

Wulfert de Greef

Of One Tree

Calvin on Jews and Christians
in the Context of the Late Middle Ages

Translated by Lyle D. Bierma



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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

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Author's Preface to the English Edition

Two years ago, Professor Dr. Lyle Bierma offered to translate into English my book *Van één stam: Calvin over Joden en christenen in de context van de late Middeleeuwen* (Delft: Eburon, 2012). I was very pleased about that for a couple of reasons. First, a book written in Dutch has a very limited readership. That is especially unfortunate when the book is about Calvin, whose significance extends far beyond the Dutch-speaking world. As is evident in the annual “Calvin Bibliography” in the *Calvin Theological Journal*, the person and work of John Calvin is a subject of worldwide interest. Publication of a book on Calvin in English is important, therefore, for the Calvin research that is carried on in many countries around the world.

I am also pleased that Professor Bierma is the translator. As a Calvin scholar himself, he is well acquainted with the reformer's work, which is important when translating a book about Calvin. He is also an outstanding translator. When I met Professor Dr. Heiko Oberman at the International Congress on Calvin Research in Edinburgh in 1994, he was very complimentary of Professor Bierma's English translation of my book *Johannes Calvin: zijn werk en geschriften*. (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1989), which was published in 1993 under the title *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* by Baker Books in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Inter-Varsity Press in Leicester, England. Professor Bierma also contributed to the publication of an expanded edition of *The Writings of John Calvin*, published by Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, in 2008. I would very much like to thank Professor Bierma, therefore, for yet another translation of one of my books.

As editor of the Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht series Refo500 Academic Studies, Professor Dr. Herman Selderhuis gave his approval to the inclusion of *Of One Tree* in that series. Thank you very much! My thanks also go to the staff at V&R, particularly to Izaak de Hulster, Laura Röthele, and Jacqueline Eller, who worked assiduously to produce such a fine edition of this book. Finally, Professor Bierma and I are most grateful to Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for a financial subsidy that helped to lower the list price of the book.

It is my sincere hope that this publication will contribute to a better understanding of Calvin, particularly with respect to his view of the relationship between Jews and Christians. Calvin did not have the last word on this subject, but in his interpretation of Scripture, he did make clear how important the unity of the Old and New Testaments is for the relationship between Jews and Christians.

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Introduction

Of One Tree: that is how the title of this work begins. But it is not immediately obvious what it means. The subtitle that follows, *Calvin on Jews and Christians in the Context of the Late Middle Ages*, makes clear that *Of One Tree* refers to Jews and Christians. Anyone who is at all familiar with the Bible will recall the image of the cultivated olive tree that the apostle Paul employs in Romans 11.¹ Some of the branches of this olive tree have been broken off, and branches from a wild olive tree have been engrafted in their place. The cultivated olive tree is a reference to Abraham, with whom God had established a covenant. God had promised Abraham that he would be his God and the God of his descendants after him.

The apostle Paul is greatly distressed that not all who have descended from Abraham believe in Jesus as the Messiah. He wonders whether perhaps God has rejected his people. But that is not so, he replies. Some branches have been broken off because of unbelief, and you are where you are, he writes, only because of your faith. Christians do not exist by themselves. They are like branches from a wild olive tree grafted into a cultivated one. They belong to Israel. Jews and Christians are both part of the covenant that God established with Abraham. Jews and Christians are of one tree.

In the NT, we read in Acts 2 about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After Peter's Pentecost address, many Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but we also read in Acts that there were Jews who wanted nothing to do with him as Messiah. Later we are told that through Paul's preaching many non-Jews came to faith in Jesus Christ.

In this study I will be focusing on John Calvin (1509–1564). How did he view the relationship between Jews and Christians? Have Christians taken the place of the Jews, or do they belong to the Jews? And what might that imply? What did Calvin think about the future of the Jews?

For a good understanding of Calvin, it is important to know what the relationship between Jews and Christians was like in the Late Middle Ages. There had been ongoing tension between them for centuries, but at the beginning of the Late Middle Ages this tension increased even more. In the thirteenth century, Jews were forced to participate in debates with Christians.² The Talmud was attacked, came under censure, and could no longer be printed. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Dominicans—supported by Johannes Pfefferkorn, a Jew who had converted to Christianity—waged a fierce battle for the banning of all Jewish literature, with

1 Rom 11:17, 18, 24. The image of the olive tree appears also in Jer 11:16.

2 See chap. 1.2, "Jews and Christians in Debate from the Thirteenth Century Onward."

the exception of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible).³ Johannes Reuchlin stood up for the Jews and opposed the burning of Jewish literature, but the discussion came to a standstill with the appearance of Luther, who now claimed all the attention.

The Jews of the Late Middle Ages also had to deal with various kinds of slander, which on occasion led to violence against them.⁴ At the beginning of the sixteenth century, they were expelled from several Western European countries, including France, and were also not permitted to live in Geneva. Calvin rarely encountered any Jews,⁵ but he must have heard things about them and also seen something of them when he traveled to places like Strasbourg, Hagenau, and Worms. During his stay in Strasbourg, he must also have heard of Bucer's involvement in the measures being implemented in Hesse with respect to the Jews. And then there were the writings of Luther, who at first wrote positively about the Jews but later turned against them with extraordinary ferocity.

During the Nazi period in the last century, people appealed to Luther to defend violent anti-Jewish behavior. To what extent that appeal was justified is a question being discussed in many publications right up to the present. Calvin never met Luther, but we do know that he held him in high esteem because Luther had so clearly highlighted the heart of the gospel. In that respect, he regarded Luther as a father, but we do not know what he thought about Luther's view of the Jews.

Because Calvin rarely encountered Jews and, unlike Bucer, did not find himself in circumstances where he had to offer his view of measures taken against them, it would seem that there is nothing very remarkable to say about his view of Jews and Christians. But we then lose sight of the fact that in his interpretation of Scripture he was continually dealing with God's interaction with the Jews that also, thanks to Jesus Christ, involved Christians. Furthermore, it is significant that in his exposition of the OT, Calvin was always attentive to the explanations that Jewish exegetes had given to a particular text.⁶

Calvin was deeply imbued with the notion that the Jews were a special people.⁷ They descended from Abraham, and in Genesis 12 we read that God called Abraham and promised to make him into a great nation and through him to bless all the nations of the earth. With respect to Romans 11, Calvin notes that Paul does not say that the entire tree, roots and all, was cut down but only that some branches

3 See pp. 30–31.

4 See pp. 23–24.

5 See chap. 3.1, “Calvin's Contacts with Jews.”

6 See chap. 3.3, “Calvin's Knowledge of Jewish Exegetes.”

7 See chap. 5, p. 85.

were broken off.⁸ The history of God's dealings with the Jews began with the call of Abraham and continues right up to the present day.

In his work *Reformation und Judentum*, Achim Detmers devotes a good deal of attention to Calvin's view of the Jews.⁹ He indicates in the subtitle that his study has to do especially with *Israel-Lehren und Einstellungen zum Judentum von Luther bis zum frühen Calvin*, thus limiting himself to "the early Calvin," by which he meant the period up to 1544. He pays only scant attention to the further development of Calvin's view of the Jews in the next stage of his life, focusing mostly on Calvin's conflict with Servetus and his posthumous work *Ad quaestiones et obiecta Iudaei cuiusdam*. That means that Detmers does not look at all at Calvin's exposition of the OT, since his lectures and commentaries on the OT were all published after 1550. However, there is a great deal to be learned about Calvin's view of the Jews from his exposition of the OT, and that exposition will be taken into consideration in this study

Furthermore, it is remarkable that Detmers distinguishes between one's view of Israel and one's position with respect to Judaism, which he calls a distinction between a primary and secondary view of Israel. The primary view relates to theological statements about the faith of Israel in OT times, whereas the secondary view has to do with statements about Judaism after the coming of Christ. Detmers acknowledges that Calvin himself does not make such a distinction, but Detmers employs it as a device in his research even though he thinks that there is no sharp dividing line between the two views.

In this study of Calvin and the Jews, I have not adopted Detmers' distinction. Calvin himself does not operate with such a distinction between Israel in the OT period and Judaism after that. He simply talks about Jews, and when he does so, we must always ask ourselves whom exactly he has in mind. For him the designation is not timebound. By Jews he can mean the people in the OT Bible passage he is explaining at the moment. He can also have in mind the Jewish exegetes whose interpretation he has consulted in his exposition of the Bible text.¹⁰ And sometimes he also means Jews living in his own time. Whatever Jews he has in mind, he always regards them as descendants of Abraham. That is not so strange because he only talks about Jews in connection with his interpretation of the Bible. It is also a reflection of the situation in which he found himself. He did not encounter Jews in Geneva, and France, the country to which he felt a lifelong attachment, had driven them out. But in the interpretation of the OT, he had to deal with God's

8 Comm. on Rom 11:17 (French translation of 1550): "... entant qu'il ne dit pas que tout l'arbre ait esté coupé, et jusques à la racine, comme on dit: mais qu'aucunes des branches sont rompues ..."

9 (Stuttgart, 2001).

10 See chap. 3.3, "Calvin's Knowledge of Jewish Exegetes."

relation to the Jews. Because he wanted to present what the OT has to say to us, the relationship between Jews and Christians regularly came up.

Calvin devoted considerable attention to the exegesis of the OT.¹¹ In his weekday sermons, he offered a *lectio continua* interpretation of a number of OT books, and he also lectured on the OT. Much of this material was preserved through the efforts of stenographers. He also wrote commentaries on many books of the OT.

So far as the interpretation of the OT is concerned, Calvin lived in an extraordinary age. People had recognized for some time already that OT exegesis should be based on the text in the original Hebrew.¹² Thanks to the invention of printing, a variety of books related to the OT had been published from the last decade of the fifteenth century onward.¹³ There included, first of all, different Hebrew editions of the OT, sometimes with annotations borrowed from Jewish exegetes. Various Targums were also published, as well as books for learning Hebrew and a number of dictionaries.

Christian Hebraists in the sixteenth century were able to consult Jewish literature, but as they studied the content of the Targums and the Talmud, their assessment of the Talmud ended up being generally negative.¹⁴ A point of debate was to what extent they could profit from the learning of Jewish exegetes. On this question Conrad Pellican and Sebastian Münster strongly disagreed.

Calvin was a younger contemporary of the Christian Hebraists Pellican, Münster, Paul Fagius, and Wolfgang Captio, and his knowledge of Jewish literature was more limited than theirs. Compared with them, he was not so deeply involved in the study of that literature as to be able to respond to it in the way that someone like Münster did. The main reason for not immersing himself more fully in Jewish literature was not that his knowledge of Hebrew was more limited but that he was so heavily involved in the exposition of the OT. With that as his goal, he made use of the tools available in his day, among them the works published by the Christian Hebraists for the illumination of the OT.¹⁵ Calvin would have known that Pellican and Münster strongly disagreed about the way in which Jewish literature should be engaged, but he never weighed in on the matter. Rather, he made use of the explanations by Jewish exegetes when he considered them important for our understanding of the text. He mentioned his disagreements with them only if he thought it was necessary.

Calvin saw his fundamental task to be the interpretation of Scripture, and in that connection he regularly mentioned the Jews. His interpretation of Scripture

11 Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin, Expanded Edition: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Lyle D. Bierma (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 84–104.

12 See chap. 2.2.1, “Hebrew.”

13 See chap. 2.2 and 2.3.

14 See chap. 2.4, “View of the Jews and the Use of Jewish Sources.”

15 See chap. 3.3, “Calvin’s Knowledge of Jewish Exegetes.”

involved his sermons, lectures, and commentaries. But the *Institutes*, first published in 1536, was also important. In the second edition of 1539, he examined in some detail the relationship between the OT and NT, a section that carried over nearly unchanged into subsequent editions. The relationship between the testaments was a significant theme for understanding the Bible. Moreover, Calvin had written the *Institutes* as a manual for understanding Scripture, which provided the advantage, then, of not having to elaborate on all sorts of doctrinal topics in his commentaries. Anyone wanting to know more about a particular topic could refer to the *Institutes*, where he addressed that subject in greater depth.

Calvin did not devote a separate section to his view of the Jews in his standard work, the *Institutes*. However, he did produce one small treatise, which has already been mentioned, in which he debated with a Jew about various questions.¹⁶ This treatise bears a close resemblance to the written debates that had been conducted in previous centuries.¹⁷ It is not certain when Calvin committed this debate to writing, but it was published (by Theodore Beza) with his permission only after his death. The treatise is of limited value for our knowledge of Calvin's view of the Jews, however, because the questions posed there to the Jew have to do mainly with the content of the Gospel of Matthew and deal with Christological topics in particular. Calvin scholars have pointed out that for a complete knowledge of Calvin's view of the Jews, one must study his commentaries and sermons as well.¹⁸

Calvin's interpretation of the OT was highly significant for the way he viewed the Jews.¹⁹ He was aware that we have the Jews to thank for the OT and that the OT is important "for us" also, not only because Jesus was the Messiah promised by God but also because of God's involvement with the Jews in the OT. The God whom we worship and serve is the God of Israel, who in Jesus Christ also cares for us. Calvin was firmly convinced that through Jesus Christ we can belong to the God of Israel and are therefore linked also to the Jews.²⁰ Oftentimes in the OT God wanted to be Israel's God, but he also had the nations in mind. Hence Calvin frequently pays attention in his exegesis not only to the relation of the Jews to other nations but also and especially to how we as Christians are included in the relationship between God and Israel.

Much could be said about the relationship between Jews and Christians. It is striking that when people write or say things about Calvin and the Jews, it is often the negative aspects that get the attention. I mention only the following examples:

16 See chap. 3.2, "A Discussion with a Jew—*Ad quaestiones*."

17 See chap. 1.4, "Important Anti-Jewish and Anti-Christian Literature from the Twelfth Century Onward."

18 See p. 70.

19 See chap. 4, "Calvin's View of the Old Testament."

20 See chap. 5.3, "Israel and the Nations Become One Body."

Christians have taken the place of the Jews; the role of the Jewish people has played itself out; the OT is spiritualized; Jews can indeed come to faith in Jesus as the Christ, but there is no longer any future for the people as a whole.

That these negative aspects are cited is not so strange. Because of the new view of the relationship between Israel and the church that arose after the Second World War, people seem to be more sensitive to the negative aspects. They are the things that stand out to us, and then we emphasize them. But we do Calvin an injustice, of course, if we do not pay close attention to what he is saying and to the contexts in which he makes certain comments. In any case, when it comes to Calvin and the Jews, there are also many positive things to say that are still important today.²¹

Because Calvin did not discuss his view of the Jews as a topic by itself, it is not easy to get a good grasp on how he understood the subject. To be sure, in his interpretation of the Bible he makes many comments about the Jews and often brings up the relationship between Jews and Christians, but these comments are always in conjunction with his exegesis of a text and thus are made in a particular context. Moreover, they are always limited in their extent. Calvin wanted to keep the interpretation in his commentaries concise and referred his readers to the *Institutes* for more detailed explanations. Therefore, in his interpretation of a passage, he certainly does not say everything there is to say on a given subject with just a single comment. In his treatment of another passage, he might address the same subject in a more nuanced or even a completely different way.

We must keep in mind that the relationship between Jews and Christians is a complex subject. If, for example, we examine only what Calvin had to say about the question of Christians superseding the Jews, we would be dealing with just one aspect of the subject. Therefore, I take up that particular question in chapter 5 only after addressing several other aspects of the relationship between Jews and Christians.²²

Chapter 6 is devoted to “Calvin’s View of the Future of Israel.” How did Calvin perceive that future? It is often said that he anticipated only the conversion of individual Jews and that the Jews as a people no longer had a role to play. Canaan, too, would no longer have any significance as the Promised Land, and the earthly Jerusalem would be superseded by the spiritual, heavenly Jerusalem. Are such statements a fair representation of Calvin’s views? Because these claims deal with such important matters, we will need to conduct a careful examination of how Calvin thought about them.

So far as the future of Israel is concerned, the promises the prophets gave to Israel in the OT are very important. In the sixteenth century, that became evident al-

21 See chap. 5, “Calvin on the Relationship between Jews and Christians.”

22 See chap. 5.1–6.

ready in the discussion between Capito and Bucer, where Bucer in his commentary on Zephaniah (1528) challenged Captio's interpretation in his commentaries on Habakkuk (1526) and Hosea (1528) of the prophetic promises regarding the future of Israel. Calvin must have been aware of this discussion. In this study, therefore, I consider the question of how Calvin handled the prophetic promises in his interpretation of the prophets and what they meant for the future of Israel. It is worth noting that he often thought about the prophetic promises in terms of the Kingdom of God, emphasizing its spiritual character over against Jewish interpretation. The question is what exactly he understood by that spiritual kingdom.

Calvin was an exegete who carefully studied the text in the original Hebrew. He was also conversant with what Christian and Jewish exegetes had to say. His relation to these exegetes will be the focus of chapter 7. He did not always agree with the Christian exegetes because on occasion they linked the OT too directly to Jesus Christ, and, in his view, such a forced Christian interpretation was usually unjustified. He also felt that they needed to take more into account what Jewish exegetes had to say. However, Calvin would sometimes criticize Jewish exegetes as well. With respect to his view of the Jews, therefore, it will be important to examine how he differed from the Jewish exegetes. The most important matters in that regard are the relationship between God and Christ and the relation of Jesus to the law. These were subjects that already in the Late Middle Ages occupied an important place in the discussions between Jews and Christians.

A live topic of discussion in that day was how to think about the charging of interest. Calvin offered his own opinion on that subject in his interpretation of the Scripture passages that played a role in the debate at that time.²³

We can infer how Calvin thought about Jews from remarks he made about them in his commentaries and sermons. In the centuries before Calvin, there were texts that both Jews and Christians employed to support their negative posture toward the other. How did Calvin handle these texts? When he spoke negatively of the Jews, it often had to do with his criticism of their biblical interpretation.²⁴

Calvin was a man of the sixteenth century, and we tend to think, perhaps, that his view of the Jews was determined by the general picture that people had of them at that time. That raises the obvious question of why we should look at Calvin's view of the Jews at all. After all, we live several centuries later, and much has transpired in the meantime. But what happened to the Jews in World War II led Christians more and more to consider the relationship between Israel and the church.²⁵ It is highly significant that in 1951 the following stipulation was incorporated into the church

23 See chap. 7.3, "Calvin's View of Interest."

24 See chap. 8, "Calvin's Attitude toward the Jews."

25 See, for example, A. H. Drost, *Is God veranderd? Een onderzoek naar de relatie God-Israël in de theologie van K. H. Miskotte, A. A. van Ruler en H. Berkhof* (Zoetermeer, 2007).

order of the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk): “The church is called to give expression to its unrelinquishable bond with the people of Israel.” This stipulation was taken over into the church order of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands in 2003. But discussions in recent years about Israel and the church suggest that there is little clarity about what is meant by “unrelinquishable bond.” Following the founding of the state of Israel, there has also been a gradual shift in thinking about the term “Israel.” The political situation in which Jews and Palestinians find themselves has led to fierce debates about the meaning of the promise of the land. Compared with the sixteenth century, much more attention is being paid today to such questions as the meaning of “all Israel” in Romans 11:26,²⁶ the meaning of the promise of the land,²⁷ and the significance of the earthly Jerusalem in God’s plan of salvation.²⁸ But publications up to the present day show that there is little agreement on these issues as well.

Living in a different time than we do, Calvin did not have to wrestle with the return of many Jews to the land of Israel or the significance of the state of Israel. But that is not to say that there is no point in looking at his view of the Jews. It is a disadvantage that he did not treat his view in a separate treatise or specific chapter of the *Institutes* and that we are left only with what he brings up about Jews and Christians in his interpretation of Scripture. That makes it more difficult to figure out his view. But the advantage is that we are forced to pay careful attention to his interpretation of those Scripture texts. In that way we remain close to the source, for the Bible itself often deals with the relationship between Jews and Christians. The God of Israel wanted to be the God of the nations as well, and in Abraham he intended to bless all the nations of the earth.

Calvin, of course, did not have the last word. He was aware as an exegete that there was much he could learn from others, and he regularly listened to others in order to form his own judgment about the meaning of a text. Sometimes he openly admitted that he was making an interpretive choice that someone else might not make. But in his engagement with Scripture he made clear what he regarded as the

26 See, for example, P. H. R. van Houwelingen, “The Redemptive-Historical Dynamics of the Salvation of ‘All Israel’ (Romans 11:26),” *Calvin Theological Journal* 46 (November 2011): 301–314. The various views of the meaning of “all Israel” led, for example, to the study by M. van Campen, *Gans Israël: Voetiaanse en coccejaanse visies op de joden gedurende de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Zoetermeer, 2006).

27 See, for example, M. van Campen and G. C. den Hertog, eds., *Israël, volk, land en staat: Terugblik en perspectief* (Zoetermeer, 2005); H. de Jong, *De landbelofte* (Apeldoorn, 2011); and the pamphlet *Israël en de Palestijnen* (publication of the Gerefomeerde Bond, 2011).

28 S. Janse, *Paulus en Jeruzalem: Een onderzoek naar de heilshistorische betekenis van Jeruzalem in de brieven van Paulus* (Zoetermeer, 2000).

major themes. His view of the unity of the OT and NT was especially significant. And closely tied to that was the relationship between Jews and Christians.

1. The Late Middle Ages: The Status of Jews in Europe; Debates and Polemical Writings

1.1 The Status of Jews in Europe before 1570

Jews in the Middle Ages occupied a separate place in a Christian environment because of their religion and the way of life that went with it. How to deal with this situation was a question on which Christians had a variety of views. And it was not a new question; people were wrestling with it already in the first centuries after Christ.

How did Augustine (354–430 A.D.) understand the relation of Jews and Christians? His view overlapped to some extent with that of Christians more generally. He emphasized that the Jews, not the Romans, were guilty of the death of Christ and thus were enemies of the church.²⁹ But hostile attacks against them were not justified. Christians needed to be patient because, in his view, there would be a conversion of the Jews at the end of history.³⁰ What is striking is his understanding of the diaspora, the scattering of the Jews among the nations. As he saw it, the diaspora was more than a divine punishment resulting from Jewish unbelief and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.³¹ It also had a positive significance. All over the world Jews bear witness to the truth of the gospel through their writings, for the OT testifies of Christ. When Jews read the OT and sing the psalms, they do so in the service of Christ and testify of him. On the basis of this understanding, Augustine classified the Jews as *capsarii*,³² which was the term for a slave who carried the box

29 Wessel ten Boom, *Profetisch tegoed: De Joden in Augustinus' De Civitate Dei* (Kampen, 2002), 169, 315f; Sujin Pak, "A Break with Anti-Judaic Exegesis: John Calvin and the Unity of Testaments," *Calvin Theological Journal* 46 (April 2011): 9ff. Augustine, who influenced the interpretation of Psalm 59 for many centuries, considered it a prophetic psalm "foretelling the passion of Christ. Hence, it is Christ's prayer for deliverance from his enemies—namely, the Jews, who are the crucifiers of Christ." Denis the Carthusian followed the same line of interpretation, as did Calvin's contemporaries Luther and Melancthon. Ten Boom also discusses Augustine's interpretation of Psalm 59 (pp. 309–314).

30 Ten Boom, "De bekering aan het einde van de tijden," chap. 7 in *Profetisch tegoed*, 221–288.

31 Wessel ten Boom, "Vreemdelingen van God: De Joden als onwetende profeten," in *Provocatie: Augustinus' preek tegen de Joden* (Kampen, 2006), 220: "However blind the Jews were before Christ, by keeping the law they truly testified of him. They were, as Augustine succinctly put it, 'witnesses to their own wrong and to our truth.'"

32 Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 40:14: "Iudaei tamquam capsarii nostri sunt." Cf. *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 56:9.

of scrolls to school for the son of the master. Similarly, the Jews carry the Law and the Prophets with them and testify to the truth of the Christian faith.³³

In the Middle Ages, Jews were viewed in an overwhelmingly negative way. They were guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. They were enemies of the church, which considered itself the true Israel. Jews needed to convert, and if they did not, they should be banished and even killed. The high level of support for this negative view became evident when in 1095, during the Council of Clermont-Ferrand, Pope Urban II called upon Christians to liberate Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslims. During the conquest, Jews could also be killed, if necessary. Participants in the First Crusade thought it appropriate to take revenge on the Jews close to home because Jews had crucified Jesus Christ. Particularly in Germany, there were many victims—1300 in Mainz alone, for example. Jews were also at risk during the Second Crusade (1147–1149). The church did indeed disapprove of violent action against the Jews, and the authorities did eventually intervene, but in the meantime these Jews were compelled for economic reasons to make large financial contributions to the crusades.

Related to the separate position that Jews occupied in society was the question of who had jurisdiction over them, the pope or the emperor? In the first centuries after Christ, the idea was already developing that Jews were of a lower status than Christians. They ought never to be in a position where they had control over Christians, for in Genesis 25:23 we read that God told Rebecca that the greater would serve the lesser.

Beginning in 1120, the popes issued the so-called *Sicut Iudeis* bulls in which the status of Jews was legally established.³⁴ They now came under the protection of the papacy and were allowed to practice their religion. They could not be forced to be baptized, and Christians were not permitted to harm them. That sounds positive, but at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 an entirely different-sounding set of decisions was made. Christians had to be protected against the Jews,³⁵ so limits were put in place on how much interest could be charged for borrowing money

33 Augustine also used other designations similar to *capsarii*. For example, he called Jews the “librarians” of the Christians. For more on this, see Ten Boom, *Profetisch tegeod*, 130–135, and J. van Oort, “Augustinus en de Joden: een inleidend overzicht,” *Verbum et ecclesia* 30 (2009): 349–364. Calvin writes in *Institutes* 1.8.10 that “Augustine justly called the Jews “the ‘bookmen’ of the Christian church, because they have furnished us with reading matter of which they themselves do not make use.”

34 The bulls were named after the opening words “Sicut Iudeis non debet esse licencia . . .” (“Even though the Jews are not permitted . . .”). Friedrich Battenberg, *Das Europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, vol. 1, *Von den Anfängen bis 1650* (Darmstadt, 1990), 101.

35 See constitutions 67–70. A German translation can be found in Karl Heinrich Rengstorf and Siegfried von Kortzfleisch, eds., *Kirche und Synagoge: Handbuch zur Geschichte von Christen und Juden*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1968), 222ff.

from Jews, and Christians were advised not to do business with Jews. Jews had to wear distinguishing badges so that Christians remembered to follow the procedures in place that restricted contact with Jews. An old regulation from the Council of Toledo in 589 was renewed that prohibited Jews from then on from holding public office, since a person who does not believe in Jesus Christ should not be ruling over Christians. In addition, those Jews who had been baptized were forced to give up their old Jewish rites. These conciliar decisions made it difficult for Jews to support themselves and, obviously, had a negative impact on the relations between Jews and Christians.

In 1234 Pope Gregory IX legalized the inequality between Jews and Christians when he decided that the Jews' culpability for the crucifixion of Christ made them "slaves" for eternity.³⁶ This ecclesiastical legislation provoked a reaction from the head of the Holy Roman Empire. Emperor Frederick II informed Pope Gregory in 1236 of his own determination that, as "servants of the imperial chamber," the Jews in his empire fell under his auspices.³⁷ With this protection came certain obligations on the part of the Jews, such as the payment of taxes. Occasionally, the emperor lent or sold to lesser authorities a portion of his rights related to the laws of protection. Jews had to purchase various rights to protection, which resulted in their having to charge the highest allowable interest rate on the loans they provided. That only fueled the hatred against them, and their social status declined even more.

Jews in the Middle Ages were also oftentimes the victims of unjust accusations. One charge that stirred up hatred against them had to do with ritual murder.³⁸ The content of this accusation expanded as time went on. It began in 1144 in the English town of Norwich with the charge that on Easter Monday Jews had tortured and crucified a boy just as they had done with Jesus Christ years before. The rumor then spread that Jews in various European cities would get together annually to determine which Christian child would be killed in connection with the Passover.³⁹ This accusation of ritual murder later grew to include the claim that Christian children were killed in order to use the blood for satanic magical practices, since medieval Jews were considered to be followers of the Devil intent on killing Christians. The charge of ritual murder was also linked to the Passover meal: to prepare the meal, Jews allegedly used the blood of a slain child of Christian parents.

36 Battenberg, *Das Europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, I:105.

37 *Ibid.*, 107.

38 Pieter van der Horst, *De mythe van het Joodse kannibalisme. Rede uitgesproken ter gelegenheid van zijn afscheid van de Universiteit Utrecht op 16 juni 2006* (Utrecht, 2006), 19ff and the secondary literature mentioned there.

39 Battenberg, *Das Europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, I:71f.

In France Jews were first accused of ritual murder in 1171, when in Blois on the Loire thirty Jews were burned at the stake.⁴⁰ Various accusations of ritual murder surfaced in Germany around 1235. Thirty-two Jews were put to death in Fulda in connection with one such accusation.⁴¹ In Spain the charge first appeared in 1250 in Zaragoza, resulting in the murder of many Jews. Ecclesiastical and civil leaders challenged these accusations, claiming they were fantasy, but to little effect, and it was not until the sixteenth century that they came to an end. Andreas Osiander made a positive contribution when in 1529 he stated in writing that charges of ritual murder had no credibility. His manuscript was printed in 1540, and certain Jews submitted it to the council of bishops when Jews there were being accused of a ritual murder.⁴²

In the thirteenth century, Jews were also accused of stealing the consecrated bread of the Eucharist and then piercing it with a knife in order to violate the body of Christ. The accusation surfaced in Paris in 1280 but had serious consequences for many Jews in Germany when in 1298 a person by the name of Rindfleisch linked it to a heavenly commission he claimed to have received to annihilate all Jews. This led to the murder of approximately 5000 Jews.⁴³

Another serious allegation against the Jews was that they poisoned water resources.⁴⁴ This accusation was often made during the years 1348–1350, when the plague was raging in Europe and a third of the population perished. No one knew the cause of the plague. Some saw it as a punishment from God. There were fewer victims among the Jews because they followed their purification laws, something of which the population at large was not aware. The story that Jews were poisoning the water resources was first circulated in Savoy, which led to violent action against them. Tens of thousands of Jews were put to death all across Europe, especially in Switzerland and Germany, and many Jewish communities were destroyed. In a number of German cities—Basel, Frankfurt, Strasbourg, and Cologne—all the Jews were burned at the stake.

40 For details of the events in Blois on the Loire, see Battenberg, *Das Europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, I:83f. Numbers 23:24 was cited in support of the accusation that Jews drank the blood of children. David Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1979), 245.

41 Battenberg, *Das Europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, I:117.

42 The title of Osiander's work was *Ob es wahr und glaublich sey, dass die Juden der Christen Kinder heimlich erwürgen und ir Blut gebrauchen*. The pamphlet was disseminated throughout Hungary in 1529 and published in Germany in 1540. See Battenberg, *Das Europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, I:170f; Detmers, *Reformation und Judentum*, 96–99; and Joy Kammerling, "Andreas Osiander, the Jews, and Judaism," in *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Phillip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett (Leiden/Boston, 2006), 219–247.

43 Battenberg, *Das Europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, I:90, 119f.

44 *Ibid.*, I:120f.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the status of the Jews deteriorated considerably as a result of various political, economic, and social measures. These actions were taken by the government, of course, but it was often the church that urged the government to limit Jewish influence. From the beginning of the thirteenth century onward, Jews were faced with a growing effort by Christians to induce them to accept the Christian faith. The Dominicans began preaching against Jews fairly soon after the founding of their order around 1215. Christians were cautioned to stay clear of the Jews and their faith, and hostile feelings toward them intensified. In 1280 leaders of the Dominican Order in Oxford persuaded King Edward I to decree that sermons be preached with the goal of converting Jews, and subsequently conversion sermons appeared on the continent of Europe as well. Sometimes the preaching of conversion sermons was highlighted in an official church decision. In 1434, for example, the Council of Basel decided that Jews should be forced to listen to conversion sermons.⁴⁵ On more than one occasion, the civil authorities cooperated with these conversion efforts by the church.

During the Middle Ages, the gap between Christians and Jews became even wider when Christians realized that Jewish study of the Talmud was growing in importance. Christians regarded the Talmud as a major obstacle to the conversion of the Jews. Beginning in the thirteenth century, the civil authorities helped to organize debates in France and Spain, sometimes at the insistence of Jewish converts to Christianity, and the Talmud played an important role in these discussions. Following a public debate, Jews were regularly required to listen to conversion sermons. Measures were also taken to censor the Talmud. In 1242, two years after the Disputation of Paris, copies of the Talmud were publicly burned, and it did not stop with that one incident. The fact that the church played an important role in measures taken against the Talmud only strengthened prejudices against the Jews and their literature. One could say that this hostile atmosphere formed a breeding ground for the accusations against the Jews.

From the late thirteenth century on, several official decisions were made concerning the banishment of Jews. This happened first in England because for decades the Jews there had been so exploited by various taxes that little more could be extracted from them.⁴⁶ Therefore, in 1290 Edward I promulgated a law banishing the Jews. Those who converted were allowed to stay. More than 16,000 fled to France, but as

45 Ibid., 158.

46 Battenberg, *Das Europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, I:90, 77f; C. P. van Andel, *Jodenhaat en jodenangst: Over meer dan twintig eeuwen antisemitisme* (Amersfoort, 1983), 59: "It would not be until the days of Cromwell (1640) that Jews were granted permission to settle in the British kingdom."