is, the 1870s to the eve of the Holocaust), the sources of real as opposed to fantastic tensions between Jews and non-Jews were not quite so obvious as those in the Arab–Israeli conflict, but they were nonetheless palpable. Jews experienced remarkable changes in many regards during those years, in numbers, wealth, social position, and even political power. Such rapid changes typically produce tensions and problems for any group, and the Jews were no exception. A few of the critics of my book and articles have warned that pointing to a Jewish “rise” threatens to lend support to the old anti-Semitic charges that Jews are bent on taking over the world or, again, that they were alone responsible for the hatred directed at them. I do not find the warnings persuasive, since, to begin with, the evidence for the rise of the Jews is compelling, but also because I cannot accept that one should avoid any observations, even if accurate, that anti-Semites might misuse. It is a sad state of affairs when such purveyors of hatred are able to condition the terms in which one writes history, forcing it into black-and-white categories.

Similarly, my efforts to give a more nuanced treatment of certain anti-Semites have encountered the objection that I have thereby offered excuses for them. Again, I believe these objections miss a crucial point: The danger is not that anti-Semites will be exonerated by a nonpolemical analysis of them; far more dangerous is to offer representations that make no effort at a rounded treatment, for that provides ammunition to those who maintain that Jews and their supporters twist history to their advantage, that they are critical of all except Jews, and that they exaggerate the flaws of their critics while covering up Jewish misdeeds. (It is again simply astonishing, and revealing, how some Jewish observers believe that Jews are uniquely destructive in their self-criticism, whereas anti-Semites assert that Jews smother all criticism of themselves.)

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)**xx** PREFACE

The recent charge by prominent spokesmen for African-Americans that Jews were major beneficiaries of the slave trade, or indeed, primarily responsible for it, underlines the problem. The accusation is exaggerated; only a small number of Jews was involved – the Jewish population in a position to be slave traders was small – but it is nonetheless true that there were a number of Jewish slave traders and slave owners. It is also the case that prominent historians of the Jews, such as Oscar Handlin in his *Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America* (first published in 1954), ignored the issue, in Handlin's history even while mentioning by name the "great Jewish merchants," who made fortunes in the slave trade.

At any rate, I do not believe that the rise of the Jews was a negative phenomenon. Far from it. The evidence, as I see it, is that changes in the conditions of Jews benefited – indeed were in many regards central to the definition of – western society as a whole and furthermore generated both positive and negative reactions, as any great success is likely to do. Just as Christian belief could engender either hostility or sympathy (and more likely a voluble, contradictory mix of each, finding exaggerated expression in times of crisis), so "rising" Jews were feared and hated by some but welcomed and applauded by others. A systematically comparative perspective helps to make it clear, for example, that material success might generate jealousy and fear in some areas, as for example in tsarist Russia or Romania, but guarded admiration in others, notably in the United States, Italy, Hungary, or Great Britain. Within each of these examples, there were many complicating factors, among them the shifting economic situation, wars and revolutions, social class, regionalism, gender, and, yes, religion – to say nothing of the irreducible personal idiosyncrasies of key historical actors.

In my previous book I devoted careful attention to those idiosyncrasies in individual anti-Semitic affairs and concluded that the personal traits of Alfred Dreyfus, Mendel Beilis, and Leo Frank were absolutely crucial to the development of the affairs that grew up after their arrests. The personalities of key anti-Semites also played unpredictable and often unrecognized roles in those anti-Semitic affairs. I carry that argument further here. Evidence for the importance of personality, the role of the unpredictable and often surprising decisions of great historical personalities, is simply too abundant to be ignored. I am not one of those who believe that if Hitler had somehow been killed at the front in World War I or that if Stalin had perished in one of his early robberies, "history" would have somehow produced another Hitler or another Stalin, and developments in Germany and Russia would have been much the same. While historians do well to integrate into their narratives the insights and interpretations offered by the generalizing social sciences – as I have done with the notion of the rise of the Jews – at some point the irreducible uniqueness of history needs also to be recognized, and that uniqueness often has much to do with the peculiarities of personality. Hitler's actions

would not have been possible without the rise of modern anti-Semitism in Germany and Europe as a whole, but that rise did not make the Holocaust inevitable; it was rather Hitler's peculiar personality that was the absolutely decisive factor.¹⁵ And in Hitler's case it is extremely difficult to believe that sincere Christian convictions on his part were responsible for the particular virulence of his hatred of Jews, at least unless one stretches to intolerable limits what is meant by Christian convictions. The same holds for nearly all major Nazis, Himmler, Streicher, Goebbels, Goering, and Heydrich among them. Similarly, the Christian convictions of the German population, although no doubt responsible in part for the lack of effective opposition to Nazi persecution of Jews, were not primarily responsible for initiating that persecution or for the eventual murder of Jews.

On the other hand, Nazism and the Holocaust undeniably emerged out of Christian civilization; negative images of Jews had been nurtured and propagated by the Christian churches for centuries, and the secular societies that emerged in modern times were of course only partially secular and by no means unequivocally separated themselves from that tradition of Jew-hatred. Recognizing these truisms is possible without jumping to the simplistic conclusions that most ordinary Christians or former Christians, whether in Germany or elsewhere, actively desired the murder of all Jews and were willing to participate in it. Nazism and the Holocaust also emerged out of Germany and German culture; evidence for a German tradition of Jew-hatred is overwhelming. Yet, even that evidence does not justify crudely deterministic visions of what occurred in Germany between 1933 and 1945. Emotional attachments to such visions on the part of those who experienced Nazi tyranny, whether directly or from afar, although certainly understandable, do not serve the cause of historical understanding. Sadly, those attachments often serve to obstruct efforts to understand and to remedy the blight of anti-Semitism.

¹⁵ Milton Himmelfarb, "No Hitler, No Holocaust," *Commentary*, vol. 77, no. 3, March 1984.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

In preparing this paperback edition, I had valuable help from a number of scholarly readers, several of whom also earlier helped with the hardback edition. First and foremost, Richard S. Levy, Professor of History at the University of Illinois at Chicago, gave the prepublication manuscript of the hardback edition a particularly thorough and useful reading. He has since then been a source of unfailing wisdom and good humor, one of the closest approximations to the ideal of a gentleman and scholar that I have encountered.

Heartfelt thanks are also due to my colleagues at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who read various drafts over a number of years, saving me from many errors of fact and interpretation: professors Alexander DeConde, Harold Drake, Tibor Frank (as visiting professor from Hungary), Joshua Fogel, Richard Hecht, Stephen Humphreys, Sears McGee, and Jeffrey Burton Russell. Since the publication of the hardback edition, a number of scholarly experts, people of often very different backgrounds and convictions, have contacted me directly with words of support, as well as suggestions for improvement. Among the most important of them are Steven Beller, John Murray Cuddihy, William Goldstein, Jonathan Morse, Kevin MacDonald, Amy Nelson, Patrick O'Brien, Norman Ravitch, and Robert Skloot. I only regret that the limited adjustments possible for this paperback edition have not allowed me to expand more fully upon the many interesting issues they have brought up, but they have helped me avoid error and appreciate all the more nuances and intricacies of this topic.

I have also been contacted by a large number of readers, in that marvelous category of "intelligent laymen," who have offered astute commentary and support of a sort that has been particularly meaningful to me. It is not feasible to list all their names, but I want here to acknowledge that comments made by several of them have deeply moved and sustained me. A now retired professor who escaped Nazi Germany in one of the last Kindertransports (although his mother and other relatives perished in the Holocaust) wrote me that *Esau's Tears* "is by far the best book I have ever read on this sad subject," adding that "all of us who are of Jewish origin are permanently in your debt." Similar words from a number of others who escaped Nazi tyranny have confirmed me

xxiii

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79538-8 - Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews

Albert S. Lindemann

Frontmatter

[More information](#)ACKNOWLEDGMENTS **xxiv**

in my initial conviction that a work like this, for all its difficulties and pitfalls, was needed and worthwhile.

Most of these readers, as indeed many of the authors of the published reviews of *Esau's Tears*, have warned that I would be denounced, indeed slandered, by those who have an emotional and professional investment in different interpretations and who – more importantly – are determined to preserve an environment of dogmatism and intimidation rather than open inquiry in this area. I was of course aware of such possibilities, although I had not quite realized the extremes to which passion, partisanship, and sanctimony could drive otherwise decent and reasonable people. I have indeed been subjected to unfair and unkind abuse, but I hasten to add that the overwhelming majority of published reviews have been favorable, and, when expressing criticism, have done so in honest and productive ways. Somewhat amazingly, all the personal correspondence I received has been respectful and supportive.

In having Frank Smith as my editor at Cambridge University Press, I have been extremely lucky; he represents what most authors hope for but fewer and fewer actually find, that is, an editor who is a source of unfailingly good advice (if not always easy to accept!) both as to style and content, and who is able to mix warm friendship with professional expertise and rigor.

My most important and influential editor has been my wife, Barbara, who has for nearly four decades carefully read draft after draft of what by now numbers some thousands of pages of published books, articles, papers, and reviews. My debt to her, in this as in so many other regards, is beyond measure.

Albert S. Lindemann
Santa Barbara, California
March 2000