

Source Sheet Class 12- 2000 Years of Jewish History-Rabbi Menachem Levine

Source 1

“Despite its anxiety to save man’s souls from the perdition of earthly pursuits in order to preserve it for the salvation of the life after death, the medieval Church insulated pupils from the dangerous contamination of Scriptures. Only those entering holy orders were allowed to study theology and delve into Holy Writ. Unsupervised, independent exploration of the Bible was tantamount to heresy and only clerics in good standing were permitted to expound Scripture from a Latin text incomprehensible to the Christian masses.”

Henry Phelps-Brown in *Egalitarianism and the Generation of Inequality* (p. 68)

Source 2

If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and blockheads govern and teach the Christian faith, I would sooner have become a hog than a Christian. They have dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs rather than human beings; they have done little else than deride them and seize their property. When they baptize them they show them nothing of Christian doctrine or life, but only subject them to popishness and mockery...If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the Gentiles ... When we are inclined to boast of our position as Christians we should remember that we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ. We are aliens and in-laws; they are blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord. Therefore, if one is to boast of flesh and blood the Jews are actually nearer to Christ than we are...If we really want to help them, we must be guided in our dealings with them not by papal law but by the law of Christian love. We must receive them cordially, and permit them to trade and work with us, that they may have occasion and opportunity to associate with us, hear our Christian teaching, and witness our Christian life. If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either.

Martin Luther, 1523 essay *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*

Source 3

“Here in Wittenburg, in our parish church, there is a sow carved into the stone under which lie young pigs and Jews who are sucking; behind the sow stands a rabbi who is lifting up the right leg of the sow, raises behind the sow, bows down and looks with great effort into the Talmud under the sow, as if he wanted to read and see something most difficult and exceptional; no doubt they gained their Shem Hamphoras from that place.”

Luther in 1543, *Of the Unknowable Name and the Generations of Christ*

Source 4

“They are our public enemies. They do not stop blaspheming our Lord Christ, calling the Virgin Mary a whore, Christ, a bastard, and us changelings or “meal calves.” If they could kill us all, they would gladly do it. They do it often, especially those who pose as physicians—though sometimes they help—for the devil helps to finish it in the end. They can also practice medicine as in French Switzerland. They administer poison to someone from which he could die in an hour, a month, a year, ten or twenty years. They are able to practice this art...Yet, we will show them Christian love and pray for them that they may be converted to receive the Lord, whom they should honor properly before us. Whoever will not do this is no doubt a malicious Jew, who will not stop blaspheming Christ, draining you dry, and, if he can, killing you.”

Luther’s “final warning” against the Jews on February 18, 1546

Source 5

“Since Martin Luther closed his eyes, no such son of our people has appeared again. It has been decided that we shall be the first to witness his reappearance ... I think the time is past when one may not say the names of Hitler and Luther in the same breath. They belong together; they are of the same old stamp.”

Hitler’s Education Minister, Bernhard Rust, in the *Völkischer Beobachter*

Source 6

It is difficult to understand the behavior of most German Protestants in the first Nazi years unless one is aware of two things: their history and the influence of Martin Luther. The great founder of Protestantism was both a passionate anti-Semite and a ferocious believer in absolute obedience to political authority. He wanted Germany rid of the Jews. Luther’s advice was literally followed four centuries later by Hitler, Goering and Himmler.

The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, William L. Shirer

Source 7

Luther, however, was not involved with later racial anti-Semitism. There is a world of difference between his belief in salvation and a racial ideology. Nevertheless, his misguided agitation had the evil result that Luther fatefully became one of the “church fathers” of anti-Semitism and thus provided material for the modern hatred of the Jews, cloaking it with the authority of the Reformer.

Martin Brecht, Church historian, professor emeritus of the University of Münster, Westphalia, Germany, in his extensive three volume biography of Luther.

Source 8

The assertion that Luther's expressions of anti-Jewish sentiment have been of major and persistent influence in the centuries after the Reformation, and that there exists a continuity between Protestant anti-Judaism and modern racially oriented anti-Semitism, is at present wide-spread in the literature; since the Second World War it has understandably become the prevailing opinion.

"Lutheran Quarterly" article in 1987 by Dr. Johannes Wallmann, German theologian and emeritus professor of church history at the Ruhr University Bochum

Source 9

"We who bear his name and heritage must acknowledge with pain the anti-Judaic diatribes contained in Luther's later writings. We reject this violent invective as did many of his companions in the sixteenth century, and we are moved to deep and abiding sorrow at its tragic effects on later generations of Jews."

Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America statement in 1994

Source 10

"It is imperative for the Lutheran Church, which knows itself to be indebted to the work and tradition of Martin Luther, to take seriously also his anti-Jewish utterances, to acknowledge their theological function, and to reflect on their consequences. It has to distance itself from every expression of anti-Judaism in Lutheran theology."

Declaration of the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, on the 60th anniversary of Kristallnacht