Introduction

These essays were written at different times, for various reasons, and differ widely in subject matter and approach. Some are very general, some highly specific; some were to be heard, some to be read. Nevertheless, as my title indicates, they are part of a single quest. With one exception, they are efforts from different angles to answer the same basic question: What is antisemitism, when did it start, and why? Like many quests, however, my search took me along unfamiliar paths, sometimes to dead ends, and brought me to unexpected turnings. Since the essays are places where I stopped rather than the end of the journey, an explanation of the path I took and the obstacles I encountered may make the connections between them clearer.

I was launched on my quest by a seeming accident, the article republished here as chapter 6, the only one not inspired by my question about antisemitism. Like all my work up to that time and much of my work thereafter, it dealt with French medieval legal and institutional history—in this case with a debate as to which of several royal ordinances was the first legislation by a Capetian king intended to apply to the whole kingdom. Though the subject matter of the ordinances in question was the treatment of Jews, that fact had attracted little attention from earlier institutional historians. They had focused on the development of legal or constitutional principle, and disregarded the immediate purpose of the ordinances as irrelevant to the broader constitutional issue.

Times had changed, however. Writing after 1945, I was much more

sensitive to evidence about how non-Jews had treated Jews. I wondered whether some knowledge about what kings and barons were doing with Jews might clarify which of those ordinances was intended to apply to the whole kingdom. Was it something about the status of Jews and attitudes toward them that had enabled the king to use them as the occasion for a major institutional advance in royal power? I found there was an obvious connection, and my discussion of the constitutional issue therefore dealt incidentally with the treatment of Jews.

All unwitting, I had started on a long journey. The article apparently suggested I was more familiar with Jewish history than I was. To my surprise, I was asked to review books dealing with Jewish history written by far more knowledgeable scholars such as Jacob Katz. And when I rashly agreed to write an extensive review essay around a book about the treatment of Jews in Angevin England, I had to learn a lot more about medieval Jewish history and about how non-Jews had treated Jews. Since I had gone to France to spend a year working on Capetian legislative history, I had time to devote to the assignment, which proved a turning point in my work.[1]

The more I read about Jewish history and how Jews had been treated by non-Jews, the more my interest grew. And as I read, I could not help noticing how diversely scholars dated the appearance of antisemitism and explained its causes. From religious motives, some depicted antisemitism as a millennial reaction to the unique values of Judaism. Others, concerned to assess the responsibility of Christianity for what Hitler had done, located its emergence in the first centuries of Christianity. Others, less concerned with religion or determined to absolve Christianity more completely, held that antisemitism was a secular phenomenon that only appeared in the nineteenth century.

One explanation of the disagreement was obvious; different scholars had examined hostility to Jews in different periods and called what they found "antisemitism." Hence, not surprisingly, they gave different meanings to the term, different dates for its emergence, and different explanations of why it had appeared. They could do so because, even though Hitler had made the need to understand the nature and causes of antisemitism imperative, there was no definition of antisemitism sufficiently precise to enable historians to agree when it started and why. The need for a sharper definition or conception of antisemitism thus seemed clear. But since the issue was remote from my work, I would not have pursued it further had I not had an idea I thought

might resolve it—or at least be an interesting way to raise and clarify it.

Starting about 1938, sociologists and psychologists had developed a new concept, that of ethnic prejudice, but most scholars who had written on the history of antisemitism were not familiar with it. I was because, as a North American product of my times, I had read Gordon Allport's magisterial work, *The Nature of Prejudice*.[2] Since it emphasized the role of irrationality in prejudice, and since one of the distinguishing characteristics of the "Final Solution" was its monumental irrationality, I thought that, if I used Auschwitz as a touchstone and employed Allport's concept of prejudice to define antisemitism, I as a historian could then locate when antisemitism so defined first appeared and suggest why it had appeared then and there. I anticipated a short and rapidly completed work that would do no more than use the new ideas about ethnic prejudice to reinterpret the detailed knowledge already provided by historians of Jews and non-Jews. *Sancta simplicitas* or rash presumption.

Part 1 deals with the first problem I encountered. I rapidly discovered that much of the historiography by both Jewish and non-Jewish historians on postbiblical Jewish history and on the attitudes of non-Jews toward Jews and their treatment of them was remarkably parochial or seriously biased. And not only was it unreliable; on many matters it was simply lacking. I criticized that state of historiography in the two essays of 1966 and 1968 that constitute Part 1 of this book. Interestingly enough, they are the only articles I ever had rejected. The essay criticizing the treatment of Jews in histories and textbooks by non-Jews was rejected by the *American Historical Review*; the essay criticizing historiography by Jews was rejected by *Conservative Judaism*. Fortunately for my self-esteem, the former was printed by the *Journal of the History of Ideas* and the latter, thanks to Jacob Neusner, by *Jewish Social Studies*. Since then, with the great increase in more objective scholarship by both non-Jewish and Jewish historians, the situation has changed greatly, making those essays period pieces. But precisely for that reason, they may still be of interest to students of antisemitism—and of historiography.

In 1964, however, my expectation that I could rely heavily on existing historiography was disappointed. Consequently, when I began to work on the formation of antisemitism, I had to cover a wide range of history and spent much time trying to get a grip on many matters that

were poorly treated or overlooked in the existing historiography. In one sense, that was effort wasted. In the following years, a number of books by specialized historians appeared that covered many of those gaps much better and more thoroughly than I ever could have. But if their detailed descriptions of events provided factual information I badly needed, most of these scholars still used "antisemitism" loosely and therefore disagreed about when it appeared and why. I still did not have an answer to my fundamental questions about antisemitism.

Part 2 deals with another major problem I soon encountered, a question that any effort to define and date antisemitism immediately raises. What, if anything, preceded it? Is antisemitism as old as Jews or did it only emerge later? Was there anti-Judaism before there was antisemitism, and if so, what is anti-Judaism?

As soon as I began to read about the history of antisemitism, I inevitably encountered the pioneering works of James Parkes and Jules Isaac and other works in the same vein that relied explicitly or implicitly on a distinction between anti-Judaism and antisemitism to determine when antisemitism started. But although these scholars were very interested in drawing a distinction and determining when antisemitism appeared and why, their perspective was very different from mine. Focusing almost exclusively on the painful question of the extent of Christian responsibility through the centuries for the twentieth-century tragedy, they typically used their faith to distinguish when Christians had strayed from the message of Jesus and become antisemitic, which led them to date the appearance of antisemitism early. Most located the origins of antisemitism in the first centuries of the Christian era, if not earlier among non-Christians.

Central to their arguments was the distinction between anti-Judaism and antisemitism, but their distinction rested on premises of faith. To put it loosely, they used "anti-Judaism" to refer to the kind of negative attitude that adherents of one religion have often manifested toward religions they do not accept. Christian anti-Judaism thus referred to the attitudes of rejection, whether mild or intense, that those who believed in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth displayed toward Jews and Judaism because Jews refused to believe in that divinity. By contrast, they used "antisemitism" to refer to any hostility of Christians toward Jews that was not necessitated by faith in the divinity of Jesus or that ran counter to that faith.

Many Christians who have discussed the subject have used the distinction to absolve what they believed to be the genuine Christian

message from any responsibility for the twentieth-century tragedy. Though most of them emphasized and deeply regretted that many Christians became antisemitic as well as anti-Judaic during the first centuries of Christianity, they were equally or even more concerned to deny any connection between proper Christian faith and antisemitism. But their use of "antisemitism" for any hostility that went beyond what their faith necessitated could not be justified empirically and had suspicious implications. It implied that, however great the difference in historical specifics, there was no difference in kind between Hitler's hostility and that of many early Christians; like Hitler, though in differing degree, many bishops, church fathers, and other Christians of the first centuries were antisemites.

That indistinctness reinforced my conviction that a more precise definition of antisemitism was badly needed. In any case, since I was not using theological premises, I disagreed with their explanation and dating of the origins of antisemitism. I was looking backward from Hitler rather than forward from Jesus of Nazareth. My conception of antisemitism depended, not on the beliefs of any religion, but on the empirical studies of various examples of prejudice by sociologists and psychologists, and on the facts of the "Final Solution." And as far as I could see, socially significant antisemitism so conceived could not be found in the first Christian centuries. But what, then, was anti-Judaism, and how did it differ from antisemitism?

Both "anti-Judaism" and "antisemitism" refer to hostility directed at those identified as Jews. Whether or not one thinks the terms denote markedly different kinds of hostility depends largely on whether one thinks that Jews were primarily responsible for the hostility or that non-Jews were. If—despite all the changes over millennia of history and all the obvious differences in culture of non-Jews—one focuses on Jews and maintains that real millennial Jewish characteristics (whether judged good or bad) have always inspired the same kind of hostility in non-Jews of very different kinds, then, as Bernard Lazare maintained a century ago, hostility to Jews has varied only in intensity and historical specifics, not in kind or cause. And for those who take this position, there will be little difference between antisemitism and anti-Judaism. If, however, one examines the characteristics of non-Jews and thinks that major differences, not simply in the intensity of the hostility but also in its basic nature, can be detected, and if the irrational hostility of Hitler (whose knowledge of real Jewish characteristics was minimal) is considered the most undeniable example of antisemitism,

then antisemitism cannot be explained primarily as a reaction to some real millennial characteristics of Jews, and antisemitism can be distinguished from anti-Judaism.

Perhaps because I was not a Jew and was writing after Hitler, I found the latter position far more convincing and accepted its consequences. It followed that if antisemitism was not coeval with Jews, it must have appeared at some time between the beginning of Jews and Hitler, and that its emergence had to be explicable by historical changes in the characteristics of Jews and non-Jews, but primarily of non-Jews. But when? If antisemitism was defined as irrational prejudice against Jews, with Hitler's irrationality as the clearest example, I thought I could trace it back to northern Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but no further. I also thought that it emerged then primarily because of a major change in the mentality of medieval Christians.

To think that socially significant antisemitism emerged then and there does not imply that there was no earlier hostility to Jews or no earlier changes in the character of hostility to Jews. Once one abandons the conviction that millennial Jewish characteristics have always caused the same kind of hostility, one would expect different kinds of non-Jews in different contexts to have been hostile in different ways and different degrees. Even though I thought that a deadly change in the basic nature of hostility to Jews had occurred in medieval Europe, I still had to acknowledge that a different and very important change had occurred much earlier with the emergence of Christianity.

Hostility to Jews had, of course, appeared before the triumph of Christianity—as had also hostility between Greeks and Romans and between Romans and Germans. That hostility to Jews is typically exemplified by the story of Haman, the riots in Alexandria in 38 of the Common Era, or the writings of Tacitus. Some Persians, Greeks, and Romans, who had their own social and cultural identity, hated the Jews in their midst because of a real Jewish characteristic, their insistence on maintaining their Judaic identity as a separate people. It is important to note, however, that the cultures that gave those Persians, Greeks, and Romans their sense of cosmic and social identity had developed independently of Judaism and had no Jewish components. Consequently, those who identified with those cultures could hate or ridicule Jews without feeling any threat, other than the fact of difference, to the foundations of their own sense of identity. Though they hated Jews for what Jews were really doing—or not doing—they had

no need to examine seriously the beliefs of Judaism and try to demonstrate their errors. Their anti-Judaic hostility thus differed little from many other instances of ethnocentric hostility throughout history.

How different the situation of Christians. Christianity had started as a Jewish sect, and even when Christians separated from Judaism and created their own Christian religions, their reliance on Jewish beliefs and practices remained enormous, nowhere more obviously than in their Old Testament. Indeed, in recent discussions, Christians have often spoken of Jews as "separated brothers," a term with peculiar biological and gender overtones that underlines both the separation and the deep dependence of Christian identity on Judaic beliefs. And because of that patriarchal connection, Christians from the beginning reacted to Judaism and Jews very differently than had the non-Christian Persians, Greeks, and Romans.

Like many non-Christians before them, Christians were anti-Judaic, that is, they were reacting to real characteristics of Jews and Judaism. But Christian anti-Judaism differed markedly from that of non-Christians because the Christians' sense of identity forced them to come to grips with Judaism. Since their sense of identity had so many Jewish components, Christians could not simply dismiss Judaism as wrong and irrelevant. To assert the distinctiveness and superiority of their own identity, Christians had to think about Judaism and argue amongst themselves and with Jews that Christians were right and Jews wrong. Thus, for Christians, the ability of Jews to maintain their own identity was not only annoying or hateful in the way ethnic differences so often are; it was an intimate and enduring threat to their sense of identity, a challenge built into their own religion.

The challenge was difficult, and Christian leaders, starting with Paul, devoted much energy to meeting it. Their labors produced something new: the first systematically elaborated rationalization that justified hostility to Jews. By the beginning of the fifth century, the Christian anti-Judaic doctrine that depicted Jews as reprehensible, wrong even in their own terms, indeed eternally damned, was firmly established. It would be preached ever more widely and endure with little change for centuries.

Christian anti-Judaism thus seemed an important precondition for European antisemitism, a halfway station between a very common kind of ethnocentric hostility and the peculiarly irrational hostility of Hitler. And if, like many Christian scholars but for my own reasons, I wanted to distinguish it from antisemitism, I had to clarify my think-

ing about its nature and consequences. Chapters 3 and 4 are early efforts to do so. Chapter 3 is a brief effort to distinguish Christian anti-Judaism from other forms of anti-Judaism, to indicate its different forms of expression, to sketch some of its effects, and to indicate how it differed from Christian antisemitism. Chapter 4 is an analysis of what anti-Judaism meant in practice and how it changed as it was transmitted to different peoples from about 400 to 1096, that is, from the time when the Christian doctrine about Jews had been firmly established to the date of the first major massacre of Jews in Europe. It suggests an explanation for the changes and argues that the massacres of 1096 were an expression of anti-Judaism, not antisemitism. But here my path led me onto very perilous ground.

Chapter 4 was my first involvement in something I had hoped to skirt. Because I was relying on a loose sociopsychological definition of antisemitism that denoted empirical phenomena, stressed irrationality, and did not refer to religion in general or any religion in particular, and since I did not think that belief in a religion was necessarily irrational, I thought, simplemindedly, that I could avoid the whole religious debate. I thought I could determine when indisputably irrational attitudes to Jews emerged without making any assertions about the nature or origin of religious beliefs. But how could I explain the changes in anti-Judaism without giving some explanation of the manifest changes in Christian beliefs that lay behind the changes in anti-Judaism?

It was certain that different groups of Christians had reacted to Jews differently in the course of the first ten centuries of the Common Era, that Christian anti-Judaism had varied both in intensity and character. But why? The obvious answer was that the mentality of Christians had changed and, consequently, the meanings they gave to formulations of Christian beliefs, including anti-Judaic beliefs. But I could not explain the changes in anti-Judaism simply by describing the changes in Christian beliefs. For if I used their beliefs as a *sufficient* explanation for the changes in anti-Judaism, I would be accepting their religious beliefs as premises of my own explanation; and that would have embroiled me, at least tacitly, in the theological debate I was trying to avoid. As a historian, I needed to have my own explanation of why those changes in Christianity had occurred, and I needed to make it explicit. The result was a theoretical section about religion in the original version of chapter 4 that must have seemed unusual, to put it kindly, when I delivered it at Spoleto.

Willy-nilly, the problem of Christian anti-Judaism—and the fact of Judaism—made the issue of religious belief increasingly unavoidable, and so did another feature of religious thought. When, for a different purpose, I examined developments in Christianity that had no direct connection with Jews, I was struck by the importance of doubts for the development of Christianity. And when I then examined anti-Judaic and antisemitic attitudes more closely, I became convinced that they were in large measure a reaction to those doubts. That conviction is expressed in chapter 5, which deals directly, if all too superficially, with Christian doubts and their impact on attitudes to Jews. I argue there that the nature of Christian doubts changed from the first century to the twelfth as the mentality of Christians changed, and that the striking change in mentality apparent in the eleventh century—a new emphasis on empirical knowledge as well as on logic—brought a new kind of doubt. That new kind of doubt made Jewish disbelief more menacing and, for the first time, drove some Christians to the verge of irrationality when they thought about Jews.

The more I became convinced of the importance of religious doubts for the emergence of antisemitism, however, the more I was forced to face the basic historiographical problem I had unrealistically tried to circumvent, the problem of the relation between religion and antisemitism. The question that bothered me increasingly was how, and how far, historians of any period and subject could discuss religious phenomena objectively. So unavoidable did that problem come to seem for any fundamental rethinking of the problem of antisemitism that it finally compelled me to devote a book to it and its implications for an explanation of antisemitism.[3]

Yet if religious attitudes were crucial for attitudes to Jews, religion was not the whole story. If it seemed undeniable that Christians had exploited Jews ideologically to satisfy their religious needs, I knew that exploitation had not stopped there. The dispersion of Jews as a controlled minority among Christians made it possible for Christians to extend their exploitation from the ideological to the practical realm.

Part 3 deals with a major example of the economic and political exploitation that ensued. I had always taken that kind of exploitation for granted, for the article that launched me on my unexpected pilgrimage (chapter 6) dealt with the secular exploitation of Jews and the conflict that conduct caused between the French kings and their barons on the one hand and the papacy and churchmen on the other. It was clear that, although the inferior religious status attributed to Jews was

a precondition for what the kings and barons did with them, those authorities were primarily moved by political, economic, and legal considerations that owed little to religious beliefs, indeed often ran counter to them, and that their nonreligious actions also affected attitudes to Jews.

Before the twelfth century, Jews were neither unusually prominent in moneylending nor stereotyped as moneylenders. By 1150, however, Jews in northern Europe were becoming disproportionately involved in moneylending, and the new stereotype of the Jews as usurers began to appear in northern Europe.[4] What made Jewish moneylending possible was not religious attitudes; it was the economic advance that started in the late tenth century, the new demand for credit it stimulated, which was satisfied by monasteries, urban Christian lenders, and Jews, the efforts of secular rulers to profit from it, and the effect of their efforts on Jews.

Since Jews were already damned, secular authorities were, for purely material reasons, quite willing to support Jewish moneylending energetically so long as they could exploit it without political repercussions. Thanks above all to that support and deprived of other opportunities, Jews engaged more and more in moneylending. They did so even though many debtors disliked or hated their creditors, and even though Christian ecclesiastical authorities were condemning ever more stridently the kind of credit transactions in which Jews typically engaged. Credit was so needed that even though Christians were the major source of credit, Jewish moneylenders could also profit—so long as they were supported and not overly exploited by the secular authorities. But the ultimate price was high. Since Christians did not want to acknowledge their own involvement in moneylending openly, it served many interests to emphasize the role of Jews and stereotype Jews as the archetypal usurer. That intersection of religious and material interests made Jews seem even more evil; their fundamentally evil nature found expression not only in their killing of Christ but also in their addiction to usury.

Chapter 6 discusses those developments, but it is now outdated. Since it appeared, other scholars have examined royal treatment of Jews more thoroughly and corrected my errors.[5] I have included it nonetheless, for it was the beginning of my quest and may still have some significance for French institutional history. A further reason is that it illustrates all too clearly an error I corrected myself. When I wrote it, I took for granted a long-established view about the nature

of Jewish legal status in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, to wit, that Jews were legally considered serfs of the king. But when I examined their status in different kingdoms more closely, I concluded that the traditional description not only was wrong but also concealed a major change that was very important for the way people thought about Jews.

As I argue in chapter 7, Jews were not fitted into the legal category of serfs, a category that also applied to many Christians; Jews were legally categorized separately as Jews. They were assigned a distinctive legal status that set them apart as different from and inferior to all others, a status that enabled secular authorities to exploit Jews and their moneylending as they could not exploit any Christians. And because Jews were being differentiated ever more completely from Christians, the way was opened for some Christians to exploit Jews in yet another and peculiarly deadly way.

Part 4 is devoted to that new kind of exploitation, which might be termed psychological or irrational exploitation. These chapters describe how Christians came to believe that Jews committed ritual murder. They are the empirical core of my argument about the emergence of antisemitism. They examine the new irrational exploitation of the existence of Jews that was expressed by a new kind of belief about them and a new kind of hostility toward them. To repress their own doubts, some Christians now imagined that contemporary Jews engaged in evil conduct that could not be seen.

The old anti-Judaic accusations against Jews had always had an obvious kernel of truth, however exaggerated. Though Jews placed a different value on the conduct, it was true that Jews did not understand their scripture as Christians understood their Old Testament, did not believe in the divinity of Jesus and approved of his execution, displayed their contempt for Christianity and its sacred symbols openly whenever it was safe, and were disproportionately engaged in moneylending in northern Europe by the latter twelfth century. But about 1150, just when a new kind of Christian doubt had appeared, when Jews were becoming disproportionately involved in moneylending, and when they were being assigned a legal status that set them apart as inferior to all Christians, beliefs appeared that lacked any kernel of truth but served to buttress Christian beliefs against the menace of new doubts. Antisemitism by my definition was emerging.

To protect their threatened beliefs, some troubled Christians created irrational fantasies: that Jews ritually crucified young children, en-

gaged in ritual cannibalism, tried to torture Christ by attacking the consecrated host of the Eucharist, and attempted to destroy Christendom by poisoning wells and causing the Black Death. The fantasies appealed to other Christians who came to believe them in such numbers that they became part of European culture.

The falsity of those accusations seems glaringly obvious now, but that was not the case before Hitler. Of course, historians had long known that those accusations were made and that thousands of Jews were killed because of them. But not until the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century was there a serious attempt by some Jewish and non-Jewish historians to disprove them. They had a hard time convincing others, however, because of the way they went about it. Strangely enough, or perhaps all too understandably before Hitler and Freud, they did not focus on the accusations themselves; they focused on the Jews and tried to prove that Jews had never done such things.

That defensive posture considered Jews guilty until proven innocent, and it set the historians an almost impossible task, for it was and is impossible to prove conclusively that no Jews ever engaged in such physically possible conduct in secret. In a period of widespread hostility to Jews, however, the approach had the advantage for Jewish historians that they could try to exculpate Jews without criticizing Christianity directly—a feature that made the approach attractive to Christian historians as well. Its weakness was that it ignored the obvious. If the evidence to support the truth of the accusations was highly suspect, as it was, it was nonetheless certain that people had made those accusations and used them to justify the killing of thousands of Jews. The first question for objective historians should therefore have been, not whether Jews could have done something like that, but what had Christians in fact done? How did those accusations arise? Who made them and why? How did they "know" that Jews had done such things?

The essays in Part 4 are the result of that simple change in optic. They show how the fantastic accusations arose and demonstrate their irrationality. Chapter 8 is a prelude that picks up the subject of Christian doubts discussed in chapter 5 and examines the reactions to doubt of one individual about 1150, in greater detail. It demonstrates that the combination of Christian anti-Judaism and a new kind of Christian doubt could drive Peter the Venerable, a highly educated man, to make accusations against Jews that bordered on irrationality.

Other Christians, however, went well beyond. Chapters 9 and 10 describe how the fantasy that Jews ritually crucified young children was created and became embedded in England. Chapter 11 explains how the fantasy of Jewish ritual cannibalism appeared a century later. For although Jewish historians have usually referred to the earlier crucifixion accusations in England and France as instances of the "blood libel," chapter 11 argues that a fantasy that can legitimately be called the blood libel only emerged a century after the crucifixion libel, in Germany in 1235.

Chapters 9–11 are detailed studies of crucial events in the creation and spread of the fantasy of ritual murder. They are not, of course, a history of all the irrational accusations of ritual murder from the twelfth to the twentieth century. Before that history can be written, there will have to be many more studies of all the other instances of such accusations in different areas by historians more familiar with the local context and the specific actors than I can ever hope to be. Nor do I examine here the other, equally fantastic, accusations of host profanation and well-poisoning. Nevertheless, a close analysis of the origin and impact of the crucifixion and cannibalism accusations suffices to reveal a characteristic common to all the accusations, their irrationality. The people who created them, and those who used them to incite massacres of Jews, never said that they themselves had actually observed Jews doing any of those things. And not surprisingly, since what the fantasies alleged was unobservable, we find that many people at the time had not believed them any more than we do.

The primary explanation of this new irrational hatred of Jews seems to be that many Christians were now plagued by a new kind of doubt, by conflicts between what they could or would know if they used their ability to think rationally and empirically and what they wanted to believe—for example, that Christ was really physically present in the Eucharist. Of course, many people were able to face their religious doubts more or less directly or set them unthinkingly aside, and many were not fearful of the presence of Jews. But many others could not or would not confront their doubts. Instead of examining what was really bothering them, they defended their beliefs by imagining that contemporary Jews were acting in ways that demonstrated empirically the truth of Christian beliefs. To repress their doubts, they suppressed their capacity to think rationally and empirically and instead imagined "Jews" according to their threatened beliefs. But doubts still plagued them, whether consciously or subconsciously. Their projections could

not remove the real source of their anxiety, for it was buried deep within them, and their projections only drove the real problem farther underground. And since they could not recognize what was disturbing them, that only heightened their sense of a menace and their hatred of it and drove them to seek an outlet for their emotions. Revealingly, the surrogate on which they vented their hate was "the Jews," the supreme symbol of disbelief.

It should be emphasized, however, that unlike the well-poisoning accusation at the time of the Black Death, the accusations of ritual murder and host profanation were not scapegoating in the normal sense. If the Christians involved felt guilty about their own doubts, they did not displace or project the blame for their doubts on the Jews. They did not accuse and punish Jews for not believing in Christ and the Eucharist. Just the reverse. In a contorted way, their fantasies made Jews believers in Christ! The fantasy that Jews were still trying to harm and torture Christ made it seem that even Jews believed, however antagonistically, in Christ's continuing supernatural existence and presence in the Eucharist.

However irrational those accusations seem to us now, and seemed to some people at the time, their psychological appeal is all too obvious. Not only did they inspire many massacres in the Middle Ages, they became embedded in European culture, disseminated and made plausible by its art, literature, and historiography. For centuries, many people believed them, even some well-educated people in the twentieth century. Chapter 12 describes one aspect of that long life, the contribution of non-Jewish historians and pseudohistorians, from the twelfth century to the twentieth, to the spread and preservation of the myth that Jews conspired to crucify Christian children.

The irrationality of these chimerical fantasies is central for my conception and dating of antisemitism. Their rationalization of hostility to Jews differed radically from the justifications of anti-Judaic doctrine; no mere exaggeration of what some or many real Jews had done, they attributed to all Jews characteristics no one had ever observed. And whatever precise psychological explanation be given, they expressed and engendered a new and peculiarly violent hatred. More and more non-Jews came to hate those they thought of as "Jews" because of something that existed only in the hater's head: the chimerical fantasy of the mysterious Jew who was dangerously different from what he or she seemed to be and who secretly conspired to do immense evil to Christians. To me at least, it seems clear that, already by the end of the

thirteenth century, many Christians in northern Europe were manifesting the same kind of completely irrational hostility toward Jews that Hitler would express much more devastatingly six centuries later.

Part 5 summarizes my thesis. Chapter 13 does so historically. It is a brief narrative that puts the developments discussed in the previous chapters together chronologically. Chapter 14 is a very different kind of summary; it is an attempt to place what I had learned about hostility to Jews in a broader context and to resolve a theoretical problem.

What had started me on my quest was the concept of ethnic prejudice developed by psychologists and sociologists. It was an important advance in the study of intergroup conflict, but here again I ran into problems. When I examined the theories of prejudice more closely, I found they did not enable me to distinguish clearly between an unusual kind of hostility to Jews and more normal forms of intergroup hostility. There were two main problems. In the first place, the theories of prejudice were based almost entirely on synchronic studies of prejudiced attitudes in the present; they did not answer the historical question of how those attitudes had come into existence. In the second place, although the studies focused primarily on the apparently unusual kind of hostility directed against African Americans, Jews, and some other groups, their definitions of prejudice were so broad as to be applicable to almost any form of strong intergroup hostility.

I could have avoided the problem raised by those considerations had I contented myself with using the new insights about prejudice heuristically to sharpen my eye as a historian without becoming embroiled in questions of theory myself—which is more or less what I have done briefly in chapter 13. To leave matters there, however, would have left my original question of what antisemitism was unanswered. And without an answer to that question, there could be no clear answer to the question of whether there was a fundamental similarity between what had happened in the Middle Ages and what Hitler did.

Another set of basic questions would also have remained unanswered. Have Jews had to face a unique kind of hostility that no other group in history has confronted? Or is there an unusual kind of hostility that has only been directed against a few groups and is called "antisemitism" when directed against Jews? Or is antisemitism no different from the kind of hostility that all major groups have experienced, even though it has been directed with unusual intensity against Jews because of their long and dispersed existence?

To argue with sociological and psychological theories so remote

from my training seemed unnecessary. Though I thought what I had uncovered historically suggested a way of modifying them, I might never have tried to deal with them in any depth had I not been invited to criticize the way the term *racisme* was used in France, where it was the preferred term for what North Americans think of as "prejudice" and was often used very loosely. The invitation forced me to formulate my ideas explicitly.

Chapter 14 is the result. It is concerned with theory rather than historical facts, with present intepretation rather than past events, with intergroup hostility in general rather than antisemitism in particular. As originally published, it was an effort to criticize prevailing ideas about prejudice and racism and to present my own theory of chimerical hostility. Though it indicated a definition of antisemitism, it did so only implicitly. Indeed, the term hardly appeared, for I was concerned to identify what was unusual about the hostility toward a number of groups, not just toward Jews. In the revised form in which it is published here, however, the theory developed is applied directly to the problem of defining antisemitism.

What is antisemitism? However we answer that question, our words or definitions cannot change what has happened. No one now can change Hitler's obsession to eliminate the human beings he thought of as "Jews" from the face of the earth or alter its effects. A definition of an observable phenomenon does not change the reality of the phenomenon, nor does it describe all the observable characteristics and occurrences of the phenomenon. My effort at definition seeks only to sharpen our focus on what non-Jews have done to Jews. The need for a more precise empirical definition of antisemitism is, I think, obvious, and I suggest that we use "antisemitism" only for a kind of hostility directed at Jews which has an observable characteristic that clearly distinguishes it from other forms of hostility to Jews.

The word "antisemitism" has been given many meanings. Since there is in fact no such thing as "semitism," save when referring to a language, the term is literally meaningless when applied to Jews, which is why I refuse to hyphenate "antisemitism." Moreover, since the word has been used to denote such a remarkably diverse variety of phenomena over millennia of history, it is semiotically ambiguous. That meaninglessness or ambiguity has made it a very unreliable and often misleading tool for the analysis of historical or contemporary events. Yet its continuing use is testimony to the conviction that there has indeed been something either unique or highly unusual about hostility to Jews.

And that, whether we use "antisemitism" or some other term to denote it, is the fundamental issue. Has there or has there not been an unusual kind of hostility to Jews? The issue is important both for our descriptions and explanations of historical events and for our understanding of contemporary and future events.

In these essays, I have attempted to demonstrate historically that Jews did indeed become the target of an unusual kind of hostility in northern Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and that that hostility was the same in kind as Hitler's hostility.[6] What was unusual about it was its chimerical character. Though I think that chimerical hostility has also been directed at some other groups and their members, I am convinced that Jews in Europe have suffered in ways beyond description because of the completely irrational way in which many non-Jews—whether Christians, Nazis, or others—tried to defend themselves from doubts about themselves by attributing unreal characteristics to "Jews." And if this theory makes it any easier to detect such madness in the present and prevent it in the future, I will think my quest well worth the effort.