

# CHRONOS

The Journal of the  
Yeshiva University Historical Society

2006 - 2007

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Dear Reader,

It is with a degree of excitement that we present to you this year's edition of *Chronos*. Many months in the making, this journal is the most ambitious yet, with fifteen exceptional articles, seven each from Yeshiva and Stern College, and one faculty submission. We are confident that you will be impressed with the quality of research and the depth of historical analysis evidenced within. It is a tribute to the outstanding faculty and students of Yeshiva University's history department that such work can be produced.

This year, we decided to present the articles chronologically. We believe that this arrangement provides the reader with a fascinating journey through history that highlights a number of elements and themes. In the first half of the journal, we discuss specific topics in the political, social, and intellectual history of Europe from ancient times until the transition to modernity. Influences, precursors, and historical perception play major roles in this part of our survey.

We begin with ancient Greece and Thucydides, who is considered by many the father of critical history. Author Michael Sherman attempts to understand how Thucydides' ideas influenced later thinkers such as Machiavelli. Moving to the Middle Ages, Yehuda Bernstein demonstrates how historical perceptions of Saladin were romanticized by later writers, and Immanuel Shalev tells the story of a medieval papacy inclined to tolerate the Jews.

In the transitional period of the Early Modern, Eitan Kastner tells of a Jewish intellectual culture revolutionized by the printing press, and Shira Schwartz shows how Isaac Newton's perceptions of the harmony of science and religion paved the way for the Enlightenment. Moving toward a more modern Europe, Perel Skier discusses Chinese revolution and Imperialism, while Noah Cheses demonstrates how four figures of Jewish history shaped Judaism's transition to modernity through the way in which they perceived their own historical legacy.

The second half of the journal focuses on the social history of mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century America. Aviva Klein tells of the orphan trains that brought children out West, and Marc Fein's discussion of the judiciary's role in banning of Mormon polygamy highlights the sometimes tenuous boundaries of Church and State. The Progressive Movement of the early twentieth century spawned both the Jewish settlement houses evaluated by Atara Lindenbaum and the bohemian subculture of Greenwich Village discussed by Jackie Fast. And the threat of communism after the Second World War forced the policy of containment discussed by Sara Lefkowitz, brought the depredations of Joseph McCarthy surprisingly reassessed by Steven Lackner, and the political activism of Bob Dylan weighed by Hadassa Rubinstein.

To round it off, our faculty submission from Professor William Stenhouse provides a fas-

inating window into historiography by showcasing the work of sixteenth century British antiquarian William Camden.

We must of course thank our writers for their diligent work in producing and refining these essays for publication. Thanks are also due to the Deans of Yeshiva and Stern College for providing us with the funds to advertise and publish *Chronos*, as well as providing substantial prizes to those who wrote the most prestigious essays. We thank our publishers for their time, advice, and expertise in producing this journal so handsomely. And we gratefully thank the History Faculty of Yeshiva University, particularly our advisors Dr. Hadassah Kosak, for their support, advice, and patience throughout the publication of *Chronos*.

We are confident that you will find this, the 2007 edition of *Chronos*, well worth the wait. We hope that you enjoy reading these fascinating pieces of history as much as we enjoyed bringing them to you.

Sincerely,

The Editors  
*Paul Adam*  
*Elissa Kempin*  
*Yosef Lindell*  
*Lea New*

# Ancient History





## Fortune's Physicians: An Analysis of Thucydides and Machiavelli

Michael Sherman

Yeshiva College 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize Winner

Two thinkers of the realist school have concerned themselves with the diseases of fortune and the ills of the state. Thucydides and Machiavelli are both men divided by a wide gulf of history, yet are kindred intellects across time united by their empirical scientific study of both history and political science, as well as a pragmatic view of events. Thucydides chronicles the Peloponnesian War in all its detail of slaughter and politics, from the council debates of Athens and Sparta to the battlefields of Greece. His work is astounding in that its historical method approaches modernity in its scope and that his political insights are acute and cutting. Machiavelli's prolific works are comparable to Thucydides' in their account of Renaissance Italy, the state of politics, and the study of history. Machiavelli's modernity is stunning in its implications, and his insights precise and arresting. The comparison of these two men begs to be written and debated. Also, beyond the similarities between their works, the question of their originality and origin could shed light on the intellectual paternity of both Thucydides and Machiavelli. By taking a careful look at the Greek historian and the Florentine secretary, a deeper understanding of both can be achieved.

Thucydides was born to a mid-rank Athenian noble family in Thrace around 460 BCE. He himself claims, "I lived through the whole of [the Peloponnesian War], being of an age to understand what was happening."<sup>1</sup> His family connections and position of *stratagos*, or general, would have put him in a position to observe first-hand the political leaders of his day, which included such statesmen like Pericles. About a decade into the war in 424 BCE, Thucydides was exiled from Athens for failure to prevent the fall of Amphipolis, and probably did not return until the defeat of Athens in the war twenty years later. Thucydides himself believed that his exile put him in a position to record the war from the perspective of both combatants. "I saw what was being done on both sides ... because of my exile, and this *leisure* gave me rather exceptional facilities for looking into things."<sup>2</sup> It seems that

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), 5:26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

he began his major work, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, during the war and finished after it concluded. He died in Athens soon after his return to the city, though the exact date is not known.

The Greece of Thucydides' time corresponded to the iconic perception that is held by modern society. Under the control of Athens, the Delian League had become the most powerful alliance in Greece and the Mediterranean. The Persian Empire had been defeated, leaving Greece in control of the Aegean Sea and Asia Minor. Trade with the entire Mediterranean brought wealth into Athens, while control of the sea protected it. The monumental Temple of Athena was completed on the Acropolis by Pericles, one of the building projects that made Athens the city of marble that is remembered today. In this golden age of Athens, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristophanes composed major works of drama. Hippocrates of Cos was born around 460 BCE and began his school of medicine in Athens, which led to the composition of the body of works known as the *Hippocratic Corpus*. The city-states of Greece prospered in the peace before the war, but this prosperity meant that the balance of power that had held in Greece since the defeat of the Persians was shifting. The Spartans, in control of the Peloponnesian League, grew uneasy over the growth of Athenian power, for they felt it threatened their interests. The stage was now set for one of the greatest wars in Western society, and the birth of history.

*The History of the Peloponnesian War* has become one of the foundations of Western history and thought. Thucydides wrote with candor and insight, and the modernity of his historiographical method as well as his political, military, and economic acumen is astonishing. Yet what is perhaps most astounding is that Thucydides composed his work with almost no historical tradition to speak of. It is as if, *deus ex machina*, Thucydides invented a historiography comparable to our modern tradition.

Thucydides begins his work with a brief overview of Greek history up to the Peloponnesian War. He laments the lack of sources, "I have found it impossible, because of its remoteness in time, to acquire a really precise knowledge of the distant past or even of the history preceding our own period."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Thucydides does manage to piece together some Greek history from what was available to him, primarily the works of Homer.

Significantly, Thucydides is critical of Homer's historical accuracy: "It is questionable whether we can have complete confidence in Homer's figures, which, since

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:1.

he was a poet, were probably exaggerated.”<sup>4</sup> When Thucydides discusses his historical methods, he also speaks of the inadequacy of the historical tradition: “In investigating past history, and in forming the conclusions which I have formed, it must be admitted that one cannot rely on the every detail which has come down to us by way of tradition.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, when claiming the superiority of his own work, Thucydides openly mocks the “historians” who have come before him:

It [my work] is better evidence than that of the poets, who exaggerate the importance of their themes, or of the prose chroniclers, who are less interested in telling the truth than in catching the attention of their public, whose authorities cannot be checked, and whose subject-matter, owing to the passage of time, is mostly lost in the unreliable streams of mythology. We may claim instead to have only the plainest evidence and to have reached conclusions which reasonably accurate, considering that we have been dealing with ancient history.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to the haphazard approach of the ancients, Thucydides formulates a novel, critical approach to his sources:

And with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principal not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else I heard of them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. Not that even so the truth was easy to discover: different eye-witnesses give different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or the other or else from imperfect memories.<sup>7</sup>

His claim to a critical treatment of sources is impressive, for it may be the first conscious example of this in Western tradition. With actual historical fact at his disposal, Thucydides is able to be more “scientific” in his history. Good data will lead to good theories, so accurate reports are needed.

Thucydides is also acutely aware of what he is writing, and knows that its reception may be mixed compared to the other works of his day:

And it may well be that my history will seem less easy to read because the absence in it of a romantic element. It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 1:10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 1:20.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1:21.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1:22

or other be repeated in the future. My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last forever.<sup>8</sup>

It is Thucydides’ calm, self-supposed superiority that would later prompt Charles Cochrane to formulate his view of Thucydides the “scientist.” The self-assured historian is able to commend his work to eternity as a monumental effort to define and describe a pan-Hellenic war that lasted decades and shook the foundation of Greek society.

Thucydides’ realism is also of part of his modernity and originality. One of the most striking examples of Thucydides’ realist approach to politics and history is his analysis of the cause of the Peloponnesian War:

War began when the Athenians and the Peloponnesians broke the Thirty Years Truce ... As to the reasons why they broke the truce, I propose first to give an account of the causes of complaint which they had against each other and of the specific instances where their interests clashed ... But the real reason for the war is, in my opinion, most likely to be disguised by such an argument. What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and fear which this caused in Sparta. As for the reasons for breaking the truce and the declaring war which were openly expressed by each side, they are as follows.<sup>9</sup>

The “causes of complaint” spoke of here are the trumped up charges that Athens and Sparta levied against each other. This interpretation cuts to the heart of the matter with ease and simplicity. Thucydides brushes aside the doublespeak of the political posturing between Athens and Sparta and shows the reader the real reason that war is waged—power, and fear that its accumulation creates.

But Thucydides’ commitment to the realist school goes even further. Steven Forde describes realism in part as “skepticism regarding the applicability of ethical norms to international politics.”<sup>10</sup> Thucydides writes, “Legally or technically the Spartans, or their allies, are the aggressors, being the first to break the peace treaty.” Yet although the Spartans are technically the aggressors, Forde argues that the Greek word used here, “*anagke*,” meaning necessity or compulsion, absolves the Spartans of moral blame for a preemptive war against growing Athenian power.<sup>11</sup> According to this argument, Thucydides belongs to a realist school

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1:23.

<sup>10</sup> Steven Forde, “Varieties of Realism: Thucydides and Machiavelli,” *The Journal of Politics* 54:2 (May 1992): 373.

of thought that accepts power politics and the survival of the state as a moral imperative above normal ethics. To find this "Machiavellian" thought in the fifth century is astounding.

Did Thucydides draw upon any earlier works in formulating his original conclusions? In *Thucydides and the Science of History*, Charles Cochrane notes a fascinating parallel between Thucydides and Hippocrates. It is Cochrane's contention that Thucydides was aware of Hippocrates and his inquiries into a scientific approach to medicine, and that Thucydides borrowed those methods and applied them to history. It is this concept of himself as a scientist and his scientific approach to history that gave Thucydides the "calm assurance with which he commends his *Histories* to the world as a possession forever."<sup>12</sup>

Cochrane connects Hippocrates to Thucydides in several ways. First of all, Thucydides and Hippocrates both ascribe to secularism.<sup>13</sup> Also, while Hippocrates saw medicine as a way to predict the progress of an illness, Thucydides predicted history by studying the past.<sup>14</sup> One obvious comparison surfaces in Thucydides' account of the plague in Athens. There Thucydides abandons his usual aversion toward straying off topic and engages the reader in a long discussion of the plague and its effects, describing the symptoms of the plague in a very clinical manner.<sup>15</sup> If it seems odd that Thucydides could emulate the Hippocratic method of cataloguing and codifying disease, Cochrane's theory is a fascinating way of explaining this anomaly.<sup>16</sup> If one accepts Cochrane, it seems a salient note that, "Almost simultaneously with the birth of natural science ... the new critical history came into being."<sup>17</sup>

History advanced and the lessons of Thucydides were forgotten. Nothing even remotely resembling the historical methods or methodology of Thucydides surfaced for hundreds of years. Enter Italy of the fifteenth century, where a renaissance of antiquity is unfolding. Here is born Niccolo, on the third of May 1469, to a lower echelon branch of the Machiavelli family. Machiavelli's father, Bernardo, was a doctor of law in Florence and well respected by his peers.<sup>18</sup> Bernardo spent

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Cochrane, *Thucydides and the Science of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Hajo Holborn, "Greek and Modern Concepts of History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10:1 (Jan. 1949): 3.

a great deal of time and effort amassing a sizable personal library for a man of his position, including works by Cicero and Aristotle, Livy's *History of Rome*, Greek and Roman philosophers, works of rhetoric, and Italian history. After his father's death, Machiavelli kept the library, rereading and enlarging it throughout his life. He added works from poets such as Virgil, Ovid, Lucretius, and others, and read the histories of Plutarch, Tacitus, and Thucydides.<sup>19</sup> Later he would use these books as sources for his most important works.

Florence in Machiavelli's day was a Renaissance city at the height of its power. With public and private buildings among the best in Italy and stunning plazas and churches, it was clear that the city could command great wealth. The cloth industry of Florence was famous throughout Europe and Florentine banking brought in enormous sums of money. The intellectual life of the city was superb—Florence was home to Dante, Brunelleschi, Boccaccio, Donatello, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Vasari, among others. The Renaissance itself saw a rediscovery of classical literature such as Thucydides and other Greek and Roman writers and a resurgence of scientific works like Hippocrates flourished. Interest in scientific discovery exploded. But Florence was also racked with tumultuous political conflicts such as the Pazzi conspiracy, Savonarola's execution, and French intervention in Florence. Italy itself was ordered in fragile political balance of power between its five greatest cities—Milan, Florence, Rome, Venice, and Naples, a balance that would shift from time to time as the French or Spanish became involved in the Italian Peninsula.

During this period Machiavelli was appointed chief of the Second Chancery and secretary of the Ten of Liberty and Peace. He most likely achieved this position through a combination of family ties and recognized skills. It was in this position, to which the charge of the militia was later added, that Machiavelli spent his political life. As secretary, Machiavelli was not only a witness to politics, but an active participant. On behalf of Florence, Machiavelli met with Cesare Borgia, the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, the king of France, and countless members of the Italian nobility. During his involvement with the Florentine militia, Machiavelli oversaw the conquest of Pisa. However, with the fall of the Florentine Republic in 1512 and the return of the Medici family to power, Machiavelli is removed from his government posts. He is soon implicated in an anti-Medici plot, imprisoned and tortured. Banned from leaving Florence, forbidden to enter the Palazzo

<sup>18</sup> Maurizio Viroli, *Niccolo's Simile* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



Vecchio, the seat of the Medici's power, and blacklisted from any career in politics, Machiavelli was exiled to his family's country estate.

There Machiavelli composed his most famous work, *The Prince*. In it he deals with the notion of the state and its ruler, relying heavily on the classics to provide countless historical facts, political examples, and as sources to both formulate and prove his teachings. Yet he is acutely aware that he is not writing to please an audience:

I have neither decorated nor filled this work with fancy sentences, with rich and magnificent words, or with any other form of rhetorical or unnecessary ornamentation which many writers normally use in describing and enriching their subject matter; for I wished that nothing should set my work apart or make it pleasing except the variety of its material and the seriousness of its contents.<sup>20</sup>

Machiavelli writes not as a poet, but as a political scientist with an in-depth knowledge of the foundations of science and history. He ignores the theoretical and moralistic rumblings of Aristotle in his *Politics*, and forges ahead with the aid of historians, not philosophers. Rather than focusing on a nice presentation, Machiavelli is confident that his work will stand on its merits alone. *The Prince* brooks no interruption in its bold, strong strides to present Machiavelli's conclusions.

All of Machiavelli's works force the reader to come to terms with the realist imperative that drives the actions of states. Machiavelli's conclusions may shock us, but they establish themselves firmly in our minds through their logical arguments. His realism is uncompromising in pursuing these arguments to their logical conclusion:

It is essential to understand this: that a prince ... cannot observe all those things by which men are considered good, for in order to maintain the state he is often obliged to act against his promise, against charity, against humanity, and against religion. And therefore, it is necessary that he have a mind ready to turn itself according to the way of winds of Fortune ... [and] he should know how to enter into evil when necessity commands ... And men in general judge more by their eyes than by their hands; for everyone can see but few can feel. Everyone sees what you seem to be, few perceive what you are, and those few do not dare to contradict the opinion of the many who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, where there is no impartial arbiter, one must consider the final result.

Not only may a prince act in this manner, Machiavelli argues that it is his obligation

<sup>20</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince in The Portable Machiavelli*, trans. Peter Bondanella (New York: Penguin, 1979), 78.

to do so. This realist imperative is a forgone conclusion to Machiavelli. Steven Forde writes, "Machiavelli's science extends also to ends, to claim that all goals of state policy must be subordinated to survival or longevity, and the means to it, power. Other goals—moral, ideological, or otherwise—which interfere with this goal, are excluded."<sup>21</sup> This realist conclusion accords with the true motive that drives the Spartans to war we saw in Thucydides.

Did Thucydides influence the political thought of Machiavelli? Machiavelli certainly read Thucydides' history. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli relates that during the Peloponnesian War the city of Corcyra took vengeance on its oligarchic rulers that had "deprived them of their liberty," a description taken almost word for word from Thucydides' account.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, even in their political theories, "Thucydides and Machiavelli share a realism in international politics that is more extreme than the realism of most if not all of the authors who in the past several decades have regarded themselves as realists."<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, just like Thucydides cut through the political posturing leading up to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Machiavelli contemptuously brushes political and moral propaganda aside. He writes, "Since my intention is to write something useful for anyone who understands it, it seemed more suitable to me to search after the effectual truth of the matter rather than its imagined one."<sup>24</sup>

Yet there is more to this comparison. If it is true that Thucydides' methods derive in part from the Hippocratic school, the same could be said for some of Machiavelli's ideas. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli discusses how the problems of the state can be recognized from afar:

For once problems are recognized ahead of time, they can be easily cured; but if you wait for them to present themselves, the medicine will be too late, for the disease will have become incurable. And what physicians say about disease is applicable here: that at the beginning a disease is easy to cure but difficult to diagnose; but as time passes, not having recognized or treated at the outset, it becomes easy to diagnose but difficult to cure. The same thing occurs in affairs of state; for by recognizing from afar the diseases that are spreading in the state (which is a gift given only to the prudent ruler) they can be cured quickly; but when, not having been recognized, they are left to grow to the extent that everyone recognizes

<sup>21</sup> Forde, 378.

<sup>22</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses* 2:2 in Bondanella, 297. See Thucydides, 4:46.

<sup>23</sup> Forde, 387.

<sup>24</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 126.

them, there is no longer any cure.<sup>25</sup>

To Machiavelli, the art of statecraft is more like the science of medicine. The state is the *body-politic*, and the princes and political scientists are its physicians. Perhaps Machiavelli absorbed some of Thucydides' medicinal approaches to history and politics.

Another similarity is that both Thucydides and Machiavelli had few qualms about reading venerated or religious texts with a critical eye. Homer was the "bible" of the Greeks—no other work had a greater influence on Greek society and culture. Its following was so great that the entire city of Athens would be granted paid leave to attend public readings of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. But Thucydides calmly uses Homer as a historical source and berates it for its inaccuracy. In a similar manner, Machiavelli reads the Bible critically to analyze the position of Moses as a leader.<sup>26</sup> For a Christian to attempt such a reading in sixteenth century Europe is unusually irreverent.

Yet despite these similarities, there is not enough evidence to claim that Thucydides' critical approach to history and political theory directly influenced Machiavelli's novel, realist conception of the modern state. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that the commonalities in their respective philosophies were shaped by similar formative life experiences. Both writers matured in the golden age of their respective city-states—both were intimately involved in government and military affairs. Both grew up in unstable times which saw the fracturing of an uneasy balance of power between factions of their political world. Both had the opportunity to observe strong central leaders such as Pericles or Duke Valentino who could serve as models for leadership. Both wrote the majority of their works in exile, allowing them the unique perspective of a former insider who could peer upon the follies of the political system with a cynical detachment. And both lived in times of cultural and scientific development, which exposed them to new forms of scientific study.

Thucydides and Machiavelli stand connected through time. Their shared ideas and the shared evolution of those ideas contain a parallelism that is unique to these two intellectual giants. Thus, to understand one helps us to understand both. These physicians of statecraft, of the Fortune that ruled nations, belong together, if not in our minds, then on our shelves.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 93.

# The Medieval Period



# Romance, History, and Saladin the Ayyubid

Yehuda Bernstein

Ever since his successes during the Crusades in the twelfth century, Muslims consider Saladin to be one of their most notable heroes, personifying valor and Jihad. While such praise is expected from Muslims, it is surprising that post-Crusade Christian and Western literature has equally lionized Saladin. For centuries, histories, poems, theatricals, and biographies have heavily romanticized his character, despite the fact that he was Christendom's most formidable Crusader adversary. This glorification is even more peculiar given the infamous brutality of the Crusader campaigns. The massacres of the Jews in the Rhineland, the cannibalism at Marat al Neuman, the extermination of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the sacking of Constantinople are only a few of numerous incidents illustrating the violent nature of the Crusades. Indeed, careful analysis reveals that the historical Saladin does not match the knightly standards so often ascribed to him. Why did Western writers depict an enemy ruler whose qualities run counter to the violent nature of these holy wars?<sup>1</sup>

## The Romanticization of Saladin in post-Twelfth Century Western Literature

The romanticization of Saladin began as early as the twelfth century. While the historian William of Tyre (1130-1185), a contemporary of Saladin, portrays the Muslim ruler negatively, calling him tyrannical and accusing him of an unjust rise to power, *Eracles*, a late twelfth century historical account of the Crusades depicts an exalted Saladin. By describing Saladin in neutral terms and justifying his rise to power, *Eracles* increases Saladin's "prestige" and "credit[s]" him with behavior that accords with a noble, knightly ethos."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rich Lawson, "Richard and Saladin: Warriors of the Crusades," (2004-2006) <<http://www.shadowedrealm.com/articles/exclusive/article.php?id=17>>.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Jubb, *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 19-21, 23-4, 28, 31. William of Tyre was archbishop of Tyre and a historian of the Crusades and Middle Ages <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-WilliamT.html>>. *Eracles* is a collection of historical accounts of the Crusades ascribed to the authorship of Ernoul. Its composition is ascribed to the late twelfth century. Little is known about the author.

Although twelfth century poetry frequently questions the motives for Saladin's benevolence, thirteenth century poetry beginning with that of Walther von der Vogelweide lauds Saladin for his commitment to munificence. Dante Alighieri follows suit in his *Inferno* by placing Saladin in "Limbo," a place between heaven and hell for virtuous souls who cannot attain salvation because they were not Christians.<sup>3</sup> Commentators on the *Inferno*, such as the Italian poets Boccaccio and Benevenuti de Rambaldi de Imola, depict the Muslim as a paradigm of generosity, which due to widespread impoverishment was a highly respected virtue in Medieval times.<sup>4</sup>

Western writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries use Saladin's character as a literary device to praise Christendom. The Minstrel of Reims writes that in gratitude for treatment at a Christian hospital in Acre, Saladin drafted a charter ordering an annual donation to the hospital. Not only does this fable use Saladin as a vehicle to praise a Christian institution, it also attests that its author considered Saladin worthy of being utilized in this fashion.<sup>5</sup> Even more striking, some authors and composers between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries claim that Saladin had noble European or even Christian lineage. There are many versions of Saladin's supposed genealogy: Mathew Paris' mid-thirteenth century *Historia Anglorum* alleges that his mother was English, while Baudoin de Sabourc's fourteenth century epic poem, *Saladin*, claims that his mother was from Northern France.<sup>6</sup> Some myths even say that Saladin had been knighted or baptized.<sup>7</sup>

The legend of Saladin continued into the Enlightenment. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* weaves Saladin's chivalric qualities into the fictional narrative. In Act I, the Sultan's treasurer expresses dismay over Saladin's openhandedness, which has caused the treasury to become "poorer than empty." In Act II, Saladin lets his sister defeat him in a game of chess, which she attributes to his

<sup>3</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Canto IV <<http://www.ccel.org/d/dante/inferno/infer02.htm>>. Dante Alighieri was an Italian-Florentine poet, 1265-1321 <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9109641>>.

<sup>4</sup> Jubb, 35-37. Giovanni Boccaccio was an Italian author and poet, 1313-1375 <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9015826>>. De Imola was an Italian author of a super-commentary on Dante's *Inferno*, fourteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Stanley Lane-Poole, *Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1978), 384-85. The Minstrel was literary-historical work composed in Western Europe in the 1260's <<http://www.bu.edu/english/levine/reims.htm>>.

<sup>6</sup> Jubb, 53, 55-56, 64. Mathew Paris was a Benedictine monk and English chronicler, 1200-1259. In Voltaire's seminal work, *Zaire*, Saladin's English descent is also discussed (Jubb, 64).

<sup>7</sup> Lane-Poole, 387-92.

“great liberality.” And in Act IV, Saladin spares the life of a Christian Templar and even gives him the choice between Christianity and Islam.<sup>8</sup> Lessing’s depiction of Saladin in such a positive fashion reflects the established tradition of Saladin’s romantic legend.<sup>9</sup>

Sir Walter Scott’s *The Talisman* also glorifies Saladin, describing him as “Saladin, to whom none will deny the credit of a generous and valiant enemy.” The most distinct praise comes in the introduction, where Scott contrasts Richard the First, “[who] showed all the cruelty and violence of an Eastern Sultan,” with Saladin, “[who] displayed the deep policy and prudence of a European sovereign.”<sup>10</sup> Unlike medieval writers who utilize Saladin to praise Christian leaders, Scott uses Richard I to laud the Sultan. Moreover, by citing Saladin’s supposed “deep policy and prudence”—words more in accord with nineteenth century statesmanship than twelfth century war waging—Scott demonstrates that he saw Saladin as an archetypical ruler that should be emulated by politicians of his own day.<sup>11</sup> Scott recognizes and follows the lead of the medievals in his romantic perception of the Sultan.

The above is just a fraction of the myriad of literature spanning the past seven hundred years which has painted in an idealistic portrait of Saladin. While more extreme claims such as Saladin being baptized or knighted are certainly exaggerations, how accurate are the less extravagant depictions? Do historical records of Saladin’s time validate his reputation? Was the Muslim general as chivalric as he was portrayed?

### Contemporary Historical Accounts of Saladin

Unsurprisingly, Muslim accounts of the Third Crusade commonly praise Saladin. Bha ad-Din Ibn Shaddad (1145-1234), one of Saladin’s first biographers and a contemporary, says the following about the Muslim leader:

<sup>8</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan The Wise* (Project Gutenberg Etext, March 2003) <<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext03/natws10.txt>>. Lessing was a German writer and philosopher of the Enlightenment, 1729-1781 <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9047921>>. *Nathan the Wise* was written in 1779, adapted from a work by Boccaccio (Jubb, 197). The Templars were a league of monks during the Crusades that practiced as knights and waged holy war.

<sup>9</sup> Jubb, 198.

<sup>10</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *The Talisman* (The Literature Network, 2000-2006), Chapter 7 <[http://www.online-literature.com/walter\\_scott/talisman](http://www.online-literature.com/walter_scott/talisman)>. Scott was a prolific, world-famous Scottish historical novelist, 1771-1832. <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9066360>>. *The Talisman* was written in 1825 (Jubb, 202).

<sup>11</sup> Jubb, 203.

Saladin was sociable, well mannered and entertaining ... He would put his friends at ease ... If anyone was sick he would ask about his illness. The purity of Saladin’s character was always evident: when in company, he would allow no one to be spoken ill of in his presence, preferring to hear only of their good traits ... [He never] insult[ed] anyone ... He always stuck to his promise ... No orphan ever came before him without Saladin’s praying for God’s mercy on the child’s parents and offering to help him maintain the same level of livelihood as his father had afforded him ... if the [orphan] had no relatives Saladin would set aside enough for him to live on ...<sup>12</sup>

Ibn Shaddad describes Saladin as charismatic, wise, generous and merciful—all traits which are esteemed by romantic literature.

Muslim historians report specific incidents that elaborate on the Sultan’s liberality and mercy. Saladin’s secretary, ‘Imad ad-Din (1125-1201), records that when Saladin conquered Tiberius’ citadel, he promised and granted safe passage to its inhabitants.<sup>13</sup> The Arab historian Ibn al-Athir (1160-1123) stresses Saladin’s compassion for women; he records that during the siege of Jerusalem, Saladin granted the wife of a Byzantine king and the wife of King Guy safe passage from the city.<sup>14</sup> Baha’ ad-Din (1145-1234), a religious judge under Saladin, reports that Saladin freed an old Frank pilgrim who was taken prisoner at Beirut. Elsewhere, ad-Din recounts that Saladin refused his son’s request to execute a Beirut captive, explaining, “One does not accustom children to shedding blood thus lightly, when they are still incapable of distinguishing a Muslim from an infidel.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Bha ad Din ibn Shaddad: A Portrait of Saladin* (Crusades-Encyclopedia, April 2005) <<http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/worldreach/assets/docs/crusades/Saladinarab.html>>. This is only a select few of the praises that the account bestows upon Saladin. The full account illustrates sufficiently the extent to which he was honored and respected by his contemporaries.

<sup>13</sup> Francesco Garbieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), 137-38. Ad-Din writes, “He sent his men...to receive its surrender with a promise of safe-conduct ... He granted [the Countess of Tiberias] safe-conduct for the journey for her companions and property...”

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 143. The words of al-Athir: “...a woman, married to a Byzantine king...asked for safe-conduct for herself and her dependants and the Sultan granted it...In the same way he set at liberty the Queen of Jerusalem... He also let her take her possessions and dependants, and she asked permission to join her husband, who was then held prisoner... This was granted and she went and stayed with him...” King Guy was Saladin’s adversary at Hattin. He held him prisoner after the battle and allowed his wife, Queen of Jerusalem, to go visit him.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 203-04. Gabrieli believes that this is one anecdote that proves the validity of Saladin’s posthumous reputation.

Notwithstanding the near universal respect for Saladin among Muslim historians, certain incidents reveal a darker side to the Sultan. Ibn al-Athir reports that after the Battle of Hattin, Saladin decapitated two hundred Templar and Hospitaller knight prisoners, and subsequently ordered his commander in Damascus to kill any knights found in his territory. This incident is described in even more gruesome detail by 'Imad ad-Din. Ibn al-Athir recounts another incident where Saladin's mercy is absent:

The wife of the Prince Arnat of al-Karak whom Saladin had killed with his own hand on the day of Hittin also came before him to intercede for her son who was a prisoner. Saladin said: 'If you will give al-Karak, I will let him go.' She went to al-Karak, but the Franks there would not let her yield the fortress, so Saladin refused to give up her son ...

Moreover, although Saladin's conduct during the invasion of Jerusalem was saintly compared with that of the Frankish conquerors in 1099, Ibn al-Athir's report reveals that this was motivated by pragmatism, not chivalry. Saladin dealt leniently with the Jerusalem prisoners because they threatened to fight to the death and commit mass suicide if amnesty was not granted.<sup>16</sup>

Like the Muslim sources, some Frankish chronicles detail Saladin's decency. *De Expugnatione* supports 'Imad ad-Din's account of Saladin's clemency at Tiberius.<sup>17</sup> When describing the peace agreement between Richard and the Muslim, Ambroise's *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* portrays Saladin's great respect for King Richard and claims that Saladin felt that Richard was the most deserving of all the Franks to rule the Holy Land. Ambroise also states that Saladin's advisors honored their word in granting safe conduct to Christian pilgrims. He labels Saladin with the chivalric adjectives "large" and "valiant," and commends Saladin's reception of Hubert Walter, Bishop of Salisbury, in Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, according to Ambroise, the Bishop himself tells Saladin, "If any one could give your noble qualities to King Richard and his to you, so that each of you might be endowed with the faculties of

<sup>16</sup> Gabrieli, 124-125, 138, 142-44.

<sup>17</sup> *De Expugnatione: The Conquest of the Holy Land by Saladin*, ed. J. Stevenson, trans. James Brundage (Crusades-Encyclopedia, April 2005) <<http://www.crusades-encyclopedia.com/primarysources/thirdcrusade.html>>. *De Expugnatione* was an anonymous account of the Crusades quoted in the later historical work written by Ralph of Coggeshall in the thirteenth century.

<sup>18</sup> Jubb, 152. Ambroise was a thirteenth century Norman poet and chronicler of the Third Crusade.

the other, then the whole world could not furnish two such princes."<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, the depiction of Saladin by contemporary Frankish historians is overwhelmingly negative. Ambroise's *Itinerarium* presents Saladin "as an ignominious upstart, immoral, opportunistic, and murderous,"<sup>20</sup> and claims that when Saladin was a young man, he headed a prostitution ring.<sup>21</sup> He blames Richard's massacre of the Muslim prisoners at Acre on Saladin's inaction in negotiations. He details:

Saladin had not arranged for the return of the Holy Cross. Instead, he neglected the hostages who were held as security for its return. He hoped, indeed, that by using the Holy Cross he could gain much greater concessions in negotiation. Saladin meanwhile was sending gifts and messengers to the King, gaining time by false and clever words. He fulfilled none of his promises, but by an increasing use of graceful and ambiguous words he attempted for a long time to keep the King from making up his mind ... Later, indeed, after the time limit had more than passed, King Richard determined that Saladin had hardened his heart and cared no longer about ransoming the hostages ... [Richard] decided that they would wait in vain no longer, but that they would behead the captives.<sup>22</sup>

Later Ambroise recounts how Saladin's invaders slaughtered many of the denizens of Jaffa.<sup>23</sup> Ernoul—a twelfth century chronicler of the Crusades—negatively portrays Saladin's execution of Prince Reynald after his victory at Hattin.<sup>24</sup> In Ernoul's account of the discourse between Saladin and Reynald, he depicts the Sultan as a temperamental, taunting tyrant, and says that Saladin sprinkled Reynald's blood on his own face and dragged Reynald's head on the ground back to

<sup>19</sup> Lane-Poole, 362.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Jubb, 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs, trans. James Brundage (London: Longmans, 1864), III, 1, 5, 13, 17-18 (pp. 210-11, 214-17, 224-26, 231-34). *The Crusades: A Documentary History* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962), 175-81 <<http://www.fordham/halsall/source/1191acre.htm>>.

<sup>23</sup> *The Third Crusade: An Eye-Witness Account of the Campaign of Richard Coeur-de-Lion in Cyprus and the Holy Land*, ed. Kenneth Fenwick (Great Britain: Butler & Tanner, Frome), 143.

<sup>24</sup> Squire to a Crusade— noble in Jerusalem. Author of a late twelfth century chronicle of the Third Crusade. After the victory at Hattin, the Muslims captured King Guy of Jerusalem and the Christian noblemen Reynald. Saladin pardoned Guy and imprisoned him. However, Reynald was infamous for his brutality to Muslims, and Saladin especially hated him for his assaulting of Muslim pilgrims traveling across the Levant to Mecca and Medina. Saladin exacted revenge on Reynald after Hattin.

<sup>25</sup> *Ernoul: The Battle of Hattin, 1187*, trans. Peter Edbury 1957, Paul Halsall July 1998 <<http://www.fordham/halsall/source/1187ernoul.htm>>.

Damascus. These gruesome details are not recorded in the Muslim chroniclers' versions of the story.<sup>25</sup>

The historical record of Saladin is at best inconclusive. It is certain that our ability to rely on contemporary Muslim and Christian accounts is limited due to their partisanship. But while bias explains Muslim glorification of the Sultan, it cannot account for why he is praised in the Frankish documents. Conversely, while Christian denigration is expected, negative incidents also exist in the Muslim accounts. In light of this historical paradox and the quixotic post-Crusade Western view cited earlier, modern day scholars struggle with the dilemma of how to consider the historical Saladin. Was he a shining paragon of virtue, a tyrant, or somewhere in between? In *Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War*, Malcolm Cameron Lyons and D.E.P Jackson support Western literature's depiction of Saladin, explaining that his wisdom and virtues warranted his glorification.<sup>26</sup> Andrew Ehrenkreutz, in his biography of Saladin, disagrees. Since the Arab world had been mired in Crusader defeat before the advent of Saladin, Ehrenkreutz posits that Arab desperation and longing for a savior may have tainted their presentation of the historical account of Saladin's military experiences. Along with the extraordinary literary talents of his biographers, this historical context directly affected Saladin's "posthumous reputation."<sup>27</sup> In *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography*, Margaret Jubb takes a more neutral position, concluding, "We can at least say that the widely accepted image of the merciful Saladin seems to have some basis in fact. It is this perceived goodness of Saladin which lies at the root of his adoption as a Western hero."<sup>28</sup>

### Conclusion

Although contemporary Muslim accounts and later Christian writers attest to the chivalric disposition of Saladin the Ayyubid, the historical Saladin may have been less noble. This divide between the mythical and real Saladin is evident in the two most notable battles of Saladin's crusading career, Hattin and Jerusalem. At Hattin, after Saladin bestowed mercy on King Guy and spared his life, he ruthlessly

<sup>26</sup> Malcolm Cameron Lyons and D.E.P. Jackson, *Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 373-74.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1972), 238. Saladin's most impressive contemporaneous biographers were al-Isfahani and ibn Shaddad.

<sup>28</sup> Jubb, 223.

massacred the captured knights and savagely executed Reynald. At Jerusalem, Saladin's humane treatment of the city's captives resembled that of a legendary Christian knight; but one cannot ignore his harsh declaration at the onset of the siege, "We shall deal with you just as you dealt with the population of Jerusalem when you took it in 1099 with murder and enslavement and other such savageries!"<sup>29</sup> Although for practical reasons Saladin refrained from savagery at Jerusalem, this statement exposes his preferred course of action. The fact that Saladin's conduct at Hattin and Jerusalem did not result in a less knightly portrayal of him indicates the romantic bent of his chroniclers.

Assuming that Saladin was at least somewhat less than ideal, what accounts for the tendency to romanticize him? While Muslims are naturally prone to laud Saladin as "the embodiment of *Jihad*,"<sup>30</sup> Christians may have been attracted by the chivalric convention of having a noble knight cast as their enemy.<sup>31</sup> The elaborate idealistic depiction of the Sultan may have been founded on slight historical truth, but strayed toward the quixotic under the heady lure of romance.

<sup>29</sup> Gabrieli, 141.

<sup>30</sup> Lawson, "Richard and Saladin."

<sup>31</sup> Jubb, 47.



## Innocent's Jews

*Immanuel Shalev*

**M**edieval Europe of the thirteenth century is characterized by Pope Innocent III's feverish pursuit of non-Christian groups and the heightening of papal power. Thus, one would not expect the measure of tolerance actually afforded by the pope to the Jews and the special place that was allotted to them in Christian society. We will see that the Jews owed their tolerant treatment to the unique role they played in Christianity. Their utility played into Pope Innocent's drive for power, suppression of heresy, and illustrated the dominance of the Christian faith in the Western world.

In order to properly understand the interaction between the pope and the Jews, their relationship must be viewed within its historical context. It is curious that a religious Christian kingdom with a strong papacy should offer any measure of toleration to a minority group of another religion. Also of interest is the official tolerance extended by the Church's upper echelons contrasted with the intolerance displayed by the Christian populace. Jews were massacred and forcibly converted by the general population during the First Crusade in 1096, despite having the official protection of the higher clergy. They were accused of ritual murder as early as 1144, and were further accused of host desecration, extreme usury, and of having dealings with the devil, despite official proclamations of the Church that decried these accusations.

Intolerance of Jews was embedded in medieval Christian culture. They were negatively depicted in sculptures, paintings, cartoons, poems, songs, plays, and in architecture. Theologically speaking, Christian theologians such as John Chrysostom and Agobard of Lyons portrayed Jews as dark and evil.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that any tolerance displayed toward Judaism by the upper echelons of the Church was therefore against social norms. There must have been a purpose and motivation behind such tolerance.

The tolerant policy extended by Innocent III toward the Jews in the thirteenth century was certainly not original among popes. In the late sixth century, when Christianity had become the religion of the majority in Europe, Pope Gregory the

<sup>1</sup> Debra Kaplan, Course Lecture on "Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in the Western World," New York: Yeshiva University, May 2006.

**Great** allowed Jews who lived under secular and papal laws to practice their religion and live peacefully. However, Jews were limited in civil society in a number of ways, including their inability to hold public office and testify against Christians in court. The policy, however, was not renewed by Gregory's successors who instead warned Christians to "stay away from Jews, lest the sons of light be endangered by the sons of darkness."<sup>2</sup> It was only in 1063, once the Church had further developed, that such tolerance was formally extended by Pope Alexander in a letter later known as the *Dispar nimirum est*, and crystallized in a later bull known as *Sicut Iudaeus* in 1120. The bulls stated that Jews were entitled to papal protection and were not to be molested, attacked, falsely accused, baptized, or have their property seized. These rights were reiterated by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and Eugenius III in 1147 between the First and Second Crusades.<sup>3</sup>

Jews were tolerated in the thirteenth century by Pope Innocent III in a similar fashion. In *An Edict in Favor of the Jews* issued in 1199, Innocent clearly outlined the tolerance extended toward the Jews. He forbade Christians to kill, wound, or rob Jews. Innocent also decreed that no Christian may use violence to attempt forcible conversion and that they may not desecrate Jewish cemeteries. However, his statement had little influence among the population. Throughout the medieval period, Christians wounded and even robbed Jews, and many forcibly converted Jews both before and after the reign of Innocent III. The official toleration extended by the papacy swam against the social current of the day.

Beyond decrees that ensured the physical preservation of the Jewish minority, Innocent III was tolerant of Jewish religious practices. He wrote: "Furthermore, while they celebrate their festivals, no one shall disturb them in any way by means of sticks or stones, nor exact from any of them forced service, except that which they have been accustomed to perform from ancient times."<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, Innocent III limited the rights he extended toward the Jews: "We wish, however, to place under the protection of this decree only those (Jews) who have not presumed to plot against the Christian faith."<sup>5</sup> In the tradition of his predecessors, Innocent granted tolerance only to those Jews who would comply with Christian authority.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth R. Stow, "1007 Anonymous" and *Papal Sovereignty* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1984), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and The Jews* (New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 93.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 95.

To further understand the puzzling tolerance offered by the pope to the Jews, the character of Innocent III must be analyzed. Innocent III became pope in 1198 seeking to augment his personal power and that of the Church. His ambitions can be read in his actions, his papal bulls, and most clearly in his sermons. In a sermon detailing the role of a pope, Innocent described the ultimate pope as both king and priest. "King" because Emperor Constantine had given Pope Sylvester the Kingdom of the West, and "priest" in the role of Vicar of Christ. Innocent frequently used this example of dual power in explaining papal authority. Upon his consecration, Innocent was the first to publicly use the term "vicar of Christ" to refer to himself. Earlier popes had used the term, "vicar of Peter."<sup>6</sup> Also notably, Innocent attributed the following words to God in *Dialogue between God and a Sinner*: "The pope, my vicar, whom I have established in my own place as your judge on earth."<sup>7</sup> Innocent therefore ascribed to himself the role of "Judge of mankind in God's stead" with the right to pass judgment on sin. From the beginning of his papacy, Innocent thought highly of himself and of his position – a trait that would lead him to search for greater power for his own person and the Church.

Historians agree that during the thirteenth century the Catholic Church constituted a state of its own. The Church had its own laws, methods of law enforcement, prisons, tithes and taxes.<sup>8</sup> The pope stood at the head of this state. In an attempt to grow and expand his state, Innocent III attained land through concessions from the citizens of Rome. Additionally, the vulnerable situation after the death of Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI allowed the papacy to slowly force nearby imperial powers out of their cities and territories, transferring them to the papal rule.

Innocent, as priest and king, wielded tremendous political power. After a struggle over the crown of Sicily, it was Innocent's political weight that tipped the scales in favor of the succeeding king.<sup>9</sup> All authorities who did not comply with the pope's choice for king faced excommunication, a sentence equivalent to deposition, since an excommunicated king or bishop could not rule. Innocent viewed this power "as a right to inspect, approve and crown..."<sup>10</sup> Thus, Innocent maneuvered himself into a place where the monarchs desired to secure papal support for their coronations

<sup>6</sup> Jane Sayers, *Innocent III: Leader of Europe 1198-1216* (Harlow, Essex, England: Longman Group UK Limited, 1994), 14-16.

<sup>7</sup> Edward A. Synan, *The Popes and the Jews in the Middle Ages* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 86.

<sup>8</sup> Sayers, 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-70.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

– a rite that now seemed to require papal approval.

Innocent was not content with spreading only his political influence, he desired **absolute control** of Christianity. Under Innocent's rule, the process of canonization, a process that traditionally came about informally through public acclamation, was **now approved** only by the pope. Furthermore, no new relics could be sanctified **without strict papal approval**. Innocent's desire for direct control of popular worship is further seen in a decree that declared that only priests would have the ability to administer the various sacraments, ceremonies and rituals that are central to Catholicism. Therefore, Innocent wielded more power than ever before in the history of the papacy.

Innocent did not only desire an increase in Christian power and influence, but he also sought tighter control on the Christian empire. To achieve this goal, Innocent set out to unify the Roman and Greek churches.<sup>11</sup> Relations were established with the East, with representatives of the Eastern churches attending the Fourth Lateran Council under Innocent.<sup>12</sup> Armenia became a fief of the Church and Eastern Orthodox Catholicos swore their allegiance to the pope. Other Eastern Christian kingdoms followed. In this way, Innocent's goal of a united Christian kingdom was closer than ever to becoming a reality.

With Innocent's ambitions for extending and uniting Christendom, as well as the heightening of the Church and the papacy's power, it is quite understandable that Innocent next turned his attention to the heretical forces within the Christian midst. Under his watch, more was done to define, pursue, and destroy heresy than had ever been done by any pope before or after him. With the aim of destroying heresy, Innocent called the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, inviting bishops and kings to partake in the meeting, rendering it the first Church council to include lay people. Through this, Innocent attempted to co-opt Europe's temporal leadership into the Church's general authority.

The Council outlined and defined who was a heretic and who was a Christian by demanding of authentic Christians a number of central beliefs. Excommunication and punishment by secular authorities were tactics used against those who did not comply. The Church fought to uproot multiple heretical groups including witches, Waldensians, and Cathars. The pope went so far as to use military force

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

against the Cathars in the controversial Albigensian Crusade, an organized massacre and elimination of the large heretical group in southern France.<sup>13</sup> Innocent clearly would not tolerate anyone who threatened the universal domination of his Christian empire.

So how is it that Innocent, the power-driven unifier of Christendom and destroyer of heresies, was also a protector of the Jews? The fervor and zeal with which Innocent sought to unite and strengthen Christianity while eliminating all that stood in the way of his goal seem to contradict his attitude toward the Jews. But this behavior seems paradoxical only if the existence of the Jews served to weaken the strength of Christianity, as did the heresies of the thirteenth century. It is not a contradiction if the existence of Jews somehow fortified Christianity instead.

Innocent III tolerated the Jews for their utility. In his papal bulls, Innocent made no secret of his personal derogatory views toward the Jews. In a bull supporting Jewish conversion to Christianity, Innocent described "Jewish blindness" and their desire "to remain in the darkest shadow" in their refusal to accept the Christian faith.<sup>14</sup> The Jews were frequently referred to as a "miserable people" and were theologically despised for their crime of deicide.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the Jews served a theological function. Such tolerance has its roots in early Christian theology. The Augustinian notion of the Jews' downtrodden state as testimony to the supremacy of Christianity and their status as witnesses to the Old Testament made their continued existence necessary. Moreover, Jewish rights were never granted unconditionally. Their privileges were extended only to those Jews who were subservient to Christian authority.

Innocent himself used the Jews for the purpose of proving the Christian faith. In his introduction to the aforementioned *Sicut Iudaeus*, Innocent explained that "although Jewish perfidy is in every way worthy of condemnation, nevertheless, because through them the truth of our own faith is proved, they are not to be severely oppressed by the faithful."<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, Innocent writes that Jews "are not to be severely oppressed," permitting some measure of oppression. It is the usefulness of

<sup>13</sup> Sayers, 127-128.

<sup>14</sup> Grayzel, 98.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth R. Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 271.

<sup>16</sup> Grayzel, 93.

the Jews that allows for a mitigation of otherwise brutal persecution.

To a pope as powerful and ambitious as Innocent, the Jews provided a welcome tool in combating the rise of heretical movements. Multiple heretical sects had sprung up in the thirteenth century with the aim of forming their own alternative churches in response to the perceived corruption of the Church.<sup>17</sup> The Jews, however, were a non-threatening non-Christian group that could be placed on display, distinguishable through their dress and suppressed through the doctrines of perpetual servitude. Their distinct dress particularly served to humiliate them, as only lepers were required to dress differently in medieval times.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the Jews served as a warning example to Christians, to "personify the absence of belief and its punitive effects."<sup>19</sup> The Jews were thus a powerful device for Innocent to root out heresy within Christianity.

However, it was not solely to their theological purpose or because they were a deterrent to heresy that the Jews owed their role in Christian society. The popes drew power for the Church by controlling Jewish status. With the growth of Christian heresies and the contest for power with the secular monarchies, having a subservient, defeated party on constant display presented the popes as superior. In one bull, Innocent explained that Jews are only tolerated "in view of the fact that they begged for our protection and our aid [*italics mine*]." The denigrated state of the Jews thus created the appearance of a higher status for Christians and their leader, Pope Innocent.

It is now quite clear why Pope Innocent and his predecessors preserved Jewish rights. The advantages were many, and the risks were small. The only detail that was left to be maintained was the balance between servitude and tolerance that produced the lowered status that the Jews were afforded. For if Jews were to be destroyed, or were they to achieve an equal or superior status, their singular role in Christian society would be lost.

Innocent's treatment of the Jews in the thirteenth century, as well as their niche in society created by Innocent and his predecessors, tells a great deal about the Catholic Church in medieval times. In a struggle for power with secular authorities and in the effort to be not only the most popular religion in the Western world, but the most powerful, the Church's leadership was prepared to use whatever re-

<sup>17</sup> Sayers, 139-50.

<sup>18</sup> Stow, *Alienated Minority*, 249.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

sources that were at its disposal to emerge victorious. All who threatened the Christian Church were not tolerated, including minorities and foreign religions. Thus, the pope, a religious as well as temporal leader, could not extend his tolerance to other religions. These other faiths threatened the very definition of the Christian political entity, whose power is based on the truth of Christianity. The Jews, however, were able to preserve their religious identity while confirming that of the Christians.

# The Early Modern Period



## The Evolving Power of Jewish Texts

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Commonly described as “the people of the book” while their texts are referred to as “a portable homeland,” the Jews greatly revere their sacred texts. But have Jews always placed the same emphasis on their holy writ as they currently do? Just as print has a history, so too does the interplay between the Jewish people and their texts. And that history most certainly is not a static one. In *Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy*, Haym Soloveitchik describes what he perceives as a shift in contemporary Orthodoxy from a mimetic tradition to its current one strongly grounded in the Jewish texts. Soloveitchik writes:

The other world in which the religious Jews seek now to dwell, and whose impress they wish to bear, is less the world of their fathers than that of their “portable homeland,” their sacred texts, which alone remain unblighted by the contagion of the surroundings.<sup>1</sup>

In a century that saw the disruption of the inheritance of tradition by a mass genocide and the thinning of the Jewish ranks through assimilation, observant Jews needed a new game-plan for perpetuating their faith. According to Soloveitchik, this manifested itself with a magnification of the importance of texts in daily life, since texts are viewed by the faithful as the only uncorrupted and reliable source in which the faith can survive.

This is not to say that texts did not always play an important role in Jewish society. Soloveitchik writes that “for at least two millennia, Torah study (*Talmud Torah*) had been axial to Jewish experience. Indeed, it was believed by Jews the world over to be necessary for their very existence as a people.”<sup>2</sup> If texts have always played a significant role in Jewish culture, how can we understand Soloveitchik’s statement concerning the shift from a mimetic tradition to a text-based one in the past two decades? We will first need to understand the place of texts in the past before we can appreciate their status in the present.

Because texts have always possessed some inherent value in Jewish culture, it should come as no surprise that the people who had influence over the Jewish texts

<sup>1</sup> Haym Soloveitchik, “Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Tradition* 28:4 (Summer 1994): 21 <<http://www.lookstein.org/links/orthodoxy.htm>>. All page numbers correspond to the text from the website version.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

– whether they were authoring these works or simply producing them – held sway over an important aspect of Jewish culture. The authority of Jewish texts carved out a greater foothold in Jewish society with the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century. Moveable type made books accessible in ways deemed impossible in the days of handwritten manuscripts. The printing press managed to standardize Jewish texts while making them cheaper and easier to read. While the affordability of the books helped extend their message to a wider audience and assist the spread of literacy among Jews, the standardization of the texts had profound consequences for the future of Judaism.

Before printing any book, the printer needed to decide what exemplar he would use as a model. Many manuscripts existed for the same text, all of which inevitably contained discrepancies. The onus rested on the printer in choosing the most accurate portrayal of the text in light of the differing traditions he had at his disposal. This process came with great responsibility, as every inaccuracy would appear before a wide audience, potentially corrupting the understanding of a text like the *Talmud* in which every word is scrutinized. Edward Fram states that:

Manuscripts constantly contained mistakes, though such mistakes were usually restricted to a particular copy of the text and copies based upon it... However, when a printed text contained a mistake, the mistake was multiplied many fold, for printing simply produced more copies of mistakes than manuscripts did.<sup>3</sup>

While errors existed in the time of manuscripts as well, the advent of print added a new severity to mistakes. Aside from the theological problems raised by printing mistakes in sacred texts, it was also bad business. From a market standpoint, publications would appear more desirable if they were known to represent a more accurate textual tradition. As an example, Fram cites that “the Romm press made great efforts to use manuscripts and improve the quality of the printing both in terms of text and the physical book.”<sup>4</sup> But even that edition of the *Talmud* contained the writings of commentators who exhibited alternative textual traditions, showing that one single authoritative text of the *Talmud* did not exist in print. In fact, the prevalence of new printings of the *Talmud* with unavoidable errors generated a new type of rabbinic literature specifically created to correct mistaken texts. For example, Rabbi Solomon Luria in the sixteenth century wrote an extensive list of corrections that was later added in further printings of the *Talmud*.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Fram, “In the Margins of the Text: Changes in the Page of the *Talmud*,” *Printing the Talmud: From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, ed. Sharon Lieberman Mintz and Gabriel Goldstein (New York: Yeshiva University Museum, 2005), 93.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

These corrections, however, did not replace the errors in the text; they were rather amended in the back with other commentaries.<sup>5</sup>

Aside from the commentaries aimed at correcting the text, the Talmud possessed scores of other commentaries. Medieval manuscripts contained only the text of the Talmud<sup>6</sup> while the commentaries appeared in separate codices. When the Soncino family decided to print the Talmud in 1484, probably the first time it was ever printed, they did so with the inclusion of the commentaries of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaqi (Rashi) and the Tosafists of Touques in the margins of the Talmudic text. These two commentaries are still the most prominently placed commentaries on a standard page of Talmud.<sup>7</sup> While the appearance of Rashi's commentary elucidating the text itself makes sense, the inclusion of the commentary of the Tosafot of Touques on the main page raises the question as to why it was inserted while other important commentaries were not. For instance, what made the theoretical work of the Tosafists more desirable than the *halakha*-focused work of Rabbi Yitzchak Ben Yaakov Alfasi (the Rif)?

We do not have an answer to this, but the consequences of prominently placing these Tosafists on the same page as the text of the Talmud in the early printings ensured that spot on the page for them ever since. In other words, the preference of one printing house for a particular configuration of the Talmudic commentaries had a profound influence on all subsequent printings of the text. Due to this arrangement specification, Rashi and the Tosafot now "have remained stalwarts of the margins of the printed page of the Talmud until the present day...because printers often copied what had been printed previously without considering the pedagogic and/or scholarly needs of the users."<sup>8</sup> Another ramification of this decision is that the theoretical comments of the Tosafists have become more accessible than the practical *halakhic* code of the Rif, found in the back of the book simply because of a printer's decision. I assume that the intended buyers of these texts became comfortable with the layout of the page, incorporating it into their tradition, thus any subsequent alteration to the layout could pose a risk to the seller of a decrease in sales. By making Rashi and Tosafot the go-to commentaries on the Talmud, the Soncinos forever influenced the traditional study of Talmud.

Aside from enhancing the study of classical texts, print also permitted the casting of older texts into new and modern molds. One such example is visible in the

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 93.2

<sup>6</sup> Marvin J. Heller, "Earliest Printings of the Talmud," *Printing the Talmud: From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, 61.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>8</sup> Fram, 91.

1691 printing of the Yiddish translation of Benjamin of Tudela's medieval travelogue in Amsterdam. Shlomo Berger states that the Hebrew original of the *Travels* "belongs firmly within the Jewish literary canon,"<sup>9</sup> but something new occurred when it was translated into the Yiddish vernacular. The translation of the *Travels* was coupled with the contemporary *Hope of Israel* by the Jewish leader Menasseh ben Israel. Berger explains the reason for this:

In this book combining two texts on travel, a medieval travelogue was linked to a contemporary seventeenth-century text to support it and augment its prestige as a genuine travel story. The twelfth-century text was updated and prepared for a seventeenth-century Yiddish reading public by placing it within a recognized Ashkenazi cultural setting, and using a Yiddish vocabulary familiar to the average Jew of the period.<sup>10</sup>

We see yet again the importance of tradition in Jewish culture. For ben Israel's new book to achieve public credibility, the publisher coupled it with a well known – but modernized in language – text from the great canon of Jewish lore. This makes perfect sense according to Berger who asserts that "the written text reveals an attempt to combine past and present, and establish it within a living tradition of a Jewish cultural system."<sup>11</sup> The goal of producing any written work is for it to effectively reach its audience. By coupling a newer work with an easily accessible classic, the publishers hoped to convince prospective buyers that ben Israel's *Hope of Israel* was of quality standard.

With the growing prominence of the printing press, printed works became geared towards a widening readership which in turn influenced the nature of the printed word. Ultimately, printing houses were business ventures that needed to sell their wares, and the larger the public interest in a book, the better. This is not to say that Jewish society was always a democratic one that relied exclusively on the marketplace to set its standard. Quite the contrary existed, as Chava Weissler points out:

Many, perhaps most, men did not acquire enough knowledge to participate in rabbinic culture in any way but the most rudimentary ways. Traditional Ashkenazi society was highly stratified, and power and knowledge were concentrated in the hands of an interlocking elite of the wealthy and/or learned.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Shlomo Berger, "Translation between Language and Culture: Benjamin of Tudela's Travels in Yiddish (Amsterdam 1691)," Inaugural lecture as professor of Yiddish language and culture at the Universiteit van Amsterdam (November 2, 2005), 8.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 39.



But printers did not want to only cater to a small elite class. After all, printing was more lucrative if it reached out to a wider audience. We see examples of this appeal to a wider readership in the publishing of non-rabbinic books like *tkhines* (prayer books for women written in Yiddish) and *minhag* (traditional practice) books. Sarah bas Tovim's book of *tkhines* titled *Shloyshe Sheorim* contains details of non-*halakhic* folk practices such as prayers during the creation of memorial candles for the dead, despite this practice lacking the backing of any previously written works. Another such non-rabbinic tradition was printed in the *Tsenerene*. In order to avoid the punishment of Eve and be blessed with easy childbirth, women would say a prayer prior to biting off the top of a citron after the annual festival of *Sukkot*. Weissler writes that "these popular practices were not required by Jewish law, or *halakhah*, and at times were even frowned upon by the rabbinic authorities."<sup>13</sup> Despite these practices not gaining the approval of the learned elite, the printers saw a market for them and went ahead with their printing because while "the elite may not have considered it obligatory... the women – or the folk – did."<sup>14</sup> Print opened up new possibilities for the dissemination of religious expression to those who did not belong to the exclusive elite class.

New printed works, like *minhag* books, also enabled a wider audience to comprehend daily ritual without the assistance of the literary elite. The *Sefer ha-Minhagim* of Isaac Tynau is one such example if this. He intended his book to serve both the fully-literate and less-literate classes as it concisely explained the protocol for daily and annual ritual in the vernacular without the back and forth of Talmudic debate.<sup>15</sup> These books proved especially useful when Ashkenazi Jews encountered other Jewish traditions, as Jean Baumgarten believes:

After all, Italian Ashkenazi Jews who maintained contacts with the Sephardic communities, whether Levantine or Spanish, and who underwent some degree of assimilation into the surrounding culture, had to preserve their rituals.<sup>16</sup>

Once committed to print, traditions became maintained and solidified for all who could read or knew someone who could.

Despite the undermining by print of the power of the elite, some rabbis managed to employ print to further their influence. The case of Rabbi Moses Isserles (Rema) in the sixteenth century and his commentary on the law code the *Shulhan Arukh*

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jean Baumgarten, "Prayer, Ritual, and Practice in Ashkenazic Jewish Society: The Tradition of Yiddish Custom Books in the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 36 (2002-2003): 128-29.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 135-36.

serves as a prime example of this. Up until the time of Rema, many Ashkenazi *yeshivot* used the medieval *Sha'arei dura* as a code for ruling on *halakha*. Rema wrote his commentary on the *Shulhan Arukh* to replace and modernize the medieval tract. According to Elchanan Reiner, "Rema meant to write a book that... departed from the customary modes of knowledge transmission of medieval Ashkenazi society and internalized the new communicative values of the printing press."<sup>17</sup> This goal was met with disapproval by some other influential rabbis, particularly R. Hayyim ben Bezalel of Friedberg. He believed that the dissemination of Rema's easily understood legal code would atrophy the influence of the elite (by making *halakha* accessible to a greater audience) and solidify and standardize *halakha* when he believed it ought to remain fluid and under the control of the rabbinate.<sup>18</sup>

Faced with such early opposition, how has Rema's commentary managed to gain the prominence in the greater Ashkenazi community that it currently enjoys? A few different factors can explain this. First, by attaching his commentary to the *Shulhan Arukh*, Rema connected his words to a work that spoke from a place of historic significance. While Rema's hometown of Cracow was, at that point, unimportant from a Jewish perspective, the *Shulhan Arukh* was penned in the Holy Land, which automatically lent it greater authority. Second, and playing off a similar theme, Rema claimed that the customs he transcribed were those of the Tosafists who he asserted were his ancestors and the ancestors of all the Jews in Eastern Europe. This placed his commentary within the continuation of tradition that proved so important to Jews at that time.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the way in which Rema treated his father text, the *Shulhan Arukh*, ensured it lasting importance. Reiner writes:

Rema took the foreign text of R. Joseph Caro and met its codificatory threat by treating it in the traditional Ashkenazi manner, by adding layers of accumulated knowledge in such a way that the borders between them and the central text became gradually vaguer. This blurred the primary status of the text, which was transformed from a text meant to be read, hence absolute, to a text meant to be studied, and therefore relative.<sup>20</sup>

After combining his writing with the authority of Israel and the traditions of sig-

<sup>17</sup> Elchanan Reiner, "The Ashkenazi Elite at the Beginning of the modern Era: Manuscript Versus Printed Book," *Jews in Early Modern Poland*, ed. Gerson David Hundry (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), 86-87.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Davis, "The Reception of the *Shulhan Arukh* and the formation of Ashkenazic Identity," *AJS Review* 26:2 (2002): 260-261.

<sup>20</sup> Reiner, 97.

nificant personalities, Rema wrote in a traditional manner, making the style more palatable and familiar to those reading, easing their transition into his new approach. Such was the fashion in which Rema used the new medium of print to advance the traditional *halakhic* system.

As we have seen from numerous examples, text has always been influential in Jewish society, though the nature of printed material has evolved throughout the centuries. The printing of the Talmud with its commentaries standardized both the layout of the page and its content. Publishing of *minhag* books and *tshines* lent a greater legitimacy to their popular practices and their accessible style and language. Sometimes, printed works of the past were employed to give authority to new texts, like the packaging of ben Israel's *Hope of Israel* with the more accepted *Travels of Benjamin of Tudela*. And finally, by delivering his content in a more traditionally acceptable fashion, Rema made his controversial commentary commonplace to Jewish society. All of these examples attest to the influence of print, since appearance in a reliable, familiar printed work awarded new ideas the credibility they required to take hold in an overwhelmingly traditional society.

This brings us back to the argument of Haym Soloveitchik when he makes the case that the importance of texts has superseded that of tradition. He argues that:

A traditional society has been transformed into an orthodox one, and religious conduct is less the product of social custom than of conscious, reflective behavior... The flood of works on halakhic prerequisites and correct religious performance accurately reflects the ritualization of what had previously been routine acts and everyday objects. It mirrors the ritualization of what had been once simply components of the given world and parts of the repertoire of daily living. A way of life has become a *regula*, and behavior, once governed by habit, is now governed by rule.<sup>21</sup>

The culture of today strives for accuracy in its religious practice, and Soloveitchik says the best place to locate accuracy is in texts. Accuracy, however, cannot be gleaned from the main primary sources of the past. These texts present too many variant opinions and do not address many of the contemporary issues. In contrast:

The new generation... obtained its knowledge in business and daily affairs, in all its walks of life, from books, and these books imparted their information in a self-contained, straightforward and accessible format. They saw no reason why knowledge of the Torah should not equally be available to them in so ready and serviceable a fashion, not as substitutes, God forbid, for the study of primary sources, but rather as augmentation... The past twenty years have produced a rap-

<sup>21</sup> Soloveitchik, 9.

idly growing, secondary *halakhic* literature, not only guides and handbooks, but rich, extensive, topical presentations, many of high scholarly caliber.<sup>22</sup>

Soloveitchik delivers a case that puts this in perspective. The *Beit ha-Behira* of the medieval Talmudic scholar R. Menahem ha-Meiri was an abnormality for its time. The work neglected the Talmudic back-and-forth argument over the *halakha* and focused on the final resolution. The *Beit ha-Behira* was lost for centuries until it was relocated in the eighteenth century when there was an attempt to reintroduce it in the canon of commentaries. These repeated attempts failed until the second half of the twentieth century when the style of Meiri's writings grew popular in a culture that desired accuracy and ease in its text.<sup>23</sup> One wonders, however if Meiri would enjoy the same popularity if he had penned his work in the twentieth century as opposed to the thirteenth. The importance of tradition still maintains enough influence for me to confidently guess that it would not. The authority of Meiri does not come from his substance alone, but his substance coupled with his status as an early medieval commentary.

Tradition still plays a role in this contemporary, text-based society, just as we saw above that the text still had influence in the years that tradition played the dominant role. Tradition plays a new and subdued role today, but it still maintains a certain strength. Soloveitchik describes the new role of tradition within a contemporary culture as when "the past is cast in the mold of the present, and the current text-society emerges not as a product of the twin ruptures of migration and acculturation, but as simply an ongoing reflection of the unchanging essence of Jewish history."<sup>24</sup> According to Soloveitchik, tradition is finagled to conform to the present reality in the text-based society in order to make it seem like the practitioners conform to an eternal (and thus correct) tradition. This shows that the *idea* of tradition still holds sway over Jewish culture, even if what is passed off as tradition does not conform to the mimetic tradition of the past. Without the perception of a tradition, the text-based society could not have legitimacy in the eyes of the faithful.

The interplay between text and tradition, where they both have relied on the other for legitimacy over the centuries, represents a truly unique facet of Jewish print. One would be hard-pressed to find a culture with similar dynamism surrounding their texts and traditions.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

# The Empirical God of Isaac Newton

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*In the eighteenth century and since, Newton came to be thought of as the first and greatest of the modern age of scientists, a rationalist, one who taught us to think on the lines of cold and untinctured reason.*

*I do not see him in this light... Newton was not the first of the age of reason. He was the last of the magicians, the last of the Babylonians and Sumerians... the last wonder-child to whom the Magi could do sincere and appropriate homage... Because he looked on the whole universe and all that is in it as a riddle, as a secret which could be read by applying pure thought to certain evidence, certain mystic clues which God had laid about the world to allow a sort of philosopher's treasure hunt to the esoteric brotherhood.<sup>1</sup>*

—Lord Keynes, *Newton Tercentenary Celebrations*

Isaac Newton has grown to be regarded as the archetypical scientist. Recognized universally as one of the fathers of modern science, Newton's contributions to quantitative analysis, in both the scientific and mathematical fields, were not only novel, but more importantly, foundational to modern scientific understanding. Insistence on a rigid empirical process and deductive reasoning marks the Newtonian scientific methodology, which today we call "doing science." Indeed, Newton's famous quote, "I do not feign hypotheses" stands as the mantra of the modern scientific community.<sup>2</sup> The principles he introduced helped to successfully move science away from occultist influences and establish it as a rational, calculated and provable discipline. Yet many inconsistencies arise within Newton's own work, violations of the empirical scientific process that he himself bore. There are times when Newton inducts God as an explanation for natural phenomena when empirical evidence runs out, even relaying a theological impetus for partic-

<sup>1</sup> *The Royal Society Newton Tercentenary Celebrations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 28-29.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac Newton, "General Scholium," *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, trans. I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 943.

ular scientific conclusions. An analysis of Newton's composite writings displays a disjointed corpus of thought, one ridden with tension between science and theology. The contradictory voices echoing within Newton's work reveal the portrait of a man whose inner perspective and intellectual experience were wrought with conflict and the overbearing sense of conundrum. Newton's correspondence with Richard Bentley presents a localized example of his approach to scientific study, offering a window into the conflicted intellectual life that was Isaac Newton.

Newton's first letter to Bentley in 1692 disturbs the conception of Newton as the quintessential scientist, presenting him in a manner quite distinct from that associated with the statement, "I do not feign hypotheses." Newton states, "When I wrote my treatise about our system [the *Principia*] I had an eye upon such principles as might work with considering men, for the belief of a deity, and nothing can rejoice me more than to find it useful for that purpose."<sup>3</sup> The above statement reveals a theological incentive behind Newton's groundbreaking work, *Principia*. This image is not that of a modern scientist par excellence, but rather, a personality possessing a strong theological bent, whose science is propelled by a religious telos.

It may be too quick to draw conclusions about a man's theological preferences and intellectual integrity based on the opening line of a single personal letter; it is certainly plausible that Newton had other interests invested in convincing Bentley of his theological sincerity. This, however, is not the only place where hints of non-scientific motivations peek out from the cracks of Newtonian science. Further on in this letter Newton repeatedly ascribes the cause of various natural phenomena to an intelligent and attentive Being, emphatically stating that there simply could not be any other viable explanation. Answering Bentley's first query regarding the formation of the sun and planets as suitable evidence for a deity, he posits, "[their particularized formation] I do not think explicable by mere natural causes, but am forced to ascribe it to the counsel and contrivance of a voluntary agent."<sup>4</sup> Newton explains similarly again in respect to Bentley's second query concerning the planets' circular orbital motion:

For since comets descend into the region of our planets, and here move all manner of ways... it is plain that there is no natural cause which could determine all the planets, both primary and secondary, to move the same way and in the same plane,

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Newton, "Correspondence with Richard Bentley, Letter One," *Newton: Philosophical Writings*, ed. Andrew Janiak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 94.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

without any considerable variation. This must have been the effect of counsel. Nor is there any natural cause which could give the planets those just degrees of velocity, in proportion to their distances from the sun, and other central bodies, which were requisite to make them move in such concentric orbits about those bodies.<sup>5</sup>

In both instances, instead of looking for a mechanical cause behind natural phenomena, Newton deduces the existence of a divine force that propels the celestial order.

It is clear that Newton's science is pitched not only at describing mechanical laws, but at determining where those laws come from, outlining not only a natural world, but a super-natural world as well, replete with a provable deity. Conversely, at times Newton's profound intellectual honesty and need for "evidence" emerge specifically in the area where they seem to have conceded to the compelling drive of theological dogma the most. Regarding Bentley's fifth and final query on proof for God's existence, Newton answers, "I see nothing extraordinary in the inclination of the earth's axis for proving a deity."<sup>6</sup> Although he finds the above cited examples as "extraordinary for proving a deity," his theological incentives do have borders. Newton does not manipulate every natural phenomenon, such as the inclination of the Earth's axis, to support belief in a deity. He does not see evidence for his theology in every nook and cranny of the natural world, and will not force reality to say something it does not. It is here that we see the parameters of Newton's theological proclivity; there is something constraining Newton's *Weltanschauung* of faith, hindering its projection onto the entirety of Newtonian scientific thought.

The two examples of theological projection cited above contain a commonality that reveals the criterion Newton employs in determining when to induct God into his scientific equation. Both cases involve particularization and specialized order in nature, which Newton seems to believe propels them beyond mechanical explanation. The presence of attentive detail found in the cosmos testifies to intelligent craftsmanship and begs for a more thorough investigation of its source. In fact, in the first example of solar and planetary formation, Newton establishes the plausibility that a simpler, more general level of formation *could* have evolved naturally and thus can be sufficiently explained in mechanical terms alone. "If the matter was evenly dispersed throughout infinite space...some of it would convene into one mass and some into another, so as to make an infinite number of great masses...And thus might the sun and fixed stars be formed..."<sup>7</sup> It is specifically the

complex particularization of different properties within the solar and planetary bodies that motivates Newton to look for a divine explanation. The same barometer stands regarding the perfect orbital motion of the planets. Newton believes that the disorderly activity of comets reflects the naturally chaotic behavior of cosmic material in general. Cast against their arbitrarily shifting cosmic backdrop, the planets' perfect and ordered orbital motion testifies to the existence of an intelligent being who has forced the planets into their specific orbits. In other words, the natural state of the universe is chaotic; the scientific order found therein requires a level of intent.

Newton discerns evidence for an intelligent creator in the scientific order within creation. Structure allows for coherence, and coherence implies reason and intent. Newton regards the order and intelligibility of the universe as empirical evidence for the existence of a deity. That is why it is specifically in these instances of perceived structure and particularization that Newton inducts God. For Newton, the existence of a deity is a deducible conclusion like any other scientific fact.

The Newtonian scientific process is empirical, demanding phenomenological evidence for any conclusion to be considered valid. Likewise, regarding theological epistemology, his approach does not differ. Newton employs the same methodology in studying both, and his demand for empirical evidence in theological studies is no less rigorous than that in scientific analysis. In this sense, he establishes a scientific theology and an empirical God. Furthermore, the two fields seem inextricably bound in Newton's worldview, affecting each other in a sort of symbiotic relationship through which belief in a deity is supported: theology becomes quantified and science becomes qualified.

In a letter from the mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, dated March 7, 1692, Leibniz praises Newton and urges him specifically to continue his efforts, "to handle nature in mathematical terms."<sup>8</sup> Leibniz is referring to Newton's work in furthering a mathematical analysis of the natural world, thereby eventually establishing mathematics as the "language of science." Newton's new quantified approach to the natural world, the development of calculus, enabled him to systematically codify scientific fact. More importantly, however, it allowed him to get a "handle" on, and systemize, God Himself. His demand for precision in all inquiries reflects a strong

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>6</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Correspondence with Leibniz," *Isaac Newton: Philosophical Writings*, 106.

need to deal with and conquer things otherwise incoherent, beyond the human grasp. Harnessing the natural world as his subject, Newton employs the only tool at man's disposal: the rational intellect. By means of observation and reflection, Newton hopes to understand the universe around him and the Creator behind it. His statement, "I do not feign hypotheses" expresses an existential need to prove things conclusively and definitively. It reflects an underlying anxiety, an awareness of the opacity that characterizes the universal puzzle, bereft of the intelligibility which the empirical process provides. Newton trusts empirical evidence as his sole tool, for it is all he can be certain of. This anxiety does not stem from his need to comprehend the natural universe alone; rather, his drive to de-mystify the world around him is the expression of a greater need to find valid grounds for his faith.

Part of Newton's need to connect science and theology is a product of his cultural milieu. Newton lived at the height of the European Enlightenment, a time when science and theology were commonly combined in the single branch of "natural philosophy." He arrived on the scientific scene when the emergent science had poised itself at war with traditional theology, posing a rift between the two and causing a sort of identity crisis for natural philosophy. It is difficult to argue that Newton's work was isolated from this intellectual context.

The pre-Newtonian scientific stage was dominated by the astronomer Galileo Galilei, whose observations helped to establish the Copernican heliocentric model of the universe as valid and true. This model and its impact on the scientific world, as well as the world at large, are referred to as the Copernican Revolution, a movement whose formulation is not deemed complete until the final contributions of Newtonian science. The Copernican model of the universe had a pervasive impact on the social and religious psyche of the time. The previously accepted model of the universe, the geocentric model, placed Earth at the center of the cosmos with all of the various other planets and cosmic material revolving around it. This celestial model fit cohesively with religious dogma that established man as a creature of divine and moral obligations, upon whom God focused and who was therefore responsible for the safeguarding of his or her own religious personality. Essentially, the geocentric universe placed man at the center of *God's* cosmos. Galileo's threat, and the threat of his predecessors, beginning with Copernicus, cut deep and went way beyond the need to draw up new universal maps with the sun at the center. The possibility that earth was not at the center of the physical cosmos sug-

gested that it was not at the center of the metaphysical cosmos either. This notion threatened to undermine the entire religious psychology of society. The Copernican model suggested some sort of fracture between theology and science that begged for resolution in order for it to gain popular acceptance.

The cultural context that Newton worked within, the Enlightenment, facilitated his unifying contribution to the scientific world. The Enlightenment was a period that could best be described by the Kantian statement, "Have courage to use your own reason—that is the motto of Enlightenment."<sup>9</sup> It was an era marked by confidence in reason and in man's ability to manipulate that reason, utilizing it as his guiding light in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. The intellectual material and scholarship of the time reflects such a confidence, employing reason to determine issues of morality and truth. Many Enlightenment texts relate to the inherent rift posed between God and the human intellect, an intellect that empowers man and raises him to an almost divine level. Newton's writings served to repair this apparent disconnect by identifying God as the Supreme Rational Being; Newton's God is the Mechanic, the Mathematician, and the embodiment of reason itself. By taking reason, the Enlightenment notion of greatness, and attaching it to God, he succeeds in *redefining* the divine nature and allows it to fit cohesively with the science of his day.

Newton's scientific and theological writings attempt to present a conception of God, reason and science that is fluid and harmonious. For that very reason, Newton may not, after all, be considered the father of modern science. The modern scientific process, as it is understood today, is a sparer version of Newton's methodology, without the dogmatic elements, demanding a stark distinction between theology and science. We tend to adopt a contrast model when dealing with science and theology today, distinguishing between the two definitively, setting each in its own throne, free to reign only in their respective domains.<sup>10</sup> As science ad-

<sup>9</sup> Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin, 1995), 1.

<sup>10</sup> This is due in large measure to Evolutionary Biology, which resulted in the need to separate the two fields because of uncomfortable theological conclusions one might be forced to draw. It should be noted that Darwin himself did not see evolution as something that necessarily denies the existence of a deity. Rather, he adopted a trend of thought similar to that of Newton: the complex specialization that is able to emerge from creation can serve just as well as testimony to the existence of a deity. Darwin and Newton differ in that Newton seems to see this specialization as an original and direct divine creation, while Darwin, obviously, sees it as the evolutionary result of an initial divine cause.

vances, this allows for a clearer picture of, as well as a valid belief in, the conclusions of both disciplines.

During an era when the perceived connection between science and theology wrought havoc and anxiety upon society, Newton successfully formed an intellectual model that positively reframed and interpreted that connection. In modern times, the implications that research in areas like Evolutionary Biology and Quantum Physics present for our conception of theology, and by extension life at large, are so chaotic that it seems natural to separate the two fields and allow them each to draw their own conclusions. Newtonian science and theology are book-ended by two scientific periods, whose data posed and still poses major disconnects between our perceived experience and hard science. Newtonian science served as a bridge that was able to merge these two elements and assuage the tension. In this respect, it stands independent, as its own kind, a sort of “theological science,” separate from the science that preceded and followed. Newton’s work resulted in the image of a provable deity that Newton himself could believe in: the God of Intelligence, the God of Newton.

# The Coming of Modernity





# Lord Macartney's Prediction Reassessed

Perel Skier

**L**ord George Macartney, sent in 1793 as the first British envoy to China, predicted the demise of the Qing dynasty with astonishing clairvoyance. He observed the fault lines where the government would break, perceived how and where rebellion would spread, and even the atrocities such a time would witness, all while he visited Qing China in its heyday. However, though Macartney's extrapolations proved true, their basis was false: the Empire's disintegration was not due to an anti-Manchu thirst for independence, but the introduction of foreign religious and political ideology at the exact moment when Chinese faith in their own government was exhausted.

Macartney believed that the Chinese administration he observed, while outwardly secure, suffered from a dangerous disparity: "The government as it now stands," he noted, "is properly the tyranny of a handful of Tartars over more than three hundred million of Chinese."<sup>1</sup> He explained that when the Manchurian Qing dynasty finally established itself after years of anarchic bloodshed, during which the Chinese had no stable governing body, "the spirit of the Chinese was...effectually subdued by the weight of calamity...and they less reluctantly submitted to foreign usurpation."<sup>2</sup> The Chinese, Macartney reasoned, had resented being ruled by Manchurians, but they were numbed by the tragedy and destruction of chaos, and for more than a century and a half they had kowtowed to the foreign Qing because "the government, though absolute, was at least methodical and regular."<sup>3</sup>

No more, Macartney stated confidently in his letters. The Emperor would soon find he had overstayed his welcome. "The Chinese are now recovering from the blows that had stunned them," he wrote. "They are awaking from the political stupor they had been thrown into by the Tartar impression, and begin to feel their native energies revive."<sup>4</sup> Macartney believed it was only a matter of time before "the incessant anxiety of foreign possession, the odium of a foreign yoke" brought the Empire crashing to its knees.<sup>5</sup> "A slight collision might elicit fire from the flint,"

<sup>1</sup> Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, Jonathan D. Spence, eds. *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999), 101.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 102.

he explained, "and spread the flames of revolt from one extremity of China to the other."<sup>6</sup> He detected an explosive tension in Chinese society, a radical instability; the smallest quarrel would provoke rebellion, he determined, and that rebellion would immediately engulf the entire country. The Emperor would be powerless to quell such a ubiquitous revolt, because the Empire had grown "too ponderous and disproportionate to be easily grasped by a single hand."<sup>7</sup> Macartney was convinced that the tenuous control the government currently maintained over its vast country would snap like a thread. He despaired of a peaceful transition to a better form of Chinese government, noting that "whenever such an event happens it will probably be attended with all the horrors and atrocities from which they were delivered by the Tartar domination."<sup>8</sup>

Macartney's observation that the empire had already surpassed the administration's capacity to govern it is amply attested to in an injunction included in Qian Yong's "On Popular Religion." On the surface, the author of this memorandum deplores the common practice of certain "religious processions and gatherings" which he deems frivolous and lewd.<sup>9</sup> However, the true source of his discomfort is the diminishing authority the local magistrates wield over the peasants. The author notes that "tens and thousands of men and women appear to watch...parades and although local magistrates occasionally ban such activities, they grow and prosper from year to year."<sup>10</sup> He harps repeatedly on the dangers of having so many people gathered in a single place: "If vicious people were to take this opportunity to loot and rob," he writes, "the situation would be uncontrollable."<sup>11</sup> In this document, little faith is displayed in the supposedly "methodical and regular" government's ability to maintain the peace.<sup>12</sup> The author knows that provincial little towns like his are not among the Emperor's top security concerns, and he is afraid of the consequences when the common people realize what Macartney noticed a half-century before: that the "ponderous and disproportionate" realm of China is beyond anyone's real control.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 130-31.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 102.

It was not, however, Macartney's vision of a resurgence of the Chinese spirit, a revolution to remove foreign tyrants that ultimately fractured the Qing's reign beyond recognition. It was the British presence in China and their two opium wars that crippled the dynasty. The British outstripped the Chinese army in technology and warfare; where China relied firmly on its traditional bannermen, relics of the pre-Industrial Revolution era, Great Britain had repeating rifles and flat-bottomed boats that enabled it to take Beijing and decimate the Emperor's forces with ease. This sounded two death-knells for China: its armies, already spread thin over the provinces of China, were left with even less manpower to enforce the Emperor's will, and contact with foreigners, previously limited to a narrow margin under the direct supervision of imperial forces, was suddenly ubiquitous. The government became incapable of effectively monitoring the influx of foreign ideas into Chinese culture; no longer did it possess the adequate means to control what ideas its citizens incorporated into their lives and in what ways. Oddly, the threat of fracture that Macartney perceived was fully realized—not by revolutionaries in China, but by his own government.

From the cracks the British created in the Chinese government sprung all the rebellion and chaos that Macartney had foreseen. Foreign influences created the problem, and in the eyes of some Chinese, foreign influences also provided the solution. The Taiping rebellion (1850–1864), whose followers were guided by a form of Christianity gleaned and haphazardly reconstructed from the teachings of foreign missionaries, sought to establish a Taiping Tianguo, “a Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace.” They came to see their Manchu rulers as unholy devils that had caused much hardship in China with their pagan ways. If they could physically and spiritually eradicate this un-holiness, the Taiping thought, peace and plenty could be restored to China. Yet here another aspect of Macartney's dire predictions was fulfilled: “by their very effort to avoid them,” the Taiping drew down upon themselves “oppression and destruction.”<sup>14</sup> They wanted to end China's economic difficulties and political vulnerability, but they were “poisoned by their own remedies.” By attacking the government, they ended up weakening themselves.<sup>15</sup> The ensuing struggle between the fledgling Taiping and the Qing would kill at least twenty million Chinese citizens before its resolution, both sides equally ruthless in their obliteration of human life.

The Taiping, for example, managed to capture and hold Nanjing, China's south-

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

ern capital, for more than a decade, but they killed thousands of soldiers and civilians alike in the process. Zeng Goufan, a key leader of the Qing efforts to subdue the Taiping, depicted their reign in Nanjing as cruel and repressive: “They have inflicted bitter sorrow upon millions of people,” he says in “A Proclamation against the Bandits of Guangdong and Guagnxi”.<sup>16</sup> He describes men and women stripped of all their material possessions, living on menial rations, and deployed as forced laborers for the Taiping. “The feet of women who refuse to unbind them are cut off and shown to other women as a warning,” Zeng records. Considered a horrific act by the Chinese, it is exceedingly painful for women to unbind their feet, and forcing them to do so is like torture.<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, the Qing's resolve to tighten their grip on the provinces they still held, to flatten any hint of rebellion in their midst, resulted in grisly scenes like the 1851 execution of Taiping rebels at Canton. A foreigner who witnessed this execution theorized that “the severity of the mandarins seemed to increase in the same proportion as the extension of the insurrection;” in a phrase that nearly mimics Macartney's own forecast, he notes that in China, the “horror” of such executions “is doubled by its attendant circumstances.”<sup>18</sup> The age of the rebels ranged from the very young to the very old, he described, “but the greater part of them was so debilitated from suffering” that when forced to kneel in the square before being executed, “they rolled in the mud.”<sup>19</sup> Each convict was decapitated, their heads carried away, “but the bodies were left in the place of execution,” the foreigner writes:

A lamentable scene then commenced. A troop of women with disheveled hair approached the fatal spot, shrieking aloud in wild disorder. These unhappy beings were endeavoring to distinguish their fathers, their husbands, and their children among the headless corpses.<sup>20</sup>

The brutality of the Taiping and the Qing alike, throughout this dark time in Chinese history, more than fulfilled Macartney's premonitions of the “horrors and atrocities” that would accompany the decline of dynastic rule.<sup>21</sup>

Although Macartney correctly perceived the dangerous overextension of the Chinese government and was able to predict with frightening precision the fall of

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 136–37.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 138–39.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 103.

the Qing and the bloody, chaotic vortex which would envelope the country with its destruction, he misattributed the cause of this tailspin. Anti-Manchurian sentiment surely arose in the wake of the British Opium Wars and was strengthened by the Chinese government's failures in both instances, but as Zeng noted in his proclamation, what distinguished the Taiping from the rebellions that had surfaced in the weaker years of every dynasty was that they had "stolen a few scraps from foreign barbarians" by adopting Western ideas of salvation and utopia.<sup>22</sup> "In a single day," Zeng said, "several thousand years of Chinese ethical principles and proper human relationships, classical books, social institutions and statutes have all been completely swept away."<sup>23</sup> That void made the Qing vulnerable to the Taiping revolution; that foreign erosion of Chinese beliefs, not a resurgence of national pride, led to the destruction Macartney foresaw.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## Beyond the Bounds of Self-Perception

Noah Cheses

Geniuses often assess themselves naively and fail to appreciate their own uniqueness. At the dawn of a new age in which Jews were forced to adapt themselves to the rapid developments of their surroundings, four towering geniuses occupied themselves with the question of Jewish endurance, survival, and renaissance. Over the course of a century, from 1740 until 1840, the Baal Shem Tov, Moses Mendelssohn, the Hatam Sofer, and Hayyim Volozhiner all fostered change, created history, and ultimately shaped Jewish destiny. The degree of accuracy to which these personalities perceived themselves directly corresponds to the manner in which they sought to shape the future of the Jewish people.

### The Baal Shem Tov and the Beginnings of Hasidism

Engulfed in grinding poverty and psychological turbulence, eighteenth century Eastern European Jewry found comfort in the eighteenth century with the Hasidic movement and its founder Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer—the Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name). The masses, searching desperately for relief and stability quickly latched onto the Baal Shem Tov. His powerful spirit and personality coupled with the simplicity of ideas that he espoused captivated the Jews of Eastern Europe.

After spending many years living in isolation in the Carpathian mountains, the Baal Shem Tov, at the age of thirty six, revealed himself as a saint and began to preach the basic tenets of Hasidism. He traveled from town to town, attracting large crowds in each location he visited. Soon enough, he became widely known as a healer and holy man.

In the year 1750, the Baal Shem Tov composed a letter to his brother in law, Rabbi Abraham Gershon Ashkenazi of Kutov. In this highly autobiographical letter, he discloses his most intimate religious experience: a great mystical vision involving the ascent of his soul to heaven on Rosh Hashanah 1747. The Baal Shem Tov reveals that during his ascent he entered into "The Palace of the Messiah" and encountered the Messiah studying Torah. In a most remarkable exchange, the Baal Shem Tov asked the Messiah:

"When are you coming, sir?" He answered me, "'By this you shall know it' (ex. 7:17): When your [the Baal Shem Tov's] teachings will become renowned and re-

vealed throughout the world and when 'your springs flow out,'" [i.e. when your Chasidic teachings become widespread].<sup>1</sup>

With the charge of the Messiah, the Baal Shem Tov understood well that his mission in life would be to teach Torah to the masses of Jews throughout the world, from the rich to the poor, the complex to the simple. Because the Baal Shem Tov perceived his own uniqueness as a mystic capable of transcendence, he recognized that in order to fulfill his mission he would need to become more familiar with his audience so that he would be capable of catering to their exact needs. For this reason, the Baal Shem Tov spent many years traveling around to various communities in Eastern Europe.

During his travels, the Baal Shem Tov acquired and sharpened the tools necessary to carry out the mandate of the Messiah: to launch a revolutionary movement that spread his teachings to all Jews. He sensitized himself to the daily challenges and concerns of simple Jews and was therefore able to contextualize his ideas in a meaningful and effective manner. Additionally, the Baal Shem Tov developed into a formidable orator, capable of sweeping away large audiences with his passionate story telling and animated Torah teaching.

The simplicity of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings testifies to the sophistication of his self-awareness. He was able to build a system of Judaism modeled not after his own personal predilections, but rather after the wants and the needs of the Jewish masses. Let us examine a few of the Baal Shem Tov's most fundamental ideas in order to determine their correspondence to the epoch in which they were disclosed.

The downtrodden and depressed state of the Jews of Eastern Europe in the wake of many decades of struggle and oppression required major rejuvenation. The Baal Shem Tov sensed this profound need and therefore emphasized the greatness of a Jew, his innate power and natural dignity. The Baal Shem Tov's most basic ideas included the importance and significance of each Jew in creation and in the universe. He taught that a Jew and his actions have serious impact upon God and the way that He runs the world. Another message that reinvigorated the forlorn mind-set of many Eastern European Jews was the Baal Shem Tov's promotion of joy as the foundation of Jewish life. He asserted that depression and pessimism were the greatest cause for spiritual apathy and sin. Only through a pleasant state of mind was it possible for a Jew to draw closer to God.

<sup>1</sup> Israel Baal Shem Tov, "Ethical Testament," quoted in Norman Lamm, "The Letter of the Besht to R. Gershon of Kutov," *Tradition* 14:4 (Fall 1974): 117.

The Baal Shem Tov also professed the notion that even evil is inherently good because nothing can exist without an inner spark of God's holiness. To a generation living in the aftermath of Chmielnicki massacres and the brutality that followed this approach to pain and suffering could not have been more helpful. The masses longed for a coherent Jewish theodicy so that they would be equipped to cope with the deep theological challenges raised by their perpetual experience of persecution.

The Baal Shem Tov's ability to transcend the boundaries of his own selfhood and accurately perceive the needs of others directly corresponds to his success in forever altering the path of Jewish history. Indeed, his life and legacy brought meaning and joy to a world that was becoming increasingly strident for Jews in Eastern Europe.

### Moses Mendelssohn: The Beginnings of the Jewish Enlightenment

The Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries destabilized the authority of the Church and left Western Europe looking for new ideas and sources of meaning. To fill this gap, the Enlightenment began to take hold of Western Europe in the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment was a movement which believed that rational thought and scientific understanding serve as the primary pathway to true knowledge, ethics, and social progress without the necessity of religion as a central factor in human life. The new movement sought to elevate and free the individual from the confinements of his historically evolved social and religious framework. As new ideas of anti-traditionalism began to take form in general society, the uniqueness of Judaism as a religion, culture, and society were challenged. How could Jews absorb the values of the Enlightenment without forgoing their Jewish values?

In response to these conditions, Moses Mendelssohn, a Jew with formidable intellectual talents emerged. He devoted his life towards reconciling Judaism with the European Enlightenment:

It is true that I recognize no eternal truths other than those that are not merely comprehensible to human reason but can also be demonstrated and verified by human powers. Yet Mr. Moerschel is misled by an incorrect conception of Judaism when he supposes that I cannot maintain this without departing from the religion of my fathers. On the contrary, I consider this an essential point of the Jewish religion.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, trans. Allan Arkush (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1983), 89.

Clearly, Mendelssohn believed in the confluence of the Enlightenment and Judaism. With this belief he sought to reformulate the truth of traditional Judaism in rational terms, claiming that reason, not faith, should be the primary source of a Jew's commitment to the universal, moral, and philosophical ideas of the Torah.

He performed this re-articulation of Judaism in *Jerusalem*, a book that resonates with an autobiographical undertone. Throughout the book, Mendelssohn constructs an ideology of Judaism modeled after his own personal life. He idealizes the ethical lifestyle of the observant Jew who, like himself, ventures out into society to contribute to the common good of mankind. He calls upon the Jewish people,

To direct the actions of its members toward the common good... Man can no longer remain in his solitary condition without a sense of wretchedness; he is obliged to leave that condition and to enter into society with those in a like situation in order to satisfy their needs through mutual aid.<sup>3</sup>

Mendelssohn argued even further claiming that "Serving the state is true service of God."<sup>4</sup> Apparently he was convinced that since he led a life of commitment to both the Jewish and secular worlds, other Jews could and would do so as well.

These lofty expectations point to the fact that like many other geniuses throughout the generations, Mendelssohn assessed his exceptional qualities naively and did not appreciate his uniqueness from among the common Jewish world. Under the impression that he was going to initiate a large-scale movement, Mendelssohn was inspired to translate the Torah into German, thereby providing the opportunity for better integration into non-Jewish culture. Mendelssohn hoped that the translation would serve as a bridge over which ambitious young Jews could pass to the great world of secular knowledge.

The reality, however, was that Mendelssohn walked a path of solitude. Being the first Jew in the modern period to win a place in the secular Western world was not an easy act to follow. In truth, he was the sole individual capable of composing philosophical works in brilliant German, thus gaining the respect of German academics while simultaneously adhering to the lifestyle of a traditional Jew, guided by both the Torah and Jewish law.

The greatest testimony to the fact that Mendelssohn failed to perceive his distinctiveness is the manner in which the next generation understood his legacy. Most of the traditional Rabbis, on the one hand, rejected his openness to the outside world

<sup>3</sup> Mendelssohn, 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

because they did not understand how it was possible to be a traditional Jew and to do anything else. Conversely, a small group of inspired students (later known as *Maskilim*) appreciated his wisdom, however were unable to actually live the infinitely complex lifestyle of their teacher. While Mendelssohn may have succeeded in his dual citizenship to the non-Jewish and Jewish worlds others merely fumbled; the duality of everyday life was too difficult to adhere to. As a result, Mendelssohn's followers, which included figures like David Friedlander, Abraham Geiger, and Samuel Holdheim, were compelled to choose one way of life over the other, causing many Jews to opt for the non-Jewish world and abandon the ranks of traditional Judaism. This phenomenon can be witnessed most strikingly in Mendelssohn's children and grandchildren, most of whom eventually converted to Christianity.

As such, it appears that Mendelssohn, unlike the Baal Shem Tov, did not realize how extraordinary he was in relation to the individuals he sought to inspire. Consequently, he possessed an inaccurate self-perception that caused him to mold a sculpture of Judaism modeled after his own person instead of the masses he was trying to impact.

### The Hatam Sofer and the Beginnings of the Ultra-Orthodox Movement

The world of Mendelssohn and his followers remained distant from the Jewish communities of Central Europe until the middle of the nineteenth century. During the first four decades of that century, an astute personality by the name of Moses Schreiber-Sofer, commonly known as the Hatam Sofer (the name given to his rabbinic responsa) emerged as the principal leader of Orthodoxy in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He astutely perceived the looming threat of the Western Jewish enlightenment and prepared the Jews of Pressburg for its onslaught. Due to these concerns he strengthened traditional Judaism from the inside by establishing one of the largest *yeshivot* in Europe, an institution that yielded most of the rabbinical leaders of Central Europe of the next generation: "I have taught thousands of outstanding students, so that the community has become an assemblage of Torah scholars."<sup>5</sup>

In his efforts to prevent liberal Judaism from influencing his communities, the Hatam Sofer adopted a position that absolutely forbade any innovation of Jewish law and ritual: "Woe to the one who changes it from the way it was,"<sup>6</sup> he wrote. In

<sup>5</sup> Moses Sofer, "An Ethical Testament," *Pressburg Under Siege*, trans. Avraham Finkel (New York: CIS Publishers, 1991), 92.

<sup>6</sup> *Responsa Hatam Sofer*, 1:28.

response to a proposal suggesting the translation of the Jewish prayer service into German, he wrote:

To pray with a congregation in a language other than *lashon ha-kodesh* is absolutely prohibited under all circumstances. Anyone who changes [the language of prayer from Hebrew] has the lower hand, and anyone who supports the words of the Sages, and the *minhag* of our fathers, has the upper hand and will be blessed by God.<sup>7</sup>

The emphatic tone of this response suggests that the Hatam Sofer perceived a threat and was directly taking up arms against it. His message was clear: any innovation not sanctioned by Jewish tradition was harmful and dangerous.

In assuming responsibility for Torah, its values and laws, the Hatam Sofer, unlike the Baal Shem Tov and Moses Mendelssohn, perceived himself to be a preserver of traditional Judaism, of the meticulous observance of Jewish faith and practice. This self-concept molded the manner in which he sought to influence the future of the Jews in Central Europe, namely to imbue them with a conservative ideology. He wrote: "it is good to elevate a prohibition [to overstate it and make it appear more stringent]."<sup>8</sup> This self-perception becomes even more evident in his ethical will where he emphasizes the primacy of Torah study numerous times:

1. Increase your Torah study, to raise again the House of our Lord and to repair its ruins.
2. Engross yourselves in Torah.
3. Teach the Torah to your children.
4. Study God's Torah diligently and with concentration. Disseminate the Torah among the masses.
5. Grant them...long life dedicated to the fear of God and study of Torah.<sup>9</sup>

When perusing the writings of the Hatam Sofer, a unique pattern emerges in which the Hatam Sofer distinguishes between "us" and "them." When asked about moving the *Bimah* to the front of the synagogue, he replied: "And even according to the Kesef Mishna who offered support for *those congregations* nonetheless [the same is] not [legitimate] *for us...for our communities* have not diminished."<sup>10</sup> The Hatam Sofer's tendency to define himself and his community in contrast to "oth-

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 6:84.

<sup>8</sup> Aaron Schriber, "The Hatam Sofer's Nuanced Attitude Towards Secular Learning, Maskilim, and the Reformers," *Torah U-Madda Journal* 11 (2002-2003): 143.

<sup>9</sup> Sofer, 89-91, 93.

<sup>10</sup> *Responsa Hatam Sofer*, 1: 28.

ers" is reminiscent of a trend noted by Jacob Katz, namely, that Ultra-Orthodox Judaism was shaped by the need of traditional Jews to show that they practiced Judaism differently than other groups.<sup>11</sup> They desired to identify themselves as a distinct unit, totally separate from the progressive reformers.

It appears that a significant factor in the Hatam Sofer's self-perception was viewing himself in contradistinction to the reformers that he was combating. This is particularly apparent in his ethical will, as it seems that the Hatam Sofer assessed his role in life and lasting legacy to be that of a soldier fighting against the reformers and the Haskala movement. At least five separate times in his short ethical will he engages in direct polemics against the reform movement:

1. Do not join the company of evildoers who follow the modern ways and who depart from God and His Torah. Do not dwell near them, and do not associate with them in any way shape or form.
2. Do not go near the books written by Moses Mendelssohn, then your feet will never stumble.
3. Never say, 'times have changed.'
4. The curriculum and the schedule of Torah classes should not be changed in any way. Anyone wanting to introduce changes shall be removed.
5. The order of prayer and the layout of the *Shul* shall be maintained in perpetuity without the slightest change or alteration.<sup>12</sup>

The Hatam Sofer feared that the innovations of Jewish reformers and the Haskalah would lead to the destruction of the traditional Judaism.

Even beyond his role as an anti-reform, Jewish preservationist, the Hatam Sofer sought to increase the separation between Jews the surrounding gentile cultures. Presumably, he thought that isolation would prevent exposure to the dangerous ideas of the enlightenment. Within this context, he demanded: "I positively and unconditionally forbid you to attend theater performances...Beware of adopting non-Jewish names, of speaking the language or dressing in the style of the non-Jew."<sup>13</sup>

Although the Hatam Sofer exhausted much of his energy combating reformers, his views on preserving traditional Judaism were not as extreme as some of his disciples, like Hillel Lichtenstein and Akiva Schlesinger, have sought to construe them. In truth, much of the ultra-orthodox, separatist, and anti-secular sentiments attributed to the Hatam Sofer were actually propagated by his followers. During his earlier

<sup>11</sup> Gil Perl, Course Lecture on "Modern Jewish History," New York: Yeshiva University, May 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Sofer, 89-91, 93.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 90-1.



years especially, the Hatam Sofer cultivated a nuanced attitude toward general culture and secular studies. In fact, as a young man he gained proficiency in geometry, algebra, anatomy, astronomy and physics. In a sermon delivered in Pressburg in 1811 he remarked, "You should keep your children from studying [other wisdoms], but you should not keep yourself [from studying them], since all the wisdoms are perfumers and cooks for the Torah and they are doorways and gates to it."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the Hatam Sofer spoke and wrote a sophisticated German, hired tutors to teach German to his children, and even allowed community Rabbis to deliver Torah lectures in German.

In the later years of his life, however, the Hatam Sofer became increasingly strict about protecting his community from any negative influences. This is evidenced by his ethical will where he forbade the use of German by Jews and engagement in outside culture. Some of his changing positions may have been due to his increasing concern over the spread of German Reform and Haskalah movements. With these considerations in mind, it seems that common conception of the Hatam Sofer as a religious extremist, promoting a separatist way of life, and a vehement anti-reformist may very well originate from his ethical will and from students' exposure to the last few years of his life.<sup>15</sup>

### Rav Hayyim Volozhiner and the Beginnings of the Yeshiva Movement

During the same epoch when the Hatam Sofer guided the Jews of Central Europe, Hayyim Itzkowitz of Volozhin led the Jewish community of Eastern Europe. Rav Hayyim Volozhiner, as he was commonly known, initiated the re-birth of Torah learning which had been in decline during the eighteenth century. He sought to accomplish his goal through the founding of a major Yeshiva, an institution of constant learning that would engage the best and brightest students in Torah study and service Jewish communities throughout Lithuania.

R. Hayyim Volozhiner sought to perpetuate the legacy of his master, the Vilna Gaon, through this new type of yeshiva. The Vilna Gaon held that the world could only endure if the Jews did not only accept the Torah but studied it ceaselessly. R. Hayyim Volozhiner incorporated this ideology into his new yeshiva, as he created a national house of Torah learning in which there would be constant study of Torah.

<sup>14</sup> Schriber, 133.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

At no time was the voice of Torah learning to be silent; there were always students who studied by the night and slept by the day.

In a letter sent out to garner the support of Lithuanian Jewry for his yeshiva, R. Hayyim Volozhiner adopted the Vilna Gaon's extremism and absolutism in regard to the primacy of Torah study: "we have no portion other than the learning of Torah... we would cease to be alive if not for those who are involved with the light of the Torah."<sup>16</sup> The same sentiment characterizes R. Hayyim Volozhiner's work *Nefesh Ha-Hayyim*, where he introduced the concept of *Torah Lishmah*, learning Torah for the sake of itself alone. In the fourth section of the book, R. Hayyim Volozhiner asserted that "the correct existence, light, and sustenance of the worlds [depends] entirely on our engaging [Torah] properly, for God, Torah, and Israel are one."<sup>17</sup>

In the same letter, R. Hayyim Volozhiner acknowledged that other scholars viewed him as the primary student of the Vilna Gaon. Although he tried to deny this special relationship, R. Hayyim Volozhiner came to inherit the exceedingly high religious standards and ideals of his master. R. Hayyim Volozhiner's son noted that his father possessed the same ascetic bent as the Gaon of Vilna: "he despised physical satisfactions and immersed himself in Torah to such an extent that when, in his old age, he was subject to great anguish, he still kept up a happy disposition, never uttering a groan."<sup>18</sup> As heir to ideas that revolved around the total and absolute primacy of the study of Torah, R. Hayyim Volozhiner molded them into the founding principles of the Yeshiva Movement. This grand ideology, however, proved to be the yeshiva's greatest weakness. Soon enough R. Hayyim Volozhiner's movement devolved into an elitist movement that further stratified the already divided Jewish population. The yeshiva, which was initially intended to be a community-serving institution, engendered greater class differentiation in the Jewish world. Only the wealthiest Jews, for example, could afford to educate their children beforehand so that they could pass the entrance exams to the new yeshiva.

R. Hayyim Volozhiner's self-perception as the lead pupil and successor of the

<sup>16</sup> Hayyim Volozhiner, "A Letter to Establish the New Yeshiva," *Toldot Bet Hashem be-Voloz'in* (Yerushalayim:

T. Frank, 2000 or 2001), 3, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Hayyim Volozhiner, *Nefesh Ha-Hayyim*, Section 4.

<sup>18</sup> Norman Lamm, *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah's Sake in the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House; New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1989), 7.

Vilna Gaon forced him to maintain exceedingly high standards and ideals for himself and to impose them upon his *yeshiva*. Like Moses Mendelssohn, R. Hayyim Volozhiner promoted idealistic aims that were far beyond the reach of the popular masses.

Although the Yeshiva Movement had its shortcomings, its positive impact upon the world of Torah learning is widely recognized. Dozens of *yeshivot* followed R. Hayyim Volozhiner's model in his own lifetime. Furthermore, many of the *yeshivot* in existence today employ his educational vision of interaction between teacher and student, the infusion of joy into Torah studies, study in partners, and public Torah lectures. R. Hayyim Volozhiner, by virtue of his personality, Torah scholarship, and his establishment of the Yeshiva of Volozhin, wrought profound changes in the intellectual climate of Lithuanian and world Jewry, thereby propagating the influence and the prestige of the Vilna Gaon.

### Conclusion

Enlightenment thinkers postulated that human beings are governed by the huge, impersonal, and cataclysmic forces of history; the individual is in no way the shaper of historical events. Judaism, on the other hand, argues that God guides all historical events through the actions of man. Man's choices thereby become the divine instrument for shaping history. The four figures examined in this paper demonstrate that the capacity of the individual to shape history by making decisions informed by his self-perceptions, and upon how accurately he assesses himself relative to those he aimed to impact.

# Modern America



## A Middle Class Solution to a Working Class Problem: The New York Times and the Orphan Train Phenomenon

Aviva Klein

In 1853, Charles Loring Brace opened the Children's Aid Society (CAS), a charity dedicated to improving the lives of New York's thousands of destitute children. One year later, he initiated what would become its most visible—and controversial—program: the Emigration Plan. Over the course of sixty years, the CAS would send approximately 105,000 orphaned, vagrant, or otherwise uncared-for children to foster homes and jobs outside New York City. His idea, the direct ancestor of modern foster-care, was born of newly developed middle-class notions about child-rearing and home life.

The *New York Times* dedicated a great deal of space to coverage of what became known as the orphan trains. It is evident from the content and tone of the articles that the *Times* fully approved of the plan, out of the same middle-class beliefs that led to its conception. Their response was positive in that it helped rally support for a cause that improved the lives of thousands of children who were victims of the atrocious conditions of New York City slums. Yet it was negative in that it perpetuated condescending and often untrue attitudes towards the plight of the poor, and glossed over some serious flaws in the execution of the Emigration Plan.

Industrialization and the rise of capitalism bred two important social effects in mid-nineteenth century New York: the rise of the middle class, and the concurrent rise of poverty. The latter was exacerbated by increased immigration. Thousands of people poured into the city, mostly with extremely limited resources and social networks. The working class population increased, but the number of available jobs did not grow accordingly. Low wages and unemployment led to the proliferation of cheap, squalid residences—the tenements—which were often filled with adults and children alike living on the brink of indigence, looking for any way to acquire their daily bread. Disease in the slums was common and deadly. Prisons and almshouses overflowed with thieves, prostitutes, vagrants and other criminals.

The new middle class looked at the horror in the city streets and formed an explanation for the rampant poverty. Based on their own idea of domesticity—the im-

portance of proper home life in shaping respectable behavior—they saw poor children wandering the streets and concluded that the working classes had actively *chosen* their inferior lifestyle. The *Times* described the life of a vagrant boy as follows:

It means *wretchedness*. It means a long course of empty stomachs, dirty clothes, and verminous sleeping places. It means to be idle, to be hungry, to swear, to chew tobacco, to wear rags, to beg and to pilfer. It means not to know letters, to hate school and avoid church. The product of it all—as we see it every day on the walks—is a dirty, ignorant, spitting, swearing boy.<sup>1</sup>

In short, life in the working class slums embodied everything the middle class cringed at. “The home preserved those social virtues endangered by the public world of trade, industry, and politics,”<sup>2</sup> and those who lived in the streets had abandoned those virtues. Improving the plight (and moral fiber) of impoverished children became the reformers’ mission of choice; most of them perceived adults as beyond help. The *Times* wrote in 1860: “We cannot convert the laboring classes...into models of prudence and good behavior...but we can afford their offsprings [sic] a better physical and moral training than the tenement-house slums supply.”<sup>3</sup> The *New York Times* claimed that nine-tenths of children would end up as criminals without swift middle class intervention. The problem of poor children was especially important because it would affect the future of the entire city; they would one day be influencing public policy by voting in local elections. The poor weren’t yet irredeemable, but immediate action had to be taken.

The Children’s Aid Society’s mission statement in the *Times* declared, “We call upon all, who recognize that those are the little ones of Christ—all who believe that crime is best averted by sowing good influences in childhood—all who are friends of the helpless, to aid us in our enterprise.”<sup>4</sup> This statement encapsulates several of the middle-class motivations behind the CAS’s creation. In addition to the notion of domesticity, the reformers’ ideas had strong roots in the second Great Awakening, a Protestant religious revival of the early nineteenth century which emphasized moralism and the perfectability of man. The movement spawned an increase in social activism; causes such as abolition, temperance, and eventually child welfare gained supporters. Charles Loring Brace himself was a minister. The CAS’s

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, “A Manufacture of Citizens,” 29 April 1856.

<sup>2</sup> Christine Stansell, “Women Children, and the Uses of the Streets: Class and Gender Conflict in New York City, 1850-1860,” *Feminist Studies* 8:2 (Summer 1982): 310-11.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Times*, “What Shall be Done with our Vagrant Children?” 17 January 1860.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, “To the Public - the Children’s Aid Society,” 2 March 1853.

activities constantly faced opposition from Catholic parents and authorities who looked upon orphan trains as a legal way to kidnap and convert their children. Thus many articles in the *Times* appealed to readers' Christian sensibilities to compel them to support the CAS's programs.

In reality, many children were alone on the streets because they had to help provide for their families by foraging for fuel and salable items, by finding whatever work they could, or simply because they had nowhere else to go. Poor women didn't preside over their homes because they had to work for a living and because their tenement rooms were not sanctuaries from the harshness of modern life. Women were paid significantly less than men for doing the same jobs, making it nearly impossible for single mothers to support families on their own. At that time the idea that children should occupy themselves with school and play was foreign and unrealistic for people who couldn't afford the bare essentials for living.

Until the creation of the Children's Aid Society, the only places for vagrant children were houses of refuge (juvenile prisons/almshouses) and orphan asylums, both of which based their treatment on conformity to routines and rules. These houses were expensive, overcrowded, and seemed to have little effect on the inmates. The children were treated as a mass rather than as individuals, and nothing was done preemptively to prevent them from requiring incarceration or such care in the first place.

Brace based his idea of family care on the example of the German *Rauhe Haus*, a school for vagrant children where they lived in small groups in country cottages; working, playing, and learning in a natural home-like environment. This system was in keeping with the middle class idea that moral values were best nurtured in the home. To reformers, the numbers and behavior of children in the streets were evidence that they were not being raised correctly; getting children out of the city, away from bad influences and into proper homes, became the priority.

The decision to send large groups of children west was based on two important factors: the need for farm labor in the Western United States, and Brace's personal idealization of farm life. The Eastern cities were overcrowded, but settlement in the West was just beginning. Brace wrote effusively about farmers' intelligence and the abundance of food in the country: "The mere feeding of a young boy or girl is not considered at all."<sup>5</sup> A letter Brace sent to the *Times* during a visit to the West says:

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Stephen O'Connor, *Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children he Saved and Failed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 100.

Providence seems to have designed that each good farmer's house should be a kind of Domestic Mission for city heathens... The great help in this matter is that noble principle at the West which recognizes manhood as equal, and makes no distinctions that nature has not made.<sup>6</sup>

Of the older girls sent to find jobs it was said that "nearly all pay a portion of their fare from their wages, and are, therefore, not to be considered as objects of charity."<sup>7</sup> Orphan trains were considered especially practical and beneficial because they did not encourage "pauperism" or reliance on handouts: children were expected to pull their weight around the farm, which had the added moral advantage of keeping them busy. Life in the West eliminated "the two great prompters of evil—hunger and idleness," and instead brought out the good qualities in poor children that were stifled in the slums.<sup>8</sup>

The Emigration Plan got off the ground because all of the parties involved saw reason to support it. City dwellers were motivated to donate to support the program since it was a cheap way to drain the city of a potential scourge and empty overflowing asylums and jails. Farm families acknowledged the advantage of taking in a poor child from the city; it was cheaper than hiring an adult and they received "points" for Christian charity to boot. If the farmer made the child feel welcome and cared for, he or she would be more likely to want to stay and make an effort to be helpful. There was strong reason for parents to allow their children to go: fresh air, fresh food, and better opportunities than they could provide. And there was incentive for the children. The move offered them a chance for adventure and new experience, the possibility of finding either a steady job or the love and warmth of a stable home many had never had.

Recruiting for the orphan trains followed a particular pattern. Children were gathered from orphanages and CAS organizations (the Newsboys' Lodging House, the Girls' Lodging house, and industrial schools). Parents would bring their children to the office, or CAS "visitors" would persuade (and occasionally coerce) them to let the children go. The youngsters would be bathed and dressed in clean clothes, then sent out in the charge of one of more CAS workers, traveling by boat and train to the designated communities. A committee was set up in advance to advertise the Emigration Plan and to screen potential foster parents. Upon arrival,

<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, "Poor Children in the West," 8 June 1858.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, "Girls to the West," 27 January 1858.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, "Our City Charities - No. IV," 7 April 1860.

the children were brought to a church or opera house and lined up on stage (hence the term “being put up for adoption”) where each one would be introduced to the community. Foster parents chose which child they wanted, and if the child did not object, took him home with them.

According to the *New York Times*, the orphan trains were an unqualified success. The children who were sent were surprisingly charming and well-behaved: “The public too frequently regard the children of the poor... as being naturally vicious and repulsive, but... Some of them are not only gifted with great personal beauty, but are affectionate, confiding, and full of noble traits.”<sup>9</sup> They were often excited to go: “The children... looked exceedingly happy on leaving the City, and sung their farewell songs to New-York merrily.”<sup>10</sup> They were eagerly welcomed in the West, and sent back cheerful accounts of their new homes and jobs: “The girls are very much liked in the West, and write home the best accounts of their situation.”<sup>11</sup> Very few of them got into trouble with the law, and the two to four percent who did were emphatically noted to be lazy rebels who were unwilling to work: “Finding that they are expected to take a part in the usual avocations upon the farm... they rebel as soon as the novelty wears off.”<sup>12</sup> Concerns were only expressed in investigative reports of the city charities in general; critics complained that street children were often too addicted to crime and sin for a mere change of environment to change their characters, or that they would corrupt the pure country homes to which they were sent. But articles expressing optimism and wholehearted approval were much more common.

In reality, we know that the results were not so uniformly positive. From the accounts of the orphan train riders themselves, it is clear that plenty of children cried when they were separated from their families and left the only place that was familiar to them. There were people in the West who complained that they were powerless to stop New York from dumping its poor children where they would be someone else’s problem. Many of them were taken on as a source of free labor rather than out of Christian charity. There is no mention of the abuse many children met with; the only reason given for unsuccessful situations was that the child was lazy or wicked.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., “Children for the West,” 4 July 1860.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 8 August 1857.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., “Girls to the West,” 27 January 1858.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., “Our Street-Boys in the West,” 19 January 1879.

There were several major problems with the Emigration Plan that the *Times*—and the CAS itself—did not address until after Brace’s death. The trips were often under-funded and under-supervised. Foster parents were rarely screened thoroughly; people often simply showed up and picked a child. White boys were given preference over girls and blacks, and non-Protestants were often placed in Protestant homes. The CAS was extremely lax in recording details of children’s origins and experiences. Abuse was particularly under-recorded. Workers also did not check up on placements as often as they should have, so that problematic situations went unnoticed.

But it is clear that the CAS had an agenda and the *New York Times* supported that agenda’s underlying principles. In an attempt to identify themselves in contrast to the poor, middle-class reformers projected their ideas about family life and the causes of poverty onto the working class. They believed that working class parents were failing their children and endangering the entire city. They were motivated by the spirit of Christian missionizing as well as notions of Christian charity. Capitalism and the sweatshop system had created the middle class, but rather than acknowledging the role these played in creating indigence, they blamed the poverty on the poor. In their eyes, orphan trains were the cheapest, easiest, and most effective method of saving both the children and the city. Naturally, they exploited every opportunity to endorse that method.

Because of poor record-keeping (changes to the system were slow and gradual in coming, only beginning after Brace’s death in 1890,) it is difficult to determine the actual success of the orphan trains. To begin with, there are different standards of success: the rate of adoption, the rate of employment, the average length of placements. Not all of them are quantifiable, such as the children’s satisfaction in their new homes, or the percentage that went on to live “productively.” We do have positive accounts from riders who thanked the CAS for giving them the opportunity to make something of themselves. Several orphan train riders continued on to become prominent citizens; two were even state governors. It is also true that after a few years, crime and incarceration rates in New York dropped noticeably. There were also riders who went on to become criminals and vagrants in the West—or simply dropped from historical record. Because of the bias evident in the *New York Times* coverage of the events, it is not a truly accurate reflection of what happened with the orphan trains, but it is a reflection of the middle class view of what they believed happened.

What can be said of the orphan trains is that they constituted the first attempt to address a formidable social problem. The *Times* stressed the fact that it was irresponsible and cruel to avoid the issue of New York's destitute children and it championed the solution that made the most sense to its middle class readership. The Emigration Plan was an ideal way for reformers both to make a difference in society and nurture principles they held close to their hearts. It is fairer to see the era as one filled with learning experiences for the middle class rather than to castigate the reformers for the mistakes they made. The fact is that they sought to give thousands of children a *chance* to change their lot in life. And most importantly for today, the orphan trains eventually developed into our current foster-care system. It has changed dramatically from what it was at its beginning, but our present understanding of how to help children and families in crisis stems directly from the orphan trains' successes and failures.

## Legal Tolerance of Mormon Polygamy in Nineteenth Century America

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In the beginning of nineteenth century, America was marked by a revolution against traditional social values and norms. An emphasis on individual autonomy coupled with the increasing urbanization of Western society led to the dissolution of religious and familial control over individuals. As a result of this newfound sexual freedom, divorce laws were relaxed, women grew more independent, and birth control, abortions, prostitution, and pornography became ubiquitous. Upset by the degradation of society, religious counter-movements such as Mormonism arose in an attempt to reaffirm traditional "family values" like "moral behavior, adherence to religious values, stable families, and responsibility and loyalty to communities." These movements placed women at the center of the home and required them to subordinate themselves to men, raise children, display modesty, and view marriage and sex as means for procreation.<sup>1</sup> The clash of ideologies regarding the role of women in society laid the groundwork for future conflicts between the Mormon religion and secular laws.

Joseph Smith entered the cauldron of conflict between religious and secular forces with profound theological difficulties. "The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all the powers of reason and sophistry to prove their errors ... On the other hand, Baptists and Methodists were equally zealous" in their attempts to establish their own theology.<sup>2</sup> Due to the "extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists," Smith requested guidance from God and asserted that God denounced all of the current manifestations of religion. Following his vision, Smith founded Mormonism, which claimed not only "to be a restoration of the church of Jesus ... but also of the doctrines of the Old Testament."<sup>3</sup> Mormonism attempted to discover religious truth

<sup>1</sup> Irwin Altman, *Polygamous Families in Contemporary Society* (England: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Edwin Gaustad, ed, *A Documentary History of Religion in America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Ray Davis, "The Polygamous Prelude," *The American Journal of Legal History* 6:1 (January 1961): 3.

by rehabilitating traditional religious practices. These same religious practices, epitomized by a traditional value system that stood in stark distinction to contemporary society, would serve as the bedrock for a utopian society.

Joseph Smith's reinstitution of polygamy was the clearest manifestation of this return to traditionalism. In 1843, Smith received a revelation from God regarding the establishment of plural marriages. Polygamous marriage was practiced by many of the sacred characters of the Old Testament including the Patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, as well as Kings David and Solomon. Since these pious biblical figures could not possibly have been in violation of God's will, Smith claimed that polygamy must be considered a valid form of marriage. "Was Abraham, therefore under condemnation [for practicing polygamy]? Verily, I say unto you *Nay*; for I the Lord commanded it."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Smith established strict conditions for the practice of polygamy: the first wife must give her consent, permission must be granted by presiding church authorities, and one must be of good character and have the financial resources necessary to support another wife.<sup>5</sup> Since only the rich and the righteous could marry multiple wives, polygamous marriage primarily existed among the upper echelons of Mormon society.

Although Smith's restoration of polygamy was based on the Old Testament, the theological constructs underpinning polygamy were seemingly created in response to nineteenth century sociological concerns. Smith argued that civil marriages were only for "time" while Mormon marriages were for "time and eternity." Civil marriages legally bound people in this world, whereas Mormon marriages bound husband and wife spiritually as well. "Spiritual wifery," as it became known, bound husband and wife both on earth and in the afterlife. Although this concept does not directly affect polygamy, it places Mormon marriages on a higher plane than civil marriages. In so doing, Mormons viewed their conception of marriage, including polygamy, as holier and more correct than its civil counterpart. Furthermore, Smith declared that women could not ascend to heaven on their own merit, but must be "sealed to worthy or righteous men in order to get a proper place in heaven."<sup>6</sup> Finally, since the purpose of marriage was to "multiply and replenish the earth," multiple wives would allow Mormon males to produce many

<sup>1</sup> Gaustad.

<sup>2</sup> Davis, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Altman, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Gaustad.

more children.<sup>7</sup> Precisely at a time of sexual revolution and the assertion of women's independence, Smith emphasized what he considered to be traditional values: the dependency of women on their husbands, that a woman's proper place was in the house raising children, that the purpose of marriage was to produce children, and that the sanctity of marriage was based on its being a religious vehicle.<sup>8</sup>

American Society looked upon the practice of polygamy unfavorably. Critics viewed the patriarchal system of polygamy as a "Mormon chamber of horrors" and a "twin relic [alongside slavery] of barbarism."<sup>9</sup> The comparison to slavery is noteworthy because it indicates that society not only viewed women as enslaved by polygamy, but also felt a moral imperative to stamp out polygamy much like abolitionists attempted to snuff out slavery. In 1862, the first legislative effort to end polygamy was passed. The Morrill Act proclaimed that: "[E]very person having a husband or wife living, who shall marry any other person ... shall ... be adjudged guilty of bigamy."<sup>10</sup> Having multiple wives became an illegal and punishable offense.

Mormon society was aghast at the new legislation. A fundamental tenet of their religion was just legislated out of existence. They sought refuge in the First Amendment of the constitution which states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."<sup>11</sup> Mormons claimed that the Morrill Act was unconstitutional because it prohibited the practice of polygamy, and by extension, of Mormonism. George Reynolds, a Mormon leader, was so convinced of this argument that he willingly submitted himself before the courts as a test case for the legality of the Morrill act.

In *United States v. Reynolds*, Chief Justice Morrison Waite had to grapple with fundamental issues regarding the separation of church and state, including whether or not Congress could pass a law effectively banning the free exercise of a religious commandment. In the end, the Supreme Court upheld the legality of the Morrill Act. Justice Waite asserted that Reynold's claim regarding the First Amendment was founded upon "neither reason, justice nor law." Justice Waite determined that "Congress was deprived of legislative power over mere opinion, but was left free to

<sup>8</sup> Altman, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Davis, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am1>.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, 7.



reach actions which were in violation of social duties or subversive of good order."<sup>12</sup> In other words, Congress could not restrict the *beliefs* of a particular individual, but retained the authority to legislate against any *actions* determined to be subversive of society. This became known as the belief-action distinction. Justice Waite based this distinction first upon Thomas Jefferson, who noted that "religion is a matter which lies solely between man and god ... legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions,"<sup>13</sup> and then justified governmental legislation against polygamy because polygamy was founded upon the "patriarchal principle ... which, when applied to large communities, fetters the people in stationary despotism." Once it was determined that polygamy undermined the social order, it ran afoul of the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedoms which states that Congress can "interfere when principles break into overt acts against peace and order." Finally, if Justice Waite were to allow polygamy he would "make the professed doctrines of religious belief superior to the law of the land, and in effect permit every citizen to become a law unto himself," thereby eviscerating the power of Congress.<sup>14</sup>

Emboldened by the *Reynolds* decision, Congress enacted stricter legislation against polygamy. The Edmunds Act of 1882 created a new offense for polygamists called unlawful cohabitation. It further released prosecutors from the burden of proving that a marriage existed and allowed "joinder of polygamy and cohabitation charges,"<sup>15</sup> which meant that "a man could be convicted of marrying a polygamous wife and then convicted again for living with her."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Mormons could no longer serve as jurors in polygamy cases. By 1893 there had been over one thousand convictions for unlawful cohabitation and approximately thirty convictions for polygamy.<sup>17</sup> More importantly, since it was the upper echelons of Mormon society that practiced polygamy, much of the Mormon leadership was incarcerated at precisely the moment its people needed them most.

As a final blow against polygamy, Congress attacked the Mormon Church itself. In 1887 under the Edmunds-Tucker Act, Congress began enforcing a provision of the aforementioned Morrill Act which placed a \$50,000 limitation on the amount

<sup>12</sup> Edwin Firmage, "Free Exercise in Religion in Nineteenth Century America: The Mormon Cases," *Journal of Law and Religion* 7:2 (1989): 288.

<sup>13</sup> Davis, 7-9.

<sup>14</sup> Firmage, 299.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 290-91.

<sup>17</sup> Davis, 7.

of property that a religious corporation in a territory could own.<sup>18</sup> The Edmunds-Tucker Act declared that any land obtained in violation of this provision, excepting churches and graveyards, must be forfeited to the United States. The Mormon Church, which had its headquarters in the Utah Territory, would be left bankrupt if this provision was enforced.

On September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1890, President Wilford Woodruff of the Mormon Church capitulated and issued a Manifesto which stated that:

We are no longer teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice ... In as much as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, ... I hereby declare my intention to submit to these laws ... And I know publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.<sup>19</sup>

Mainstream Mormons accepted Woodruff's Manifesto as a revelation from God and proceeded, after time, to stop sanctioning polygamous practices. By 1963 approximately 92% of Mormons disapproved of the practice of polygamy.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, Justice Waite's pronouncement in *Reynolds* was fulfilled: the laws of the land trumped the laws of Mormonism, to the point where the actual theology of Mormonism was fundamentally altered.

The United States' treatment of polygamy raises several troubling questions regarding our status as a tolerant society. Tolerance for and freedom of ideas and practices contrary to our own is embedded in the seminal documents of the United States. The First Continental Congress declared in the Declaration of Independence that every man is entitled to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Freedom of speech and freedom of religion are guaranteed in the First Amendment to the Constitution. Yet apparently, these rights exist only in theory. When the state was confronted by a practice it held abhorrent, it banished the practice, despite the religious significance it held in the eyes of many citizens. Is this not the mark of an intolerant society? Only if one assumes that in order to be a tolerant society one must permit everything, even at the expense of self-preservation. A close examination of the First Amendment's protection of religion reveals that even if Waite's belief-action distinction is incorrect, the United States' treatment of Mormons was still within the bounds of a tolerant society.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> John Christainsen, "Contemporary Mormon Attitudes toward Polygamous Practices," *Marriage and Family Living* 25:2 (May 1963): 167-68.

There are two primary interpretations of the First Amendment's guarantee not to prohibit the free exercise of religion. The first, a minimalist's view, would argue that the amendment only grants a right to non-persecution, that is, "a right not to be intentionally mistreated on account of one's religious beliefs or practices."<sup>21</sup> Laws cannot be passed which directly discriminate against a particular religious act, but if a law incidentally affects religion, it is still legal. "Formal neutrality" would satisfy the first amendment. Maximalist interpreters argue for a broader protection, that of accommodation. According to this theory, religion has a right "to be free not only of intentional mistreatment, but also of burdens the law may happen unintentionally to place upon it." This position would require the government "to justify a compelling interest before the particular law is upheld."<sup>22</sup>

Yet it would appear that the United States, in its treatment of the Mormons, still fulfilled both of these interpretations of the First Amendment. According to the minimalist interpretation, which requires neutrality, since the law banning polygamy did not specifically single out Mormons for prosecution and made it illegal for anyone to marry a second spouse, the law was written in a perfectly neutral manner, and would fulfill the first interpretation's mandate for the protection of religion. Since the United States adopted a neutral law rather than authoring an overt attack on Mormonism, it seems that they were acting in a tolerant manner. Opponents, however, would argue that they merely cloaked intolerance in a tolerant framework. Despite the apparent neutrality of the text, the law prohibiting polygamy was clearly an attack on Mormonism since it was passed only after Mormons began practicing polygamy. However, since it is almost impossible to prove the motivations behind legislation, judging a law based on anything but the text itself is unfair. Furthermore, since the claim that a legislator's motivations were "intolerant" is unfalsifiable, the claim can be made with impunity, for any law, no matter how carefully worded, could be deemed intolerant by this standard. Therefore, the most that can be asked of a country is to write tolerant laws. Tolerant, in this situation, is defined as any law which does not discriminate against a specific group, and by this definition the United States acted tolerantly toward the Mormons.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Bou-Habib, "A Theory of Religious Accommodation," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 23:1 (2006): 109.

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Harmer-Dionne, "Once a Peculiar People: Cognitive Dissonance and the Suppression of Mormon Polygamy as a Case Study Negating the Belief Action Distinction," *Stanford Law Review* 50:4 (April 1998): 1297.

Applying the maximalist definition of accommodation to the Mormon cases is a bit murkier. Justice Waite, in *Reynolds*, concluded that polygamy was subversive of the public order because if it became widespread then it would lead to despotism. At first glance, Justice Waite provided the necessary "compelling interest," the public good. However, as noted by legal scholars, he failed to produce any justification for why polygamy undermined the public good. The court never "explained why plural marriage was a threat to the public domain." Even more shocking, the court "never examined whether polygamy degraded women" nor produced any victims of Reynold's conduct, nor demonstrated a causal link between polygamy and despotism.<sup>23</sup> Although the court presented a compelling state interest, it failed to provide proof that a need existed to protect that interest. The question now becomes, was the court negligent or intolerant? Does the lack of justification mean that the judge was basing the decision purely on his own biases, or was the judge convinced that he proved his argument adequately? Again, it is impossible to know. But what must be noted is that what was potentially intolerant was not the banning of polygamy, but rather the lack of justification for that ban. Assuming that there was a compelling state interest, like self-preservation, banning an action antithetical to that interest would not be intolerant.

Freedom of religion, as defined by *Reynolds*, only protects freedom of belief but not freedom of action. It has already been established above that the United States was not acting intolerantly when it banned the action of polygamy. The belief-action distinction, as enumerated by Justice Waite, allowed for toleration of the belief while concurrently banning the correlative act. Yet presumably, if it were demonstrated that banning the action would fundamentally affect an individual's belief, then Justice Waite would agree that his provision was intolerant since it would contradict both the spirit of Jefferson and the Virginia Statute of Religion.

From a psychological perspective it in fact appears that the differentiation between belief and action exists only in theory. At a certain critical point, the cost of complying with a set of laws contrary to one's beliefs results in a state of cognitive dissonance in which one believes in a particular idea but acts in another manner entirely. This state is psychologically untenable and eventually the believer must make a choice "between conformity and continued observance in the face of adversity." In the case of the Mormon Church, this point of decision came after the

<sup>23</sup> Firmage, 290.

government threatened to confiscate all of its property. Woodruff decided that the Church must abandon polygamy to ensure its own continued existence and to "enable members to practice other aspects of the religion." Over the course of time "polygamy has become a historical and cultural phenomenon rather than a current theological reality."<sup>24</sup> In one poll, 22% of Mormons believed that polygamy was originally allowed only because of the unique circumstances of the time and 26% felt that polygamy should never have been practiced.<sup>25</sup> Banning the practice of polygamy altered the tenets of the Mormon faith to such a degree that a significant number of contemporary Mormons feel that polygamy should never have been practiced. Although Justice Waite thought that he was tolerating the beliefs of Mormons, in truth he was destroying them.

If Justice Waite had known that it was impossible to separate action from belief, would he then have allowed the practice of polygamy? I think not. Justice Waite consistently argued that the law of the land must reign supreme lest every citizen be a law unto himself. The same argument would apply to beliefs. If a belief results in an action that is subversive of the public good then Congress retains the right to legislate against that belief to prevent every believer from having a personal set of laws. Although Justice Waite's words clearly state that Congress only has jurisdiction over actions, not beliefs, thus preventing legislation even in the face of a compelling state interest, I believe that Justice Waite himself would have argued that his law did not place beliefs that result in action outside of the scope of Congressional authority. Although pure beliefs of the type described by Jefferson would remain beyond the purview of Congress, beliefs that result in action are subject to Congressional jurisdiction because they have the potential to negatively affect the public sphere. According to this definition, even though the belief-action distinction was shown to be invalid from a psychological perspective, Justice Waite acted within the boundaries of tolerance when he banned polygamy. As long as a compelling state interest exists and Congress remains within its jurisdiction, then it is not intolerant to ban actions, even when they stem from beliefs.

The court in *Reynolds* felt that there was a compelling state interest to ban polygamy because it would be subversive of the public good and potentially lead to despotism. Critics claim that this reason is unfounded and is merely a mask for bigotry and intolerance. But since we cannot determine unwritten motivations,

<sup>24</sup> Harmer-Dionne, 1310.

<sup>25</sup> Christansen, 168.

we must rely on the words of the justices themselves. The mere fact that the court felt compelled to provide justification for their decision is an indication of the tolerant nature of society, for an intolerant society has no compunctions over banning an action for a trivial reason or none at all. Justice Waite appealed specifically to the public good, demonstrating his recognition that anything which was not subversive of the public good should not be banned. Whether or not he proved this danger beyond a shadow of a doubt is irrelevant—he still attempted to provide justification. Although the final decision appeared to be an attack on Mormonism, the court saw itself as protecting the public sphere from the perceived scourge of polygamy.

The measure of a society's tolerance should not be judged solely on the practices it allows or disallows, but on the rigorousness of the legislative process and level of debate required before banning a particular action. Society does not have to be tolerant to the point of self destruction; indeed, a just society may not allow actions contrary to the public good. However, it may not ban actions merely on a whim, but must first prove them to be subversive of the public good. The Mormon polygamy cases of the nineteenth century are a perfect example of the process a tolerant society must undertake before it can ban an action. A society should not be judged based on the practices it bans, but rather by the process undertaken before it bans them.

## The Jewish Settlement House: Haven or Danger to the Eastern European Immigrant?

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With the rise of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the composition of the American Jewish community changed dramatically. The new immigrants were forced to acclimate to the values of a "new world," values that were often drastically different than those of the European *shtetl* in which they were raised. As a result, new institutions cropped up in these communities that sought to help the new immigrants in this process of acculturation. One of these institutions was the Jewish settlement house, an establishment that paralleled similar organizations developed by the Progressive movement in American society. The goals of the Jewish settlement houses often varied, with some promoting Americanization while others promoted traditional Jewish values. Despite these lofty goals, many of these establishments were often quite unsuccessful, and found difficulty attracting the immigrants (and particularly the youth) in these communities. An analysis of these settlement houses will be useful in showing both their ideals and the reasons for their ultimate failure within the Eastern European Jewish community.

The streets of the Lower East Side Jewish community were constantly full of activity and commotion. The compact tenement housing for immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided Jewish European immigrants with barely livable conditions: the wealthy immigrants lived in dark three bedroom apartments with few windows, while less fortunate immigrants often lived with three to four families in the same apartment.<sup>1</sup> Forced to reside in suffocating conditions in the winter months, both children and adults turned to the streets in the summer and springtime for all forms of social life and recreation.<sup>2</sup>

While the resident immigrants enjoyed the camaraderie of the outdoors, such crowded streets brought a slew of problems to the immigrant community. For example, many men bicycled to work, and would commonly knock children down.

<sup>1</sup> Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Cary Goodman, *Choosing Sides* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 4.

Children filled the streets to such an extent that one cyclist claimed that it was "impossible to avoid running them down." This cyclist admitted to running three children down on his way to work, but said "the accident was absolutely unavoidable." Many residents of the Jewish East Side ghetto, having recently emigrated from Russia, compared the cyclists to pogromists. In a tactic of self defense, these immigrants covered the streets with glass, garbage, and sharp stones in order to stop the cyclists. As the cyclists drove by, the residents would pelt them with eggs and vegetables, sometimes even using pushcarts to block the riders.<sup>3</sup>

Knowing their children were freely roaming the streets, many parents worried about the uncontrollable influences on their children. Children easily learned about sex in the streets at an early age, and some experimented with the opposite gender as well. One immigrant recalled his childhood on the East Side, recalling how "the streets taught us the deceits of commerce, introduced us to the excitement of sex, schooled us in strategies of survival, and gave us our first clear idea of what life in America was really going to be like."<sup>4</sup>

Many blamed the juvenile delinquency problem of the East Side on the horrible tenement situation, which forced young children to spend time on the streets without any parental control or influence. The street did not provide sufficient healthy amusement, and the children were easily tempted by such problematic activities. In one year alone in the early twentieth century, 549 juvenile delinquents from the Lower East Side Jewish community were sent to reformatories for petty crimes such as larceny, disorderly conduct, and burglary. The Jewish community, reacting to these issues, created restrictive institutions to reform such behavior, but these institutions, according to a resident of the East Side, were completely ineffective, and "served probably only to make the callous delinquent nature more pachydermatous still to regenerative influences."<sup>5</sup>

Such issues brought by the flux of European immigration to America spurred "progressive reformers" to set up alternative facilities, called settlement houses, for the immigrants' recreation.<sup>6</sup> Simultaneous to these years of immigration (roughly around 1890-1925), the Progressive Era swept the United States, an epoch char-

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>5</sup> G. Lipkind, "Delinquent Jewish Children on the East Side," *American Hebrew*, January 1903, 327.

<sup>6</sup> R. Gems, "The Rise of Sport at a Jewish Settlement House: The Chicago Hebrew Institute, 1908-21," *Sports and the American Jew*, ed. Steven A. Reiss (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 149.

acterized by an optimistic and pragmatic spirit of social reform. Middle class people, especially women, thought the predicaments of the rising tide of immigration, such as crowded streets and juvenile delinquency, could be surmounted with carefully planned institutions. The settlement house would also help Americanize the immigrant, and help them shed recognizable traces of their countries of origin.<sup>7</sup> These reformers created the settlement house for the immigrant, designed to draw children away from the streets to play in its facilities. These settlement facilities, through healthy and wholesome recreation, would inculcate the immigrants with American morals and values such as competition, cooperation, and teamwork.<sup>8</sup>

Knowing that the alternative was immigrant filled streets, the settlement house movement grew rapidly, seeking to educate the immigrants specifically as Americans. All lessons were aimed towards an "education for citizenship." Beyond the formal educational lessons, the settlement house also taught the skills built for the American home and community life. Experienced Americans prepared young immigrants for a new kind of parenthood and family life, and infused every lesson with morality and proper manners.<sup>9</sup>

While all agree that one of the primary goals of settlement houses was to Americanize the immigrant, various scholars have begun to examine settlement house workers in light of cultural pluralism. Most rely on the research of John Higham, who portrayed settlement house workers as advocates for human rights, helping immigrants retain their respective cultures in the process of Americanization. In 1955, Higham wrote that "on the whole, settlements did more to sustain the immigrant's respect for his old culture than to urge him forward into the new one... Preaching the doctrine of immigrant gifts, Jane Addams<sup>10</sup> and her fellow workers concentrated less on changing the newcomers than on offering them a home." The settlement emphasized to the immigrants that they did not have to reject the past, but could preserve the customs and traditions of the "old country" without giving up on becoming American.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> David Kaufman, *Shul With a Pool* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 91.

<sup>8</sup> Gems, 149.

<sup>9</sup> Miriam Stern, "Ladies, Girls and Mothers: Defining Jewish Womanhood at the Settlement House," *Journal of Jewish Education* 69:2 (2003): 4.

<sup>10</sup> Jane Addams started the Hull House, a secular settlement house for immigrants in Chicago.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Rose, "From Sponge Cake to *Hamentashen*: Jewish Identity in a Jewish Settlement House, 1885-1952," *Journal of American Ethnicity* 13:3 (1994): 3.

More current scholars, though, disagree with this portrayal of settlement house workers. Contemporary scholars agree that these workers were not straightforward cultural pluralists who advocated the preservation of past cultures in light of becoming an American. Instead, assimilation was seen as the settlement house's ultimate goal, insisting that the immigrants reject any remnant of their pasts in order to become a full fledged American citizen. The need to assimilate ultimately overshadowed respect for the Old World and retaining its culture.<sup>12</sup>

Still, the practices and traditions of the Jewish immigrant presented an evident deterrent to the goal of Americanization. Many Jewish immigrants felt comfortable attending secular settlement houses, such as Jane Addams' Hull House, either because they could comfortably cast off much of their religion, or because Americanization was presented as compatible with their Jewish heritage.<sup>13</sup> It is in this historical context, though, that German Jews, who had immigrated to America in the early nineteenth century, recognized a particular need amongst the new Eastern European Jewish immigrants for specifically Jewish settlement houses.

In contrast to German Jews who eagerly sought approval from gentiles, Eastern European Jews envisioned themselves as completely separate from the secular world, and strongly believed in maintaining their Judaism. The German Jewish community, because they quickly adapted and assimilated into American society, had gained a considerable amount of prosperity and respect within American culture. German Jews were afraid that America would associate them with the new Jewish immigrants, thereby posing a threat to their own newfound success. In order to prevent the Eastern European Jews from standing out, the German Jews created many philanthropic organizations whose goals were to help the new Jewish immigrants easily acclimate into American culture (thus thwarting an embarrassment to the German Jewish community).<sup>14</sup> Many of these groups, though, had different understandings of what it meant to be a Jew in America, and to what extent Judaism should be sacrificed for the goal of Americanization.

The German founders of the Jewish settlement house had to carefully combine the goal of Americanization with the retention of Jewish values and customs. To solve this, Jewish practice was often put into the form of Americanization. For example, the socialization of the American immigrant required a religious element

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Kaufman, 118.

<sup>14</sup> Rose, 6.

simply because "every good American goes to church."<sup>15</sup> Moreover, a meeting place for both European and German Jews could work to create a monolithic form of American Judaism. The variety of origins within the Jewish community concerned many American Jews' prospects regarding the future of American Judaism. A weekly New York Jewish newspaper, *The American Hebrew*, described the solution of blending everyone together by noting: "Out of the blending of divine element, the cross-fertilization of types, views and principles, a Jewish renaissance may be witnessed on American soil, springing from conviction and shaped by our stirring life."<sup>16</sup>

Started by a group of young German women from the Young Women's Union in Philadelphia in 1885, the Neighborhood Centre Settlement House's stated purpose was the Americanization of young Jewish immigrants. One of the leading rabbis of the community charged the German Jews to take care of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants, and said they possessed "habits repulsive to propriety...sentiments foreign to civilization...[W]ink at it, let it go unchecked, and you will imperil all the good reputation of Philadelphia Hebrews most seriously."<sup>17</sup> Originally built as a kindergarten, the Neighborhood Centre quickly developed into a full fledged settlement house with classes, clubs, a health clinic, a playground, and a temporary children's center. According to the Young Women's Union, Americanizing was not simply about learning English and stating the Pledge of Allegiance, but about keeping clean, cooking like an American, and upholding American values within their families. Implicit in all lessons and activities of the settlement house was the message that in order to prosper in America, the European Jews had to remake themselves from the inside out, imitating the German Jewish American model. This contrasted heavily with the *landsmanshaft* community (developed with the Eastern European communities), which tried to maintain the atmosphere of home and the old *shtetl* life for the European immigrant. Despite the availability of the German Neighborhood Centre, the European Jewish community was reluctant to join the German establishment, and quickly opened a plethora of their own Hebrew schools and storefront synagogues.<sup>18</sup>

Opened in 1893, the Educational Alliance of the Lower East Side in New York City became known as the "palace of immigrants."<sup>19</sup> The thousands of immigrants

<sup>15</sup> Kaufman, 103.

<sup>16</sup> Qtd. *ibid.*, 92.

<sup>17</sup> Rose, 6.66

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

who were involved in the Educational Alliance took part in its various activities, such as calisthenics, preparatory classes for public school, religious classes, domestic science classes, clubs, and gym work. At night, classes in a variety of subjects, such as English, American history, geography, and government were held, all aimed at Americanizing the adult immigrant population. One of the main focuses of the Alliance was to provide sports activities for the males, and the Alliance provided young immigrant boys with sporting equipment, sports instruction, and training, all designed with the purpose of keeping them off the streets. An institution that was proudly both Jewish and American, all activities of the Educational Alliance were to be created serve as "mediators between immigrant and American ways of living."<sup>20</sup>

That same year in Chicago, Jane Addams held a meeting with German Jews in her famous Hull House to discuss the creation of a Jewish settlement house. The discussion resulted in the opening of the Maxwell House in 1893. Yet the latter remained poor competition for the Hull House.<sup>21</sup> The German Jewish establishment failed to attract Chicago's Eastern European Jews, and as a direct reaction to the Maxwell settlement, the European Jews began to establish their own institutions, such as the Self Educational Club. The failure of the Maxwell House added to the mounting tension in the city between its German and Eastern European Jews. In order to unify the Jews of Chicago, the Chicago Hebrew Institute was created, which modeled itself on the Educational Alliance of New York. Its stated purpose was "the promotion of education, civic training, moral and physical culture, [and] the amelioration of the condition and social advancement of the Jewish residents of Chicago."<sup>22</sup>

Jewish settlement house workers presented their establishments with lofty aims: to Americanize the immigrant, to help the Jewish immigrant sustain his religion while simultaneously fully acclimating to American culture, and to "serve as mediators between immigrant and American ways of living."<sup>23</sup> Many immigrants, though, were fairly critical of the German Jewish settlement houses. They sensed that the intentions of the settlement house workers were really to refine and contain the poor. *The New York Times*, in an editorial in 1900, confirmed such senti-

<sup>19</sup> Kaufman, 104.

<sup>20</sup> Goodman, 37-39.

<sup>21</sup> Gems, 149.

<sup>22</sup> Kaufman, 118.

<sup>23</sup> Goodman, 38.

ments by describing the Educational Alliance as a "center of civilization in parts of town that are most given over to savagery."<sup>24</sup>

While settlement houses took full responsibility to teach the immigrants proper morals and manners, many immigrants resented such lessons. The founders of the settlement houses, who would at times arrive in chauffeured limousines, considered themselves to be experts in the discipline of moral refinement, and, accordingly, saw no better option than to take on the responsibility themselves of teaching the immigrant mothers. This created resentment among many of the immigrant mothers, and they felt patronized when the German founders attributed all of the immigrants' manners to the classes at the settlement houses. Many immigrant young girls also felt a sense of pretension in many of the settlement house activities; in a letter, one young girl wrote that "sometimes we had to sit through a tiresome lecture or listen to an adumbrating prima donna."<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, the prospect of organized sports at the settlement house did not always excite the young immigrant boys. The settlement house's goals of teaching kids the proper way to play and inculcating American values through sports did not always translate well to the immigrants; they sensed instead a condescending attitude amongst the settlement house workers, and felt they were not being treated as equals. Moreover, the young boys felt that the settlement houses were infringing upon their free time. A.H. Fromenson, the editor of the *Jewish Daily News*, describing this attitude, wrote that "the settlements have conspired with the big city to rob the boy of his inalienable right to play: the settlement by means of sit up straight and be good social rooms, literature clubs, civic clubs, basket weaving, and scroll iron works."<sup>26</sup>

Fromenson also criticized the Education Alliance on religious grounds and said that the settlement house lacked true Judaism. He wrote that, because of this, many religious families mistrust the Alliance. He also blamed the Alliance for causing an unbridgeable gap between children and parents. The Americanization of the immigrant child caused them to reject their parents outright, and created contempt towards the religious opinions of elders. The settlement house, to the religious European Jew, was seen as not assisting, but rather challenging the existence or "real Judaism" in America.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Qtd. *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Stern, 26-27.

<sup>26</sup> Goodman, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Kaufman, 105-06.

Furthermore, the Jewish settlement houses did not suffice to keep Jewish children out of Christian settlement houses. Despite the alluring recreational programs of the Educational Alliance, many young Jewish children in New York City attended local Christian settlement houses in its stead. Alfred Lucas, the Secretary of the Union of Jewish Congregations of the United States and Canada, in a slew of letters to the *American Hebrew* in 1905, begged parents to watch where their children go after school. Lucas wrote that the Christians mask their goal of missionizing Jewish children under their stated intention for a "moral uplifting of the neighborhood." Christian clubs, such as The Sewing School (which was attended mainly by Jewish girls), opened every session with the singing of hymns, followed by a proclamation of love for Jesus. In his various letters to the editor, Lucas included the various Christian settlement houses largely populated by Jewish children. Even Jacob Riis, Lucas warned, who promised his only intention included nothing but the love of Jews, was working to proselytize Jews.<sup>28</sup>

Lucas suggested that the community set up a chain of Jewish settlements, but establish them under a different name. The Jewish community settlements would have to provide the same light, cheerful rooms, cleanliness, and wholesome food that the Christian workers offered, in contrast to the street, filth, and hunger now offered in the Jewish community. Jewish parents can not be asked to keep their children away from the sweet voiced missionaries when the Jewish community offered nothing of the sort. Presently, Lucas claimed, the Jewish community was presenting nothing but "harsh, strident voices in their homes, rough, uncouth manners in their synagogues, and ill favored, slovenly teachers..." If the Jewish community would find funds for such a project, the professionalism of the Jewish settlement houses might appeal to the children, and they would stay away from the streets and the Christian establishments.

Settlement Houses were established in order to acclimate and Americanize European immigrants. German Jews, in imitation of Christian philanthropists, established Jewish settlement houses for their Eastern European brethren, hopeful they would provide an environment that was non-threatening to the immigrant's religion but would slowly force him to Americanize. While many European immigrants took full advantage of the Jewish settlement houses, others strongly

<sup>28</sup> Alfred Lucas, "For the Children!" *American Hebrew*, August 1905, 195.



resented the American education from the German Jews. To many Eastern European Jews, Americanization was not the foremost goal. Instead, European Jews concentrated on maintaining a flourishing religion similar to their experiences at home. Throughout the years, as both German and Eastern European Jews sought to acclimate and reform to American culture, their differences would continue to be easily discernable.

## **“A Republic in the Air”: Shattering Two Misconceptions about the Earliest Modern Transformations of Greenwich Village, 1905-1920**

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**G**reenwich Village is famously known for its winding street pattern and its similarly quirky population of artists, writers and free-thinkers. Once the quiet, upstanding neighborhood that served as the setting of Henry James's *Washington Square*, the Village has spent the last century basking in a rather radical reputation for permissiveness and liberal attitudes—from socialism to feminism to homosexuality. Many historians write that the Village began to become bohemian during the decade before World War I. They generally portray this revolution in basic terms: that within a few years, the neighborhood's fine, cultured streets became the sites of all-night cafes for masses of struggling artists and suffragettes.

This approach, however, simplistically presumes that the Village only changed from a fine Victorian community into a saturated enclave of artists and radicals, while it ignores the other social changes that occurred in the years preceding the “bohemian” revolution. I intend to look at this transformation in a new light and shatter two basic misconceptions about early modern Greenwich Village. Firstly, I intend to explore the social changes of the neighborhood that occurred in the first decade of the twentieth century, looking at the incoming immigrants as well as the incoming reformers to trace the directional of the social osmosis that produced the bohemian subculture. Greenwich Village became bohemian as a result of Progressive intellectual sympathy for the poor along with the freedom of the working-class to reject Victorian values. Secondly, I hope to challenge our regnant perception of the extent of bohemian profusion by looking at the “radicals” of the prewar Village in the context of their diverse neighbors and the rest of the city. To a large degree, the bohemia popularly depicted in Greenwich Village during the 1910's is an exaggerated caricature; however, it is evidence to the way that the revolutionary Village captured New York's imagination and continues to do so.

## The Social and Ideological Rise of Bohemia

From the middle of the nineteenth century, Greenwich Village contained row-houses with colonial-style architecture and winding roads that gave it an endearing, quaint personality. To the north of Washington Square, many wealthy families built luxurious homes, and in the southeast corner of the neighborhood, homes gave way to tenements. Although it was the most "American" ward of downtown Manhattan as nearly two-thirds of the residents were United States citizens from birth,<sup>1</sup> the population was still very ethnically and socio-economically diverse, containing sizable enclaves of Irish, African-Americans, and Italians of working and middle-class status. Perhaps other wards of Lower Manhattan featured higher concentrations of immigrants, but no other district contained such a pluralistic society as Greenwich Village.

As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, the neighborhood became increasingly ethnic as townhouses were demolished for the spread of ever-encroaching tenements. According to the *New York Times* in 1903:

The tenements are increasing with amazing rapidity ... old conditions are being swept aside by the tide of immigration, and the Colonial doors to the houses that were once the entrances to the homes of Knickerbocker gentlemen and ladies are filled with people of all ages, of swarthy skin, and with the dark eyes of sunny Italy.<sup>2</sup>

Simultaneously, industrial buildings replaced residential blocks in the South and East<sup>3</sup> that had been among the most charming in the Village. It seemed as though the neighborhood was becoming like the rest of Lower Manhattan—a dense mix of factories and tenements. However, the middle-class and patrician gentry remained, and the area retained its spirit of communal unity. Parades in Washington Square every year would attract "throng" of the wealthy and poor alike. *New York Times* depictions of Washington Square from the era include sketches of working-class and middle-class children together.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most striking forms of cross-class sympathy and understanding was the creation of the settlement homes in the Village in 1900 and 1902. Created by middle-class social workers such as Mrs. Mary Simkhovitch who wished to offer

<sup>1</sup> Gerald W. MacFarland. *Inside Greenwich Village: A New York City Neighborhood 1898-1918* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. 16 August 1903.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 14 November 1920.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. 25 May 1900.

services to working-class youths, the West Side House and the Greenwich House offered classes in sewing and cooking as well room and board for those who needed it. When the Greenwich House was dedicated, the *Times* was cautiously optimistic:

Greenwich Village, that quaint old district in New York, will be the scene for this pioneer experiment. Greenwich Village, though its history is rich, has within recent year fallen low on the social scale. Italians are now in great part colonizing it—Italians of the laborer order. Even the architectural charm of this district ... is rapidly going, tenements replacing the curious old dwelling houses for half a century its feature. No better district could be found, however, in which to start such a movement.<sup>5</sup>

One year after its doors opened, the newspaper reported that the factory girls and the educated women of the settlement had successfully bonded, stating, "the girls of the factories that crowd in upon the neighborhood have ceased to scoff upon the 'fine ladies' now that they have found them firm friends and sisters indeed."<sup>6</sup> Men from up Broadway began to flock to the Greenwich House in an effort to understand their counterparts living downtown. The administrative operations of the House itself reflected somewhat radically egalitarian inclusiveness, as the board of directors included members of varied classes and ethnic groups, and services were extended to African-Americans as well as whites.<sup>7</sup>

The settlement houses were built upon the rising ideology of the time—Progressivism. Progressivists maintained that social problems could not merely be the result of moral inadequacies as the middle-class reformers of the mid-nineteenth century had believed. Instead, the framework of the social system at self was at fault, and in order to improve the lives of the starving poor, efforts from the wealthy and educated were necessary. One of the ideological heirs of Progressivism was socialism, and many of the men and women who served in the settlement houses and the Greenwich Village Improvement Society were the heads of the socialist movement in New York. Although the leaders of these organizations were actually from the ranks of the educated patricians,<sup>8</sup> most of them were influenced to become socialists by the immigrants in the settlement houses where they worked.<sup>9</sup> The impoverished working-class immigrants influenced the ideology of the wealthy, educated reformers, as they adopted socialism, labor unionism, housing reform, and feminism,

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. 24 August 1902.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. 16 August 1903.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times*, 2 August 1908, 9 (*Supplement*).

<sup>9</sup> MacFarland, 121-22.

among other ideas, as their rallying points. This was one subtle indication of what was to follow in the coming years.

The first true bohemians of the Village in this era were actually intellectual heirs of Mary Simkhovitch and the Greenwich House model in some striking ways. They were also college-educated men and women, people who came from the north side of Washington Square—but their politics and philosophy were shared with the working-classes. One reporter described them as follows: "In unscientific language, they are 'intellectuals,' but they have no ambition."<sup>10</sup> They were ideological radicals who were proud to wear sandals and to live in garrets just like those people who had no high-brow cultural upbringing. Although they came from the ranks of the gentry, they rejected the gentry's values for those of the immigrants.<sup>11</sup> This was what made the Greenwich Village bohemianism so revolutionary. Instead of witnessing the immigrants' striving for assimilation into the upper-class society, here we see a shift, as the very upper classes themselves rejected their own values. The direction of the social osmosis was directly opposite from what New York City had witnessed for over half a century.

Eventually, the rest of the upper classes yielded their values to the Village values. In 1908, the idea of a woman walking out in short, bobbed hair was viewed as exceedingly scandalous, but some women in the Village decided to go with the look anyway, hoping to imitate the style of Russian revolutionaries. In 1912, bobbed hair was the predominant style in the Village. Eight years later, the *New York Times* reported that "now society's doing it too,"<sup>12</sup> and that the radical fashions of the Village from a decade earlier had been sublimated into popular modern culture.

### The Extent of Bohemian Profusion

Many historians who have written books about the early modern era in Greenwich Village have taken the same general perspective: the neighborhood had one face prior to its "transformation" to bohemianism, and that after the revolutionary winds came through, it was entirely radical and altogether recreated. However, this depiction is only somewhat true. 1912 to 1916 are deemed by many to be the high years of the artistic, literary, and radical revolutions in the Village.<sup>13</sup> During these

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, 21 December 1919.

<sup>11</sup> MacFarland, 169.

<sup>12</sup> *New York Times*, 27 June 1920, 71.

<sup>13</sup> MacFarland, 212.

years, the leftist neighborhood publication, *The Masses*, began to be printed, clubs began to open up, townhouses were rezoned into studios at lightning speed, and newspapers across the country started identifying Greenwich Village as "America's Bohemia."<sup>14</sup> *New York Times* articles from the decade also use "bohemian" as a synonym for the Village without even explaining the usage of the term,<sup>15</sup> which indicates that the general readership was familiar with this appellation.

Simultaneously, other districts in New York City began to develop strong artist populations who embraced a modern culture over a Victorian one, and these areas were considered as equally bohemian as the Village. "The arcade on Lincoln Square is held up as a rival for the title [of bohemian] ... held by the Washington Square community,"<sup>16</sup> read one headline from 1916. Although "everything seems to move uptown, even bohemian, which ... was pointed out to tourists as being located in Washington Square and Greenwich Village,"<sup>17</sup> in reality "there are very few 'bohemians,' no more than, if as many as, there are in certain sections of Riverside or Harlem."<sup>18</sup> Yet, for some inexplicable reason, Greenwich Village gained a notoriety that none of these other enclaves could ever mimic.

The Village itself was not entirely populated by beret-wearing, feminist artists and poets. One very typical woman who lived near Washington Square for over fifty years was reported to "hardly know that these Greenwich Village persons exist. She has never been to their theater (although it is a stone's throw away from her work)."<sup>19</sup> This woman was not an anomaly; many people living in Greenwich Village during its most revolutionary years actually had no connection to the bohemian lifestyle of their neighbors. Many of the Village's residents were still factory-worker immigrants and middle-class Americans such as those who had lived there in the previous decade. Mary Simkhovitch, president of the Greenwich Village Improvement Society, described the neighborhood by saying, "Everyone lives in Greenwich Village; artists, professional people, clerks, factory workers, day laborers, longshoremen, [and] garment makers."<sup>20</sup> While she listed "artists" at the top of her list, artists only comprised one segment of the total population. Others

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>15</sup> *New York Times*, 21 December 1919.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 October 1916, 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 November 1920.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 December 1919.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 June 1916.

described the neighborhood as an "interesting part of town, which has everything good, bad, and indifferent."<sup>21</sup> Although national newspapers during the 1910's and history books ever since then have portrayed the neighborhood by focusing exclusively on the bohemians, this depiction is exaggerated and inaccurate.

Nevertheless, the accepted notion that the bohemians of the Village were a large-scale force continued to gain popularity. By 1917, Greenwich Village had a guided-tour service of its own led by Adele Kennedy for tourists from as far away as California and Europe to "come down here to see the freaks."<sup>22</sup> By the latter part of the 1910's, the idea that bohemia was located in Greenwich Village had become so entrenched in common parlance and knowledge that many New Yorkers decided to move to the Village and become bohemian as well. Although these new residents were not really starving artists who struggled to pay rent while discussing politics and literature at all-night cafes, they romanticized this vision, and moved into the neighborhood as somewhat louder, more superficial imitations of their bohemian models. In 1916, a 14-story high-rise apartment building was constructed on Washington Square South. With its small studio floor-plan and rentals-only policy, the owners of the building clearly marketed the building toward the young, the unsettled, and the artsy, who were "steadily increasing to congregate around Washington Square."<sup>23</sup> However, the building featured the highest standard of modern amenities for its day. The windows were sky-high, and so were the rents, which no genuine starving artist could afford. One could say that the tower was a symbol of the gentrification of bohemia which apparently began a mere four years after bohemia was discovered.

Indeed, as we have seen, Greenwich Village was not as much of a bohemia during its revolutionary decade as many would have us believe. The artists of New York lived in many neighborhoods, they never fully monopolized the character of the Village itself, and many of those who actually did live in the Village were as much spectators of the cultural revolution (i.e. "bohemians of the pseudo variety"<sup>24</sup>) as they were instigators.

At the same time, it is historically significant to consider the degree to which the Village was a phenomenon both in its heyday and throughout the decades that

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 7 October 1917.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 2 April 1916.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 14 November 1920

followed. It gained a position of recognition in America's consciousness. As Villagers would proudly explain, it was "America's first home for iridescent souls, first real art center, first republic in the air,"<sup>25</sup> and "a figment of lively imagination."<sup>26</sup> The Village's reputation as an artist's bohemia was a myth crafted by New York's interest in adopting modern values. The caricature of the artists was the city's way of romanticizing a radical ideology of modernity that would soon take hold of the world.

The birth of modern Greenwich Village did witness social osmosis from the lower socioeconomic classes to the wealthy and educated. But it was also a popularized movement of ideologies that made a neighborhood both legendary and fake in its own time. And ever since the revolutionary artists and thinkers of the Village entered America's consciousness, the entire country has ridden along on the "republic in the air."

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 5 April 1916.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 14 November 1920.

# Persuading a President and Public: Kennan's Unknown Telegram and the Cold War

Sara Lefkowitz

Note: This paper is an analysis of the attached document,  
George F. Kennan's Telegram of March 20, 1946.

The winter months of 1945-1946 constituted a major turning point in the United States' conception of the Soviet Union during the early stages of the Cold War. Situated at a crossroads, American officials struggled to gain an understanding of the Russian psyche and to structure their own foreign policy accordingly. The changeover from 1945 to 1946 served as a transitioning period in which the U.S. government's approach began to evolve from one of discussion and compromise to that of hard-line containment. The Soviets were no longer viewed as allies, but as ideological adversaries to be contended with on a political, economic, and military level. A series of events, all in relatively quick succession, contributed to this shift in mentality and policy among U.S. officials.

However, the Truman administration appeared to be the only beneficiary of this newfound grasp of the Soviet threat. The American public, still brimming with post-war optimism and idealism, remained completely unawares of the changed situation. It had not been privy to the contents of George F. Kennan's Long Telegram of February 22<sup>nd</sup>, in which the Soviet Union's ideological commitment to expansionism and permanent struggle with the West had been discussed at great length. As U.S. officials began to prepare themselves for Russian attempts at world domination, the public continued to regard the Soviet Union as a friendly nation.

This disconnect between official government consensus and public understanding became very apparent following Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech of March 5, 1946. Churchill delivered the "British echo" to the Long Telegram, describing Soviet control of Eastern Europe and its subversive campaign to uproot "Christian civilization."<sup>1</sup> His calls for an Anglo-Saxon alliance were not well-received by the American press nor the public, who chastised Churchill for his unduly strident remarks. If U.S.-Soviet relations were in fact marred by various tensions, they argued, then perhaps the U.S. should make more concerted efforts to improve them.

Such public statements eventually reached George Kennan, who functioned as

<sup>1</sup> Martin Walker, *The Cold War: A History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 41-42.

head of the American Embassy in Moscow. Alarmed by the gross misapprehension evident in these accounts, Kennan responded vociferously with a four-page telegram to the Secretary of State, George Marshall. Drawing from his earlier February 22<sup>nd</sup> Long Telegram, Kennan urged U.S. officials to redress the public's misconception regarding the Soviet threat. Thus, the lesser-known telegram of March 20, 1946, not only served to reinforce the Truman Administration's commitment to a hard line stance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, but it also precipitated large-scale efforts to educate the American public and convince them of the merits of such an approach.

From the outset of the telegram, Kennan stresses the problematic naïveté permeating the pages of American newspapers and the speeches of prominent individuals. Employing words such as "concern" and "alarm," Kennan invokes an urgency that necessitates his ensuing response to the egregiously misplaced trust in Soviet political sensibilities.<sup>2</sup> In fact, according to Kennan, the belief that traditional diplomacy will succeed in allaying Soviet suspicions "constitutes, in our opinion, the most insidious and dangerous single error which Americans can make in their thinking about this country."<sup>3</sup>

As such, Kennan attempts to counter such "wishful" misconceptions through an in-depth explanation of the Soviet mindset of suspicion. "Personal contacts, rational arguments or official assurances" will not "convince Russians of good faith of our aims and policies" because not only are they incapable of being convinced, they do not want to be convinced.<sup>4</sup> The Russians, asserts Kennan, have not turned to suspicion as a last resort, but rather have deliberately incorporated it as an integral part of their political framework. Without the constant threat of foreign infiltration, the Russians would lose their justification for their own repressive domestic regime. When they no longer have any enemies, the Soviets conveniently invent them; in this regard, the U.S. and Great Britain have supplanted former World War II foes Germany and Japan.

This idea represents a departure from Kennan's previous Long Telegram in which he does validate, to some degree, Soviet suspicions of the West. Citing their concerns for security, Kennan had referenced Russian history, which is replete with foreign invasions, as a mitigating factor in Soviet trust of the West. However, in his telegram of March 20<sup>th</sup>, Kennan makes no mention of any certifiable impending threat facing the Soviet Union. Instead, he dismisses the whole Soviet outlook as an "a priori tactical position," delegitimizing the entire notion of "suspicion"

<sup>2</sup> Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall, March 20, 1946, Harry S. Truman Administration-File, Elsey Papers (2006), 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

with speech marks, rendering it a mere fabrication.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Kennan ascribes a certain maliciousness to the intentionally hostile Soviet agenda, characterizing it as "selfish" and "unscrupulous."<sup>6</sup>

Kennan proceeds to counteract the American public's belief in "personal contacts, rational arguments or official assurances" as a means of securing Soviet cooperation with point-by-point rebuttals.<sup>7</sup> Rational arguments are incompatible with a system rooted in "psychosis," propaganda, and total absence of objectivity.<sup>8</sup> Direct contacts can not be formed when foreign ambassadors are allowed only minimal visits. Official assurances will not be trusted when the countries professing them are deliberately misrepresented by Soviet authorities. Suspicion of outsiders is rampant because the Soviet Union applies suspicion internally as well.

As he does in the Long Telegram (which he references in the document itself), Kennan invokes in the Telegram of March 20<sup>th</sup> the moral and ideological underpinnings of the struggle between the Soviet Union and the West. He extends the Soviets' proclivity for covertness and suspicion to their lack of belief "in such things as good will or individual human virtue."<sup>9</sup> This statement subtly forms the crux of Kennan's entire argument, which is predicated on the recognition of a "very simple and basic fact."<sup>10</sup> How can a nation of good conscience and principle hope to make inroads with one that is so convinced of and oriented around man's evil propensities? Attempts to do so would be both logically and morally unsound. As a result, urges Kennan, the utmost must be done to convey a better understanding to the shapers of American public opinion, so it no longer "places on our government an obligation to accomplish the impossible..."<sup>11</sup>

With its systematic analysis of Soviet "suspicion" and its emphasis on education, Kennan's telegram has ramifications which can be traced to two subsequent developments of the Cold War. Although usually addressed to George Marshall, Kennan's telegrams were often circulated throughout the various departments of the Truman administration, and were therefore influential in shaping U.S. foreign policy. By repeatedly stressing that traditional diplomacy would not be effectual in reducing Soviet tensions towards the U.S., Kennan's words may have struck the right chord within an administration already leaning towards a hard-line approach. The telegram of March 20<sup>th</sup> may have served to translate such inclinations into

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4.

concrete actions. At the end of March, in an unprecedented forceful and "blunt" message, Truman demanded the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran.<sup>12</sup> The Soviet Union yielded to international pressure and backed down on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, thus setting a precedent that would encourage American assertiveness in dealing with the Russians.

Kennan's March 20<sup>th</sup> telegram also appears to have convinced the Truman administration of the necessity of having an informed citizenry. Interestingly, at the time of the telegram's reception, Kennan had been pushing the State Department for a reassignment. Although the urgent tone of Kennan's telegram may have reflected an earnest concern over misapprehensions of the current situation, it certainly served his own purposes as well. Kennan returned to the U.S. just a month later to assume the position of Deputy for Foreign Affairs at the National War College in Washington D.C. Thus, Kennan became the administration's "point man in a campaign to sell both official and public audiences on the need to contain the Soviet Union."<sup>13</sup> With a speaking tour in the summer of 1946 and the sanction of officials like Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, Kennan disclosed the true nature of the Soviet threat to public audiences nationwide. Kennan's input was also solicited during the 1946 drafting of the Clifford-Elsey Papers, which represented Truman's personal attempts at educating the American public.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, Kennan's telegram of March 20<sup>th</sup> 1946, though relatively unknown, appears to have played a vital role in cementing both the American government's and the public's commitment to a hard-line policy of containment. Though a more proactive agenda would not emerge until 1947-1948, with the introduction of the Marshall Plan and NATO, the telegram of 1946 laid the groundwork for the preliminary stages of containing Communism. By hardening American sentiment into antipathy and distrust, Kennan may have actually hastened the Cold War hostilities he had previously warned of.

<sup>12</sup> Walker, 44.

<sup>13</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 32.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INCOMING TELEGRAM

ACTION MUST BE ENDORSED  
ON ACTION COPY*WALL*

RKE-P-X

7612

No paraphrase necessary.

Moscow via War

Dated March 20, 1946

Rec'd 4:59 p.m.

ACTION: SECRET

INFO:

S  
U  
C

SECRET

878, March 20, 2 p.m.

In recent days we have noted a number of statements made either editorially in American papers or individually by prominent Americans reflecting the view that Soviet "suspicions" could be assuaged if we on our part would make greater effort, by means of direct contact, persuasion or assurances, to convince Russians of good faith of our aims and policies.

Sent Department 878; repeated London as 150.

I have in mind particularly numerous calls for a new three-power meeting; PHILADELPHIA BHOORD's proposal that US give "assurances" to assuage Russia's fears, Lippman's appeal for closer "diplomatic contact" and, above all, Henry Wallace's expressed belief (if BHO has quoted him correctly) that there is something our government could and should do to persuade Stalin that we are not trying to form an anti-Soviet bloc. (We note many similar statements in British press).

I am sending this message in order to tell Department of the concern and alarm with which we view line of thought behind these statements. Belief that Soviet "suspicions" are of such a nature that they could be altered or assuaged by personal contacts, rational arguments or official assurances, reflects a serious misunderstanding about Soviet realities and constitutes, in our opinion, the most insidious and dangerous single error which Americans can make in their thinking about this country.

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 11652, Sec. 302 and 303 or (2)

Dept. of State letter, Aug. 14, 1972

BY *NT/...* NAME Date 2-5-74

If we are

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

-2-8378, March 20, 2 p.m., from Moscow via War

If we are to get any long-term clarity of thought and policy on Russian matters we must recognize this very simple and basic fact: official Soviet thesis that outside world is hostile and menacing to Soviet peoples is not a conclusion at which Soviet leaders have reluctantly arrived after honest and objective appraisal of facts available to them but an a priori tactical position deliberately taken and hotly advanced by dominant elements in Soviet political system for impelling selfish reasons of a domestic political nature. (Please see again in this connection part II of my 511, February 22). A hostile international environment is the breath of life for prevailing internal system in this country. Without it there would be no justification for that tremendous and crushing bureaucracy of party, police and army which now lives off the labor and idealism of Russian people. Thus we are faced here with a tremendous vested interest dedicated to proposition that Russia is a country walking a dangerous path among implacable enemies. Disappearance of Germany and Japan (which were the only real dangers) from Soviet horizon left this vested interest no choice but to build up US and United Kingdom to fill this gap. This process began even before termination of hostilities and has been assiduously and unscrupulously pursued ever since. Whether or not it has been successful with people as a whole, we are not sure. Although they are not, since publication of Stalin's interview, highly alarmed, we are not sure they are convinced of Anglo-American wickedness. But that this agitation has created a psychosis which permeates and determines behavior of entire Soviet ruling caste is clear.

We do not know where this effort has its origin. We do not know whether Stalin himself is an author or victim of it. Perhaps he is a little of both. But we think there is strong evidence that he does not by any means always receive objective and helpful information about international situation. And as far as we can see, the entire apparatus of diplomacy and propaganda under his works not on basis of any objective analysis of world situation but squarely on basis of the pre-conceived party line which we see reflected in official propaganda.

I would

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 11652, Sec. 302 and 303 or (2)

Dept. of State letter, Aug. 14, 1972

~~SECRET~~



SECRET

-3-#878, March 20, 2 p.m., from Moscow via War

I would be last person to deny that useful things have been accomplished in past and can be accomplished in future by direct contact with Stalin, especially where such contact makes it possible to correct his conceptions in matters of fact. But it would be fair neither to past nor to future Ambassadors to expect too much along this line. The cards are stacked against us. An Ambassador can, as a rule, see Stalin only relatively rarely, and even then he has to overcome a heavy handicap of skepticism and suspicion. Meanwhile Stalin is presumably constantly at disposal of a set of inside advisers of whom we know little or nothing. As far as I am aware, there is no limit to extent to which these people can fill his mind with misinformation and misinterpretations about us and our policies, and all this without our knowledge. Isolation of foreigners and (this is important to note) of high Soviet figures as well, both from each other and from rank and file of Soviet population, makes it practically impossible for foreign representatives to trace and combat the flow of deliberate misinformation and misinterpretation to which their countries are victims. Let no one think this system is fortuitous or merely traditional. Here again, we have a vested interest vitally concerned, for excellent reasons, that things should be this way, that free contact should not take place, that foreign representatives should be kept in dark and that high Soviet figures should remain generally dependent on persons whose views are unknown, whose activities unseen, whose influences unchallengeable because they cannot be detected.

To all this there should be added fact that suspicion is basic in Soviet Government. It affects everything and everyone. It is not confined to us. Foreign Communists in Moscow are subjected to isolation and supervision more extreme, if anything, than those surrounding foreign diplomats. They enjoy no more than we do any individual confidence on part of Kremlin. Even Soviet internal figures move in a world of elaborate security checks and balances based on lack of confidence in their individual integrity. Moscow does not believe in such things as good will or individual human virtue.

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 11652, Sec. 302 and 504 or 505

When

Div. of State letter, Aug. 16, 1978

SECRET

-4-#878, March 20, 2 p.m., from Moscow via War

When confidence is unknown even at home, how can it logically be sought by outsiders? Some of us here have tried to conceive the measures our country would have to take if it really wished to pursue, at all costs, goal of dissuading Soviet suspicions. We have come to conclusion that nothing short of complete disarmament, delivery of our air and naval forces to Russia and resigning of powers of government to American Communists would even dent this problem; and even then we believe--and this is not facetious--that Moscow would smell a trap and would continue to harbor most baleful misgivings.

We are thus up against fact that suspicion in one degree or another, is an integral part of Soviet system, and will not yield entirely to any form of rational persuasion or assurance. It determines diplomatic climate in which, for better or for worse, our relations with Russia are going to have to grow. To this climate, and not to wishful preconceptions, we must adjust our diplomacy.

In these circumstances I think there can be no more dangerous tendency in American public opinion than one which places on our government an obligation to accomplish the impossible by gestures of good will and conciliation toward a political entity constitutionally incapable of being conciliated. On other hand, there is no tendency more agreeable to purposes of Moscow diplomacy. Kremlin has no reason to discourage a delusion so useful to its purposes; and we may expect Moscow propaganda apparatus to cultivate it assiduously.

For these reasons, I wish to register the earnest hope that we will find means to bring about a better understanding on this particular point, particularly among people who bear public responsibility and influence public opinion in our country.

KREMAN

WFD

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 11652, Sec. 302 and 504 or 505  
Div. of State letter, Aug. 16, 1978  
BY: [signature] DATE: 2-10-79

## In Defense of Joe McCarthy

Steven Lackner

Joseph Raymond McCarthy is perhaps America's most hated Senator. He is infamous for his communist "witch hunts" in the early 1950's, which became known as McCarthyism. People identify McCarthyism with the practice of publicizing accusations of political disloyalty or subversion with insufficient regard for evidence. Many historians accuse McCarthy of demagoguery involving bullying tactics. McCarthyism is a frequent epithet used in our political arena to attack conservative opponents. We are told of a great reign of terror when McCarthy disregarded civil rights to suppress political opposition. The reality is as the famous former communist Whittaker Chambers wrote: "Innocence seldom utters outraged shrieks. Guilt does."<sup>1</sup> There is an abundance of relatively new indisputable evidence about the Communist menace at the Cold War's infancy, which proves that the United States government had allowed Communists to infiltrate the government. Secret communications between the Soviet Union and Communist agents within the United States are now known due to the release in the 1990's of the Venona Cables. As such, McCarthy seems less like the bullying demagogue of the Red Scare and more like an opponent of what was in actuality a Red menace.

The post-World War II environment provided for McCarthy's success in combating communism. Americans saw an expansion of the Soviet regime across Eastern Europe. The Russians blockaded Berlin and NATO was created. China fell to Communist control under Mao Tse-Tong.<sup>2</sup> At the end of January 1950, Alger Hiss, a top career diplomat in the State Department, was convicted of perjury after being exposed by the former Communist Whittaker Chambers.<sup>3</sup> On February 2<sup>nd</sup> of the same year, Klaus Fuchs was arrested in Britain for sharing atomic research information with the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup>

One week later, on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1950, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy delivered a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, in which he held up a paper claiming there were two hundred and five subversives in the State Department. After his Wheel-

<sup>1</sup> Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), 537.

<sup>2</sup> "Damage": *Collier's* Assesses the Army-McCarthy Hearings," <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6449>>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> T. M. Sanders, "Chronology of Soviet Espionage," <[http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sanders/214/other/handouts/chr\\_spy.html](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sanders/214/other/handouts/chr_spy.html)>.

ing speech, the Saturday Evening Post heralded McCarthy's arrival with an article entitled "The Senate's Remarkable Upstart."<sup>5</sup> He would rise to power suddenly, and almost just as swiftly fall from influence less than five years later. McCarthy was appointed Chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations and its Subcommittee on Investigations after the Republicans took control of Congress in 1952. He broadened the Committee's powers in an attempt to identify Communists in the government.<sup>6</sup>

McCarthy's Senate Committee was only responsible for finding Communists within the government. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was responsible for more of the famous investigations of Communist activity outside the government, such as the investigations into Hollywood that took place before McCarthy even gave his Wheeling speech. McCarthy's targets were federal employees. In contrast to the Soviet regime, all Americans had the benefit of legal counsel during interrogations and nobody was incarcerated without a trial. McCarthy was not involved in the prosecution and conviction of the Soviet "atomic" spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the only ones executed for espionage.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, Communists should not have been working within the United States government. The Communist ideology was at odds with American ideals. This is indicated by a Communist manual entitled *The Communist Party: A Manual on Organization* by J. Peters. The manual offers insight into the Communist mindset and describes the role and aim of the Communist Party. It states in part:

As the leader and organizer of the proletariat, the Communist Party of the USA leads the working class in the fight for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, for the establishment of a Socialist Soviet Republic in the United States, for the complete abolition of classes, for the establishment of the classless Communist society . . .<sup>8</sup>

It is evident from the manual that the Communist Party within America embraced the Soviet ideology.

<sup>5</sup> Richard A. Baker, "200 Notable Days: Senate Stories, 1787 to 2002," <<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/congress/senate/notabledays/chap6.pdf>>.

<sup>6</sup> "Have You No Sense of Decency": The Army-McCarthy Hearings," <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6444/>>. 8 June 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Herman, *Joseph McCarthy: Reexamining the Life and Legacy of America's Most Hated Senator* (New York: The Free Press, 2000) 3-6; Robert Gabrick and Harvey Klehr, *Communism, Espionage, and the Cold War: A Unit of Study for Grades 9 - 12*, (online preview), <[http://nchs.ucla.edu/NH18\\_5-preview.pdf](http://nchs.ucla.edu/NH18_5-preview.pdf)>.

<sup>8</sup> Roy Cohn, *McCarthy* (New York: The New American Library, 1968), 5.

In the period after World War II, the Soviet Union and, more broadly, international Communism, was seen as a very real threat. President Harry Truman in his farewell address described this Cold War as "this all-embracing struggle - this conflict between those who love freedom and those who would lead the world back into slavery and darkness."<sup>9</sup> It is only logical that Communists should not have been allowed positions within the U.S. government where they could have access to confidential information, influence policy and sabotage U.S. interests.

Fear of Communists working secretly within the U.S. government was not an unfounded paranoid fantasy, but a reality. In 1943, the U.S. Army's Signal Intelligence Service, precursor to the National Security Agency, initiated the Venona Project.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of this project was to decrypt Soviet cables between the KGB in Moscow and its operatives in the United States.<sup>11</sup> The decrypts from the Venona Project were first declassified and publicly released on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1995, close to half a century after Senator McCarthy delivered his speech concerning subversives in the State Department.<sup>12</sup> The cables provide insight into the depth of Communist espionage in America. The evidence, for example, proved that Julius Rosenberg was in fact a vital agent of the Soviet Union who headed a spy ring collecting scientific secrets, some of which related to the atomic bomb. Ironically, his code name in the cables was "Liberal."<sup>13</sup>

The depth of espionage throughout the 1940's is stunning in its scope. Some Communists held positions of influence in the US government and had access to sensitive information. Elizabeth Bentley was a former Soviet spy who defected in 1945 and identified dozens of spies working within the government. She was derisively called the "blonde spy queen" and none of those that she pointed out were successfully prosecuted. Through Venona we know that she was telling the truth. Venona also revealed that there were in fact over 350 Americans working as Communist spies during World War II.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Harry S. Truman, "The President's Farewell Address to the American People," <<http://trumanlibrary.org/calendar/viewpapers.php?pid=2059>>. 1954.

<sup>10</sup> National Security Agency, "Venona," <<http://www.nsa.gov/venona>>.

<sup>11</sup> Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 14-15.

<sup>12</sup> National Security Agency, "The Venona Documents," <<http://www.nsa.gov/venona/venonadocs0017.cfm>>.

<sup>13</sup> Haynes and Klehr, 310.

<sup>14</sup> Harvey Klehr, "Red Scare Revisited," <<http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/06/then.now/>>.

According to the Venona cables, spies existed in many areas of the U.S. government. Duncan Lee was an aide to OSS (the precursor to the CIA) Chief William J. Donovan and a Soviet agent.<sup>15</sup> Laurence Duggan was the personal advisor on Latin America to Secretary of State Cordell Hull and a Soviet spy.<sup>16</sup> Lauchlin Currie was the administrative assistant to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and deputy administrator of the Board of Economic Warfare as well as a Soviet operative.<sup>17</sup> Harry Dexter White was the assistant Secretary of the Treasury under Roosevelt and also worked for the Soviets. He secured high-level positions within the Treasury for at least eleven other agents of Stalin.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, White and his agents in Roosevelt's Treasury Department stalled a dispatch of \$200 million in gold to the Chinese Nationalists fighting a civil war against Mao Tse Tong. By July 1944, only \$12 million had reached China. By the time shipments had resumed in May 1945, it was too late. The Nationalist yen had collapsed. They also set a Communist agent as an advisor on monetary policy in the Nationalist government. White was later chosen by President Harry Truman to be the top U.S. official at the International Monetary Fund.<sup>19</sup> Alger Hiss, an advisor to Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference where the President handed Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union, was an important Soviet spy.<sup>20</sup>

Less than half of those found in Venona were identified, leaving over 150 unknown spies. It is now also known that the CPUSA (Communist Party of the United States) was not merely an ideological party. The party actively worked to secure false passports for spies, recruit agents, and set up safe houses for meetings. The CPUSA had a special "underground apparatus" which was working to help Soviet Intelligence operations within the United States.<sup>21</sup>

McCarthy, claiming there were Communists in the State Department, jumped into the political limelight with his speech in Wheeling, among "the most significant in American political history" according to Senate historian Richard Baker.<sup>22</sup> But the idea that Communists were working for the State Department was raised years before

<sup>15</sup> Haynes and Klehr, 104-07.

<sup>16</sup> Rorin Platt, "Red Scare or Red Menace" <[http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/AD\\_Issues/amdipl\\_11/platt\\_reds.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/AD_Issues/amdipl_11/platt_reds.html)>.

<sup>17</sup> Haynes and Klehr, 145-50.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>19</sup> Herman, 107.

<sup>20</sup> Klehr, *Red Scare Revisited*.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Baker, 167.

McCarthy brandished his famous list in West Virginia and took to the Senate floor. Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee sent a secret report to Secretary of State George Catlett Marshall in June of 1947 that stated:

It is evident that there is a deliberate calculated program being carried out not only to protect Communist personnel in high places, but to reduce security and intelligence protection to a nullity. . . On file in the Department is a copy of a preliminary report of the FBI on Soviet espionage activities in the United States, which involves large numbers of State Department employees. . . this report has been challenged and ignored by those charged with the responsibility of administering the department. . .<sup>23</sup>

These are words that may as well have come directly from Joe McCarthy's mouth.

McCarthy based his charges against the State Department on the "Lee list," named after Robert Lee, a former house staffer who had given it to a reporter. The list from the Appropriations Committee stated that there were 108 security risks in the State Department with 57 cases pending. In 1946, Secretary of State James Byrnes had sent Congressman Adolph Sabath a letter stating that 284 State Department employees were unfit for employment and 79 had left the department. That left 205 employees who were possibly still in the State Department. McCarthy said, in light of the Lee list, that at least 57 remained. Though the number 57 was actually two years old, it was important because no one knew what had happened to them. McCarthy utilized real lists and simple mathematics to arrive at his numbers.<sup>24</sup>

McCarthy did muddle his message when it came to the State Department. He was guilty of at times saying there were "57 card-carrying Communists," at other times referring to "Communist connections," and sometimes saying they were "certainly loyal to the Communist Party."<sup>25</sup> Despite inconsistencies in McCarthy's rhetoric and disputes over numbers, he had every right to address the issue of security risks in the State Department, an issue that existed long before McCarthy propelled himself into political stardom.

A main target of McCarthy's within the State Department was Owen Lattimore, whom McCarthy called "the top Soviet espionage agent in the United States."<sup>26</sup> Al-

<sup>23</sup> Thomas E. Woods, Jr., *The Politically Incorrect Guide To American History* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2004), 169.

<sup>24</sup> Herman, 94-99.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>26</sup> Ronald Radosh, "The Legacy of the Anti-Communist Liberal Intellectuals" *The Partisan Review* 64:4 (23 October 2000)

<<http://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/archive/2000/4/radosh.html>>.

though Lattimore has been portrayed as another victim of McCarthyism, there was much to be suspicious about. Owen Lattimore was a top official at the Institute for Pacific Relations (IPR) and had an office in the State Department. A reliable informant, Louis Budenz, had named him as part of an active spy ring. He may not have been a "top agent" but he certainly belonged nowhere near the State Department. When McCarthy made this claim, eight people associated with IPR were already named under oath as Communist agents. In a letter to an acquaintance, Lattimore wrote he could "always be reached at Lauchlin Currie's office ... State Department Building" – the office of a man the Venona decrypts identify as a Soviet Agent.<sup>27</sup> The Senate Internal Subcommittee led by Nevada Democrat Pat McCarran investigated the matter and vindicated McCarthy declaring, "Lattimore was for some time beginning in the middle 1930's a conscious articulate instrument of the Soviet conspiracy."<sup>28</sup>

While Lattimore may not have been a Soviet agent, McCarthy had in fact named provable Soviet operatives who had been in the government. Among these are T.A. Bisson, Mary Jane Keeney, Cedric Belfrage, Solomon Adler, Franz Neumann, Leonard Mins, Gustavo Duran, and William Remington.<sup>29</sup>

The hell McCarthy raised concerning the State Department was justified. This is especially true considering that outrageous statements from the President and the Secretary of State preceded McCarthy's claims. President Truman had declared ongoing HUAC investigations into the treasonous Alger Hiss a "red herring."<sup>30</sup> When Alger Hiss was proven to be a spy, Secretary of State Dean Acheson announced, "I do not intend to turn my back on Alger Hiss."<sup>31</sup> McCarthy pushed the pendulum in the other direction, and took up the mantle of the anti-Communist cause.

One of the more controversial attacks that McCarthy made against the Truman Administration was in June of 1951. McCarthy delivered a speech against then Secretary of Defense George Marshall as being soft on communism. This came after the firing of General Douglas MacArthur from his command in Korea

<sup>27</sup> William F. Buckley, Jr. and Brent Bozell, *McCarthy and his Enemies* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1954), 110,155.

<sup>28</sup> Wes Vernon, "AIM Report: Looney Clooney Smears Senator McCarthy," <[http://www.aim.org/aim\\_report/4297\\_0\\_4\\_0\\_C](http://www.aim.org/aim_report/4297_0_4_0_C)>. 13 January 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Ann Coulter, *Treason* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2003), 59.

<sup>30</sup> Douglas O. Linder, "The Trials of Alger Hiss: A Chronology," <<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/hiss/hisschronology.html>>. 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Sam Tanenhaus, "Acheson: Speaker For the US Way," 23 August 1998 <[http://www.aim.org/aim\\_report/4297\\_0\\_4\\_0\\_C](http://www.aim.org/aim_report/4297_0_4_0_C)>.

earlier that April. Some of what McCarthy mentioned was Marshall's role in cutting off aid to Chinese Nationalists, his willingness to offer the Marshall plan to Russia, his support for concessions to Russia at Yalta, among many other complaints. The larger question of whether actions of the United States had aided the rise of the Soviet Union was legitimate. His claims that Soviet successes were "brought about, step by step, by will and intention" of those in power went too far.<sup>32</sup> There was, however, a record of failure in relation to the Soviet Union, with Soviet expansion, domination, and strength only increasing in the years since the Second World War. For this, McCarthy blamed men like Marshall.

Marshall had made mistakes. An example of Marshall's naiveté regarding Communism is demonstrated by his refusal to look at a notebook left on his plane before returning it to a Mao Tse-Tong aide Zhou En-Lai in 1946.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, McCarthy had gone too far in his attack on Marshall. McCarthy must have realized this because he later took out some criticisms when the speech was turned into a book entitled *McCarthyism: The Fight for America*. Marshall was not part of a "conspiracy so immense," as McCarthy had implied.

In 1953 McCarthy would turn his attention toward the Army, a decision that would end his meteoric rise to the national stage. McCarthy began his investigations into the Army with Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, where civilian scientists and engineers worked on new power sources, missiles, and radar networks for the military. Communists such as Julius Rosenberg, Martin Sobell, Joel Barr, and Alfred Sarant had all been employed at or regularly visited the Fort.<sup>34</sup>

McCarthy did raise legitimate claims that the Army Screening Board was negligent. The case of Aaron H. Coleman proved this. Coleman had worked at the base for fifteen years even though he had attended a Communist meeting and had been friends with Julius Rosenberg in college. The Army found classified documents at Coleman's home in 1946. Coleman was also an employment reference for Communist Martin Sobell. McCarthy had a witness that said Coleman was a member of the Young Communist League. And Coleman was reinstated by the Screening Board in Washington even after a regional board had suspended him.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, wit-

<sup>32</sup> Herman, 193.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 238-40.

<sup>35</sup> David Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 330-40.

nesses at the fort said that classified documents were taken home all the time.<sup>36</sup> There were legitimate security concerns when it came to Fort Monmouth.

The fort's commander, General Kirk Lawton, cooperated with McCarthy and told McCarthy privately that by cooperating he was throwing any promotion "out the window." The General was suddenly transferred and then discharged from the Army on grounds of disability.<sup>37</sup> The Army's message was that cooperation with the Senator was unacceptable. The fact remains that despite Army obstruction, the Army is a branch of the Federal government and subject to scrutiny like any other.

McCarthy also conducted investigations into Irving Peress, who was drafted in October 1952 to serve as a dentist. Peress had evaded the question of whether he was a Communist in a questionnaire. Regardless, he was promoted to Major in 1953. Brigadier General Ralph Zwicker had recommended Peress be discharged. Only after being called to McCarthy's subcommittee and invoking the Fifth Amendment was Peress honorably discharged.<sup>38</sup> McCarthy then said that "certain individuals in the Army have been promoting, covering up, and honorably discharging known Communists."<sup>39</sup> The Army may not have been "coddling Communists," as McCarthy put it, but Army negligence and lax security were worth investigating. After all, a Communist was being promoted to the position of major and then being honorably discharged.

The Army shot back with claims that McCarthy and his Subcommittee's chief counsel Roy Cohn had been trying to gain preferential treatment for a young staffer who was inducted named David Schine, and had been using the investigations as leverage to fulfill that aim. On the face of it, the Army's charge was ludicrous, since the Army admitted providing the preferential treatment. Schine received preferential treatment, but McCarthy only made requests at Roy Cohn's behest. McCarthy himself had called Schine "a nuisance" and "a pest."<sup>40</sup> A Senate committee investigated these charges in the Army-McCarthy Hearings. The Committee itself concluded that McCarthy had not utilized improper influence on behalf of David Schine, but that it was rather Roy Cohn who had engaged in some "unduly, persistent, or aggressive efforts." The Committee further reported that

<sup>36</sup> Herman, 240.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 239, 243.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 247-48.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate*, 2nd ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 248-49.

<sup>40</sup> Oshinsky, 404-06.

the army had behaved improperly. The Committee said that Army Counsel John G. Adams "made vigorous and diligent efforts" to block subpoenas for members of the Army Loyalty and Screening Board "by means of personal appeal to certain members of the [McCarthy] committee."<sup>41</sup>

It was revealed in the hearings that White House Chief of Staff Sherman Adams had ordered that a report on McCarthy be made. It also came out that already from January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1954, far in advance of the hearings which began on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the White House was planning an attack on McCarthy. Counselor for the Army John G. Adams refused to discuss a meeting with Attorney General Bronwell on January 21. Eisenhower claimed executive privilege, establishing a presidential precedent, on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

Eisenhower stated in a letter that it was not in the public interest to reveal confidential information. Eisenhower used the privilege over forty times.<sup>42</sup> McCarthy did not have access to necessary evidence. Paradoxically, opponents of Richard Nixon would later scoff at the idea of utilizing executive privilege to hide the truth regarding the Watergate scandal. When McCarthy was the man being investigated, however, there was no one on the Left rallying against Eisenhower's "Imperial Presidency."

The most famous moments of the Army-McCarthy hearing was McCarthy's exchange with Special Army Counsel Joseph Welch. Roy Cohn, McCarthy's Senate Committee's Chief Counsel, was on the stand on June 9. Despite Welch's references to Cohn's suspected homosexuality, Cohn nonetheless treated Welch like a gentleman. Welch kept sarcastically begging that Cohn get every Communist out of government before sundown.

McCarthy had enough, and named Frederick G. Fisher, a young member of the Army Counsel and of Welch's law firm who had been a member of the National Lawyer's Guild, named by the Attorney General as "the legal bulwark of the Communist party."<sup>43</sup> He explained:

I have hesitated bringing that up, but I have been rather bored with your phony requests to Mr. Cohn here that he personally get every Communist out of government before sundown. Therefore, I will give you information about the young man in your own organization . . . I get the impression that, while you are quite an actor, you play for a laugh, I don't think you have any conception of the danger of the Communist Party.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Griffith, 261.

<sup>42</sup> Herman, 268-71.

<sup>43</sup> "Have You No Sense of Decency: The Army-McCarthy Hearings," 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Welch however exploited the situation by saying McCarthy was "reckless," "cruel," and in need of "forgiveness." He said that McCarthy had "done an injury to that lad" who "shall always bear a scar needlessly inflicted by you." Then he uttered the legendary statement: "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"<sup>45</sup> This instance is the most famous example of McCarthy's bullying and demagoguery. Never mind that McCarthy was responding to Welch's absurd questions. McCarthy's "cruelty" entailed "exposing" what was actually public record. The *New York Times* had provided a photo of Fisher about two months prior with this caption:

Mr. Welch today confirmed news reports that he had relieved from duty his original second assistant, Frederick G. Fisher of his own Boston law office, because of admitted previous membership in the National Lawyers Guild, referred to by Herbert Brownell, Jr. the Attorney General as the 'legal bulwark of the Communist Party.'<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, Fisher was never scarred. He went on to become, as the *New York Times* reported, "a partner at Boston's prestigious Hale & Dorr and president of the Massachusetts Bar Association."<sup>47</sup>

Though McCarthy seemed like a bully to viewers on television, the truth was much different. Although writers of history will still cling to this exchange as proof of the evil spirit of McCarthy, it is unfair to portray McCarthy as a monster. The facts paint a very different picture than the legend.

The case of Annie Lee Moss is also used to bolster the legend of Joe McCarthy as a man with no sense of decency. As a recent example, George Clooney used historical footage of Moss in his film *Good Night and Good Luck* to help paint a picture of McCarthy as an abuser of the innocent. The footage as it appeared in the film is an example of the flagrant abuse of historical truth. Annie Lee Moss was a Pentagon Signal Corps Employee brought before McCarthy's Senate Committee on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1954, accused of being a Communist on the word of an FBI Informant. Moss, who worked in the Code Room of the Pentagon, was seen as an innocent, simple-minded black woman, an exemplary victim of the bullying Senator's baseless charges. Democratic Senator Stuart Symington unbelievably assured her that if she were fired from her Army job, he would "see that you get a job."<sup>48</sup> The

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Cohn, 197-98.

<sup>47</sup> David Margolick, "The Law; At the Bar," *New York Times*, 11 December 1987.

<sup>48</sup> Herman, 335.

footage shows McCarthy quickly leaving the room to avoid further embarrassment from the fruitless questioning. The true story is at odds with the picture McCarthy's critics seek to paint. The Federal Subversive Activities Control Board reported in 1958 that "the Communist Party's own records, the authenticity of which the Party has at no time disputed ... show that one Annie Lee Moss ... was a party member in the mid-1940s."<sup>49</sup> In reality, Ms. Moss was a Communist Party member with access to top-secret material in the Pentagon. Whether or not she was an active spy, as a member of the Communist Party she posed a security risk and was therefore a legitimate target of investigation. The case of Annie Lee Moss demonstrates that supposed victims of McCarthy were often not as innocent as they seemed at the time.

Not everyone viewed McCarthy as a villain. It is important to understand that McCarthy was not always a pariah in the eyes of the American people. As late as January 1954, he enjoyed a 50 percent approval rating, with only 29 percent disapproving.<sup>50</sup> Bobby Kennedy worked for a time as assistant counsel for McCarthy's Subcommittee on Investigations, and McCarthy even stood as godfather for Bobby's first child. The same year as McCarthy's censure, John F. Kennedy responded to a speaker in Cambridge, Massachusetts, who stated that Harvard could be proud to neither have produced an Alger Hiss or a Joe McCarthy. Kennedy adamantly objected saying, "How dare you couple the name of a great American patriot with that of a traitor?"<sup>51</sup>

The career of Joe McCarthy quickly came to an end after the McCarthy-Army Hearings. The resolution to censure McCarthy was presented by Senator Ralph Flanders on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1954. After reviewing forty-seven counts, the Watkins Committee decided to adopt only two. One was to condemn McCarthy's behavior before a Senate Subcommittee in the previous Congress. The previous Congress did not deem McCarthy's behavior worthy of censure, but the new 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress did. The second count was that McCarthy had treated a General testifying before his committee with disrespect. The censure dealt with violations of "senatorial traditions." McCarthy was to be held responsible for not being enough of a gentle-

<sup>49</sup> Jack Shafer, "Good Night and Good Luck and Bad History," 5 October 2005  
<<http://www.slate.com/id/2127596/>>

<sup>50</sup> Pat Buchanan, "When the Right was Right," 12 May 2003  
<[http://www.townhall.com/columnists/PatrickJBuchanan/2003/05/12/when\\_the\\_right\\_was\\_right?page=full&comments=true](http://www.townhall.com/columnists/PatrickJBuchanan/2003/05/12/when_the_right_was_right?page=full&comments=true)>.

<sup>51</sup> Oshinsky, 489.

man. His censure would include a list of names he had called fellow Senators working toward his demise, such as "cowardly" or "stupid," or that the Watkins Committee was a "fraud that imitated Communist methods."<sup>52</sup> These standards were never applied to any of McCarthy's foes who engaged in name-calling every bit as nasty. Senator Flanders, who had presented the resolution to censure, had accused McCarthy of homosexuality and compared McCarthy to Dennis the Menace and even Adolph Hitler.<sup>53</sup> McCarthy, however, had taken on forces that were more powerful than he in his confrontation with the Army and the Eisenhower Administration. McCarthy would die a few short years later on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1957, from cirrhosis of the liver, caused by his excessive drinking, which peaked during the Army-McCarthy hearings.

The Junior Senator from Wisconsin, Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy, fought to make sure Communists had no place within government. He brought up legitimate concerns about the State Department. His investigations into the Army were based on alarming examples of Army negligence at Fort Monmouth as well as the promotion and honorable discharge of a Communist. Many of his supposed victims are not victims at all, which is clear from the case of Annie Lee Moss. An unprecedented censure was conjured up that destroyed McCarthy's reputation and career. But the anti-Communist cause that he came to embody was a noble cause, motivated to protect the security of the United States of America. The Venona decrypts have proven that the United States government was riddled with spies during and after the Second World War and that Communist subversion within the government was not a myth invented by McCarthy.

Over McCarthy's desk he kept a framed motto: "Oh God, don't let me weaken. Help me continue on. And when I go down, let me go down like an oak tree felled by a woodsman's ax."<sup>54</sup> His actual demise was less heroic. He died a disheartened man, in disgrace, survived by the myth of McCarthyism.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Censure of Senator Joseph McCarthy (1954)*  
<<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/60.htm>>

<sup>53</sup> Herman, 274.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.



## Bob Dylan: Activist or Apathetic?

Hadassa Rubenstein

Widely considered a father figure of the protest movement, Bob Dylan was distinct from the others in that he never clearly expressed his views concerning the key issues facing Americans of the time. When it comes to understanding the political motivations behind the music of Bob Dylan, there are two opposing camps. Many critics argue that Dylan never actually intended to be an activist. They claim that his unwillingness to assert his political views lay in the fact that he simply had none. Dylan, according to this interpretation, was uninvolved and unaware. Some go so far as to say that Dylan capitalized on the spirit of the time, using the popular ideas of the counterculture to gain a following. The other view maintains that Dylan deliberately wrote cryptic songs in order to inspire the generation. He possessed a unique ability to illustrate his ideas, rather than narrate them. A talented poet, Dylan left room for interpretation, encouraging his audience to draw their own conclusions without being spoon-fed.

On the surface, it would seem that this method of "illustrating without narrating" would be less effective in stirring up feelings of discontent among American youth. The blatant lyrics in other musicians' songs certainly had a tremendous impact. However, it is arguable that those who really influenced the counterculture were above simplistic black-and-white messages. For this reason, Bob Dylan has a lasting legacy within the protest movement and a strong following until this very day. The tense dialectic between activism and apathy can be seen throughout the life and career of Bob Dylan, making him one of the most fascinating characters of the 1960s.

Bob Dylan was born Robert Zimmerman in 1941, near the start of World War II. As Dylan described it, "If you were born around this time or were living and alive, you could feel the old world go and the new one beginning. It was like putting the clock back to when B.C. became A.D."<sup>1</sup> Like many other American children, Dylan had distinct memories of anti-Russian propaganda and air-raid drills in grade school. He wrote, "The threat of annihilation was a scary thing. We didn't know what we did to make them so mad. The Reds were everywhere, we were told, and out for blood-lust."<sup>2</sup> During this tumultuous era, Dylan observed the evolution of the Cold War mentality, the Vietnam War, and the subsequent reaction of the American public.

<sup>1</sup> Bob Dylan, *Chronicles: Volume One* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Dylan, 30.

In 1959, Dylan left his home in Hibbing, Minnesota to attend the University of Minneapolis on a state scholarship. Dylan itched to leave, feeling claustrophobic in his provincial community. He explained, "I had to get out of there...Just from my senses, I knew there was something more than Walt Disney movies."<sup>3</sup> Dylan seemed to embrace the idea of rejecting his past and reinventing himself. This can be seen in the decision to change his name from Robert Zimmerman to Bob Dylan at the age of nineteen. While in Minneapolis, Dylan became a frequenter of the Dinkytown neighborhood, known as a gathering point for individuals with unique ideas that broke with traditional thought. It was there that Dylan first became known as a folk singer, often performing traditional folk songs and covers of other artists. Without graduating from college, Dylan moved to New York at the start of 1961.<sup>4</sup>

The America of the 1960s was a turbulent one; never before had there been a generation that so blatantly challenged the leadership of its country. Doubts began to circulate concerning the validity of the war in Vietnam. Many people were troubled by the unfair treatment of African-Americans, and demanded equality. The various movements of the 1960s adopted different methods to spread their opinions and beliefs. In particular, music was utilized as a social and political tool.

Dylan belonged to a community where ideas churned and rebellion was in the air. He became part of a protest movement called "Broadside," which published many of his songs. *Broadside Ballads, Vol. 1*, an LP put out in 1962, included the debut of Dylan's "John Brown," a disturbing song about the realities of war. It tells the story of a young soldier who heads off to Vietnam with his mother's support and encouragement. She brags about her hero son to all the neighbors and anticipates his return. When he finally comes back, his mother is shocked to see that he is a cripple. She is forced to confront the reality of the war. She realizes that the medals her son received could never make up for his lifelong injuries and loss of innocence. Dylan made sure to proclaim that John Brown is fighting a war "for some unknown cause," to emphasize that the tragedy occurred for no legitimate reason.<sup>5</sup>

*The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* was released in 1963, and included some of Dylan's most popular protest songs, such as "Blowin' in the Wind," a song that became an anthem of the civil rights movement.<sup>6</sup> Dylan seemed, within a few lines, to ask all the key questions facing society at the time, and hinted an answer to them all, with-

<sup>3</sup> Clinton Heylin, *Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades Revisited* (Harper Entertainment, 2003), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Scaduto, *Bob Dylan: An Intimate Biography* (London: W. H. Allen, 1972), 26-51.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Shelton, *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), 157-58.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

out revealing it. Members of the anti-war and civil rights movements alike became inspired by lines such as, "How many years can some people exist/Before they are allowed to be free" and "How many deaths will it take till he knows/That too many people have died." Interviewed for an issue of *Sing Out!*, Dylan remarked,

Too many of these hip people are telling me where the answer is, but oh, I won't believe that. I still say it's in the wind and just like a restless piece of paper, it's got to come down sometime...But the only trouble is that no one picks up the answer when it comes down so not too many people get to see and know it...and then it flies again.

Many people claimed to have the answer to the problems facing Americans at the time. The notion of "peace, love, and happiness" was particularly popular. Dylan saw through such platitudes, and understood that the real answer was far more complex. He continued to discuss the events in Vietnam. "I'm only 21 years old and I know there's been too many wars."<sup>7</sup>

Included in the album was "Masters of War." This song was a harsh criticism of the men who not only instigated wars, but also benefited from them. In the liner notes of the album, the song is said to be a reaction to the Cold War arms buildup. The beauty of "Masters of War" is that it revealed a universal and eternal idea concerning all wars, unlike other songs of the generation that remained tied to the events of the day. The lyrics are extremely harsh, describing Dylan's ultimate fantasy of standing over the graves of the warmongers. The song takes a violent and active stance, unlike the idealistic but unrealistic lyrics of other anti-war songs.<sup>8</sup>

While Dylan attended many of the same events as other folk singers of the time, many felt that his heart was not really with the cause. In 1963, at a Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)-organized voter registration rally in Mississippi, Dylan joined the likes of Pete Seeger, one of the prominent members of the folk community, to sing for a group of black farmers to raise their morale and help gain national attention. Theodore Bikel, one of Dylan's fellow musicians, later remarked:

His political attitudes were less strongly formed than many of ours. It seemed a more personal thing with him to be going down into the Deep South. He moved from the universal to the personal, while most artists and writers tend to move from the personal to the universal.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>8</sup> Howard Sounes, *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 131.

<sup>9</sup> Shelton, 170.

This perception of Dylan developed further in December 1963, when he was honored with the Tom Paine Award by the Civil Liberties Committee. The award was to be given to "a public figure who epitomized the good fight for freedom and equality."<sup>10</sup> Dylan's acceptance speech was controversial. He lent his support to the black community and spoke about his frustration at seeing African-Americans dressed in suits at the March on Washington. They should not have felt the need to dress up to prove to society that they were worthy of respect. Dylan continued to ramble on about understanding the motivations of Lee Harvey Oswald, who shot President Kennedy only three weeks before. He also objected to the ban on traveling to Cuba, claiming there was no danger involved.<sup>11</sup>

Much uproar ensued, and Dylan was later interviewed for *The New Yorker* on the subject. He claimed that he was not part of the Movement and never wanted to be part of any political organization. While he agreed with many of the actions of liberals, he did not fully support the dinner. Dylan knew many leading members of the Civil Rights Movement and considered them to be his friends. He could not, however, understand the idea of an elaborate dinner that exacerbated the differences between the two—White, and African Americans. Money was being given out of guilt, without sincere motivations. Forced to give a speech, he had said what was on his mind without reservations. Certainly, he argued, he was not happy that Kennedy had died. He simply understood the "uptight" feeling that Oswald experienced in such unstable times. The event put Dylan in an interesting position. No one could doubt his support of the black community, but many felt he was not doing enough for the cause. Indeed, with his prominent public image, he could have accomplished more than he did. His refusal to take part in political organizations drew much criticism.<sup>12</sup>

Dylan made some controversial statements about the Civil Rights movement. He believed in equality, yet felt unsure of the movement's ability to have an impact on the American mindset. In an interview for the *L.A. Free Press* in 1965, Dylan said that African-Americans getting the right to vote would not solve as many problems as people believed it would. He prattled on about the limited benefits that an equal education would offer the black community. In Dylan's eyes, education was important if all you cared about was getting a good job, yet it did not determine the type of person you would be. After all, Dylan chided, "Who cares if Washington was even the first president of the United States? You think anybody has actually ever been helped with this kind of knowledge?"<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 202-03.

<sup>13</sup> Paul J. Robbins, "The Paul J. Robbins Interview," *Younger Than That Now: The Collected Interviews with Bob Dylan* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2004), 35-46.

Some of Dylan's most influential protest songs were written in 1964, with the release of *The Times They Are A-Changing*, the title also of the album's first track, which stirred the young generation with a clear message of the importance of standing up against authority. The song described the ever-widening "generation gap" and was quickly embraced by civil rights activists. Dylan analyzed the phenomenon and concluded that, "He who gets hurt/Will be he who has stalled/There's a battle outside and it's ragin'/It'll soon shake your windows/And rattle your walls/Oh the times they are a-changin'." Despite Dylan's strong words, many critics questioned his enthusiasm for protest, as he once said regarding the famous tune, "Well, you know, it seems to be what the people like to hear."<sup>14</sup>

"With God on Our Side," the third track, brilliantly breaks down "the myth of God's approval for ungodly wars."<sup>15</sup> Dylan struggles with the idea that God stands behind the victors of any given war and discusses the hypocrisy of post-war alliances, as he writes, "The Second World War/It came and it went/We forgave the Germans/And then we were friends/Though they murdered six million/In the ovens they fried/The Germans now too had God on their side." Dylan finally comes to the conclusion that "If God's on our side/He'll stop the next war."<sup>16</sup> This idea certainly resonated with the members of the anti-war movement, who embraced the song wholeheartedly. "With God on Our Side" suggested that Dylan was finally becoming a strong activist. After all, as Robert Shelton points out, he was singing "an atheistic song in a country that has 'In God We Trust' on every penny."<sup>17</sup>

The murder of a black woman by a white Baltimore socialite in 1963 led Dylan to write "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," probably his best-known song concerning racial inequality. Hattie Carroll, a barmaid, was struck without provocation by William Zantzinger's cane and died the next day from a cerebral hemorrhage. Dylan depicts Carroll as an honest, hardworking mother of ten whose inferior status led to her disgraceful murder. Zantzinger is seen as an immoral brute who managed to receive a light sentence due to his political connections. As it turns out, Zantzinger had been drunkenly tapping people with his cane at a party, and to his misfortune he tapped Carroll, a woman suffering from an enlarged heart and hypertension. He was likely not as ruthless as Dylan's depiction. Dylan could certainly be

<sup>14</sup> Daniel J. Goczkzy, "The Folk Music of the 1960's: Its Rise and Fall," *The Dylan Companion*, eds. Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman (Da Capo Press, 2001), 4-17; Heylin, 126.

<sup>15</sup> Shelton, 213.

<sup>16</sup> Maurice Capel, "The Blessing of the Damned," *The Dylan Companion*, 106.

<sup>17</sup> Shelton, 335.

seen as an activist in this case, especially since he altered the facts of the story, as Clinton Heylin claims, to "fit his preconceived notions of injustice and corruption."<sup>18</sup>

While fans and critics alike idolized and admired his brilliant words, Dylan later admitted that he had used protest as a publicity tactic. While Joan Baez was one of Dylan's first admirers, she claimed that Dylan once remarked, "Hey, hey, news can sell, right? I knew people would buy that kind of shit, right? I never was into that stuff."<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, at the time, Dylan was known as an anti-war activist whose words were rooted in the ideology of the movement. It was not until later in the decade that Dylan abandoned folk-protest and began belting out harsher rock songs. After 1964, Dylan never wrote a song that dealt overtly with protest. He turned his back on musicians who had seen him as an essential part of the movement. Dylan was especially vocal toward Phil Ochs, a popular protest singer of the time. Ochs never doubted that Dylan was the most talented of the bunch, and observed, "Dylan is forcing everybody to listen to him, the quality of his work is so good and so communicative... Dylan has become part of so many people's psyches."<sup>20</sup> Dylan did not return the compliment and reportedly said to Ochs, "The stuff you're writing is bullshit, because politics is bullshit. It's all unreal. The only thing that's real is inside you. Your feelings. Just look at the world you are writing about and you'll see you're wasting your time."<sup>21</sup>

The first real example of this shift took place at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. Pete Seeger opened the annual event by describing the difficult issues that society was facing and the various tactics that should be used to combat discrimination against blacks and the government's involvement in Vietnam. The audience expected Dylan to give an "acoustic performance of socially aware songs."<sup>22</sup> Instead, Dylan performed a rock version of "Maggie's Farm" as well as "Like a Rolling Stone" with members of The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, including Mike Bloomfield on electric guitar.

The events at the festival forced many to view Dylan in a new light and reevaluate his commitment to the values of the counterculture. Many felt that the electric guitar "represented capitalism... the people who were selling out."<sup>23</sup> When interviewed for *Spin* magazine in 1985, Dylan commented on the reaction of the crowd at the festival, "You can do some really disgusting things in life and people

<sup>18</sup> Heylin, 125.

<sup>19</sup> Scaduto, 120.

<sup>20</sup> Heylin, 245.

<sup>21</sup> Scaduto, 176.

<sup>22</sup> Sounes, 181.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

will let you get away with it. Then you can do something that you don't think is anything more than natural and people react in that type of riotous way."<sup>24</sup>

It should be noted that despite the style and manner in which Dylan performed, "Maggie's Farm" and "Like a Rolling Stone" are both songs that touched upon the popular notion in the protest movement of defying conformity.<sup>25</sup> However, it was not Dylan's lyrical style that shifted with this song. Rather, it was the way in which he sang it, gruffly shouting the chorus, "How does it feel/To be on Your own/A complete unknown/Like a Rolling Stone." This represented a shift to rock and roll, as the impact of lyrics depends largely on the manner in which they are communicated. Dylan observed his transformation from folk to rock musician "is what made me different. I played all the folk songs with a rock and roll attitude."<sup>26</sup> "Like a Rolling Stone," released first as a single and later as part of *Highway 61 Revisited*, is a six-minute piece that was revered not only by members of the counterculture but by the great musicians of the time. Until that time, popular songs had been far shorter. Dylan pioneered the idea of a radio-worthy song longer than just a few minutes. In "Like a Rolling Stone," Dylan revealed his frustration and anger at people who did not go against the grain in order to live life honestly. Had Dylan played with an acoustic guitar and calm tone, such uproar would most probably not have ensued.

Dylan's embracing of rock and roll was shocking to most of his fans, but some argue that the transformation was to be expected. Many people incorrectly assumed that Dylan was always immersed in folk culture. They assumed that he would always produce music in the same style as his mentors, particularly Woody Guthrie, the father of folk. Dylan was cast in the same light as Guthrie, who had always stood up against the music business and never changed his image to suit anyone else. Dylan was seen as having contributed to the protest movement in ways that other musicians only dreamed about. They could not have imagined plugging in an electric guitar. How could he betray his roots to fit in with a "newer" sound? However, to view Dylan as a one-dimensional folk figure would be to ignore the plain and simple facts of his history. Dylan also grew up under the influence of artists such as Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry, certainly not cut exclusively from the "folk" cloth. Back in Minnesota, he had even created a rock band. Dylan only became a folk musician in college, but he wasn't always that way. He never turned his back on other genres of music. In an interview in 1966, Dylan ex-

<sup>24</sup> Scott Cohen, "Bob Dylan Not Like a Rolling Stone," *Younger Than That Now*, 225.

<sup>25</sup> Shelton, 272.

<sup>26</sup> James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin: The Rise of Rock and Roll 1947-1977* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

plained, "Folk music came in as some sort of substitute for awhile, but it was only a substitute."<sup>27</sup> When considering these facts, Dylan's performance at the Newport Folk Festival does not seem so surprising after all.

Dylan pursued his new style of music, much to the dismay of many fans who grew accustomed to his steady stream of seemingly political messages. They could not accept that Dylan left the cause in pursuit of what he referred to as "Salvation." While some fans claimed to understand the switch, most of his previous followers felt betrayed. Dylan began to attract a new following that viewed rock as an "escape to a palmier time before Vietnam."<sup>28</sup>

In July of 1966, Dylan suffered serious injuries following a motorcycle accident near his home in Woodstock, New York. His recuperation pushed him into the shell of reclusiveness and he was seldom seen in public. As usual, his fans responded negatively to this withdrawn image of Dylan. They felt that he had shied away from what was important, putting pressure on the American government to bring the boys back home from Vietnam. Dylan seemed more apathetic than ever before.

*Self Portrait*, released in 1970, reflected Dylan's new choice of lifestyle and his abandonment of "everything his 1960's fans wanted him to be."<sup>29</sup> The album was a combination of cover songs and some mediocre original material. In 1981, Dylan remarked that the album was meant to be a joke. He felt as though he was receiving credit for things he had never been a part of. In order to deter fans, he claims, he put out an album that he knew no one would buy.<sup>30</sup> If that was indeed Dylan's intention, it worked. A scathing review by Greil Marcus appeared in *Rolling Stone*, with the title "What is this Shit?" Marcus sharply observed that "unless he returns to the market-place with a sense of vocation and the ambition to keep up with his own gifts, the music of [the mid-sixties] will continue to dominate his records, whether he releases them or not."<sup>31</sup> Dylan eventually took heed of Marcus' suggestion, and did release many magnificent albums that revealed no trace of sixties ideology. Unfortunately for Dylan, he was still pigeonholed into that category.

It cannot be said that Dylan completely abandoned his activist roots. While the war came to an end, the issue of racial discrimination still weighed heavily on his mind. Dylan was particularly taken with the story of Ruben "Hurricane" Carter,

<sup>27</sup> Miller, 219.

<sup>28</sup> Shelton, 329.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Roos and Don O'Meara, "Is Your Love in Vain: Dialectical Dilemmas in Bob Dylan's Recent Love Songs," *The Dylan Companion*, 39.

<sup>30</sup> Heylin, 313.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 316.

an African-American boxer who, after being framed for a crime he did not commit, was given a life sentence in 1967. Carter had been involved in petty crimes and was convinced that he had been locked up by white policemen who had always had it in for him. It was not until 1974 that the witnesses who had identified him in court confessed that they had lied under oath. Carter began to publicize his cause and wrote a book entitled *The Sixteenth Round*, in which he maintained his innocence and called for his immediate release. After reading the memoir, Dylan befriended Carter and decided to devote a song to the story. "Hurricane" the first song on 1976's *Desire*, was co-written by Jacques Levy whose background in theater direction aided in the emotional quality of the song.<sup>32</sup> In addition to being extremely moving, "Hurricane" was also, as Howard Sounes writes, "an excellent piece of journalism."<sup>33</sup> Despite the increase in publicity, Carter remained in jail until his eventual release in 1985. Dylan once again put himself in the spotlight as a strong advocate of racial equality. However, to those who thought that Dylan turned over a new activist leaf, or that "Hurricane" was a "protest song," Dylan revealed in an interview for *People* magazine in 1975 that, "I'm not an activist. I am not politically inclined. I'm for the people, people who are suffering. I don't have any pull in the government."<sup>34</sup> Dylan was all for sympathizing with the plight of others but was very reluctant to take extreme action.

The debate as to Dylan's place within the protest movement is truly fascinating. The twists and turns of his career keep his fans and critics guessing. Nevertheless, to focus on the debate would be unfortunate, as it is secondary to the overarching power of Dylan's work. Dylan did not invent the protest song. It existed before he arrived on the scene and lasted long after he left. However, he accomplished through his work what others never could. As Joan Baez said, "He wrote songs that hadn't been written yet. There aren't very many good protest songs. They're usually overdone. The beauty of Bobby's stuff is its understatement. Anything that's brilliant is an understatement like that..."<sup>35</sup> Indeed the power of Dylan lies in his subtlety. As for the mystery of Bob Dylan, perhaps an article in *Newsweek* magazine said it best: "The one sure thing about Bob Dylan is that there is no sure thing."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Sounes, 286-87.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>34</sup> Jim Jerome, "Bob Dylan: A Myth Materializes with a New Protest Record and a New Tour," *Younger Than That Now*, 97.

<sup>35</sup> Scaduto, 111.

<sup>36</sup> Malcolm Jones Jr., "A Primitive's Portfolio," *Younger Than That Now*, 277.

# Faculty Contribution



## William Camden, the Romans, and Britain<sup>1</sup>

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When I describe my particular field of research in an honest and straightforward fashion, I call it “the history of classical scholarship.” Because that phrase sounds rather dull – not content with studying dead languages and civilizations, I have chosen to examine dead people who studied dead languages and civilizations – I usually try to dress what I do up in slightly more appealing clothes: “the history of archaeology,” say, for normal people, and “the practice of classical reception” for academics. But whether it sounds exciting or not, what I have ended up doing is the history of classics as a subject (and particularly of the study of classical objects such as inscriptions and coins – hence the ‘archaeology’ part). This history is important because in both Europe and North America, classical studies, and particularly Latin and Roman history, remained a fundamental element of elite education right into the twentieth century. Knowledge of the ancient world and its languages provided a springboard from which people with access to that education learned to think about the world around them. In my course ‘Images of Empire,’ for example, we examine how the classical heritage shaped the way leaders approached ruling people or territories, and the visual forms they used to project themselves. And occasionally as I research dead classicists, I uncover examples of individuals who start by working on Greece or Rome, end up doing something rather different, but whose classical background offers a useful way of understanding the intellectual choices that they made. One example is an English scholar, William Camden (1551–1623), who wrote a hugely influential account of British history and geography, the *Britannia*. This began life as a survey of the geography of the Roman province of Britain, but as Camden researched, he realized that the Romans alone did not provide a means to understanding the country in which he lived. He started to examine post-Roman history,

<sup>1</sup> This is an early staging post, with skeletal references, on what I hope will be a long expedition to investigate Camden; it borrows from a paper I delivered to the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in 2006. I am grateful to Paul Adam for his discussions of related topics, and particularly to his insights that lie behind the penultimate paragraph here, very much the tip of an iceberg.

and, as we shall see, ended up by seeing the Saxons, not the Romans, as most important for understanding the institutions around him. The starting point, though, determined the format that his work took; that format, in turn, offered a new way of considering the English state.

Camden’s career is a good example of how scholarly aptitude and persistence offered a means to social mobility in Elizabethan and Stuart England.<sup>2</sup> Camden’s father was what we would now call an artisan, but young William got a place at Christ’s Hospital, a new school for London’s underprivileged poor and orphans; presumably on the basis of his aptitude, he later transferred to St Paul’s School, which offered the best classical education at the time. At the age of 15 he went to Oxford University, where he met many useful friends and colleagues, including the poet-adventurer Philip Sidney, but failed to secure a lasting position or even a degree. He later suggested that his sympathy for the Anglican Church won him the patronage of neither of the important Puritan and Roman Catholic factions which controlled the university at the time; if so, that was the sort of political slip he would not make in the future. Leaving Oxford, he seems to have meandered for a while, before taking a job in 1575 as second master at Westminster School, at that time just to the west of the city of London. There he devised a classical curriculum that fostered both Greek and Latin in his pupils, and harmonized classical education with Anglican theology. The school and his teaching were a success. His fond pupils included Ben Jonson. While a schoolmaster, he researched and wrote the *Britannia*. The success of the book brought him public prominence, and eventually in 1597 a new job, Clarenceux king of arms, where he was one of three figures responsible for examining heraldry and coats of arms – this does not sound important, but in practical terms it was a position of considerable importance for policing and regulating the aristocratic and land-owning hierarchy of the state.<sup>3</sup> It required him to maintain his historical research. His works included a publication of medieval sources for his *Britannia*, a miscellany of other related material,

<sup>2</sup> See now Wyman H. Herendeen, “Camden, William (1551–1623),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4431> (5 October 2007). Camden is little studied, probably because he made the mistake of writing in Latin; it is striking that the most thorough and useful recent book about him is in German: Christiane Kunst, *Römische Tradition und englische Politik: Studien zur Geschichte der Britanniensrezeption zwischen William Camden und John Speed* [Spudasmata, 55] (Hildesheim: Olms, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> William Rockett, “*Britannia*, Ralph Brooke, and the representation of privilege in Elizabethan England,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53:2 (2000), 474–99.

and, most importantly, a politically sensitive but intellectually satisfying history of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. By this point he was definitely an establishment figure. Near his death he established the Camden Professorship of Ancient History at Oxford, the university that had failed to give him a degree. This chair perpetuates his name, otherwise largely forgotten, today.

Camden seems to have started researching antiquities in England seriously in the 1570s. The major impetus to his work, as with so many of the important English cultural achievements of this period, came from the continent of Europe.<sup>4</sup> Camden gives us the details in the preface to his work. He had always been interested in antiquities, he wrote, and his friend Sidney had given him some encouragement along the way, but lack of time and poverty had impeded his efforts. "After a few years," however, "the hugely distinguished man Abraham Ortelius came to England, that most famous founder and defender of the whole of the field of geography. He spent much effort persuading me to illustrate ancient Britain, that is, as far as possible to restore antiquity to Britain and Britain to her antiquity, and to return truth to our affairs, which either popular credulity or the comforting authority of writers had banished."<sup>5</sup> Camden is not simply praising a deceased colleague with these words: Ortelius was the most famous map-maker of his time, then better-known than his contemporary and collaborator Gerard Mercator, who gave his name to the geographic projection still in use today. The encouragement of so distinguished a figure, together with the time and money that the Westminster teaching job provided, were all Camden needed. What exactly had Ortelius meant by asking Camden to take on this project of 'restoration'? Letters that Camden wrote in the late 1570s give us some idea. Fundamentally, what Ortelius had entreated Camden to do was to match ancient Roman place names and other Roman geographical information – his antiquity is classical antiquity – with their contemporary counterparts. Most detailed among the ancient sources for Britain's geography was a document known as the *Antonine Itineraries*. This provided a list of places, with distances between them. The places lay along Roman roads; each

<sup>4</sup> See in general F. J. Levy, "The making of Camden's *Britannia*," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance* 26:1 (1964), 70-97.

<sup>5</sup> William Camden, *Britannia* (London: George Bishop, 1600), second ad lectorem, 1 [=sig. Kkk1 r], "Post paucos annos in Angliam venit clarissimus vir Abrahamus Ortelius vniversae Geographiae vindex & instaurator celeberrimus qui mecum pluribus egit ut Britanniam nostram antiquam illam illustrarem, hoc est, ut Britanniae antiquitatem & suae antiquitati Britanniam quoad possem restituerem; & veritatem in rebus nostris quam vel vulgi credulitas, vel scriptorum securitas proscripserant, postlimio revocarem." This is a slightly fuller description of Ortelius than appears in the preface of each edition.

individual itinerary, then, would give a legionary commander or merchant an idea of how long it would take him to travel from place to place along the road. Camden's first task was to work out which sixteenth-century communities matched the Roman places from the *Itineraries*. Ortelius was a maker of historical maps as well as contemporary ones; with Camden's information and existing maps of Britain, he could create a map of the Roman province. Ortelius's defended his historical maps by claiming that "geography is the eye of history"; he believed that his maps of the ancient world offered readers of ancient Roman texts a chance to visualize the places that they were reading about, and so further their understanding (a lesson publishers of historical textbooks today have absorbed all too well). Ortelius did not limit himself to the pagan world; he also produced a map to illustrate the journey of Abraham, for example.<sup>6</sup>

Ortelius's support and suggestions, though, were just the beginning of a long historical journey for Camden. He certainly was able to provide Ortelius with much of the data he required, but in the course of gathering that information he discovered much more about the country in which he was living than the fluid names of its places. The *Britannia*, printed in 1586 after ten years' work, was the product of this research. It is a hard book to characterize, not least because it came out in seven separate editions in Camden's lifetime (1586, 1587, 1590, 1594, 1600, 1607, and 1610), each one longer than its predecessor, so that the 1610 edition dwarfs the 1586 one. The first six were in Latin, which has meant that scholars have usually simply looked at the 1610 English edition to try to see what Camden was trying to achieve; by doing so, they have missed out on a chance to see how the work evolved, as well as running the risk of being misled.<sup>7</sup> Neither Camden nor his translator, Philemon Holland, was entirely pleased with the 1610 edition, and Holland added some details himself.

Camden's aims, too, make the book difficult to pigeonhole. He announces them as follows: "to search out the most ancient British people and the origin of the English, and to bring forth from the shadows the old British cities mentioned in Ptolemy, the Antonine Itinerary, and other sources."<sup>8</sup> The second half of this formulation, then, accords with Ortelius's geographical interests; but the first, the

<sup>6</sup> The 'Abrahami patriarchae peregrinatio et vita': see L. Wellens-De Donder, "Un atlas historique: le *Parergon* d'Ortelius," in *Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) cartographe et humaniste* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 86.

<sup>7</sup> A useful corrective: William Rickett, "The structural plan of Camden's *Britannia*," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26 (1995), 829-40.

<sup>8</sup> William Camden, *Britannia* (London: Ralph Newbery, 1586), sig. [A6]r, "ad antiquissimam Britannorum, et Anglorum originem indagandam, et vetustas Britanniae urbes, quarum meminerunt Ptolomaeus, Antoninus, et alii, e tenebris cruendas."

quest for origins, is a different interpretation of the map-maker's recommendation that Camden restore antiquity to Britain, and Britain to its antiquity. It is a more explicitly historical investigation. The two complementary strands determined the structure of the book. It starts with a historical overview of the British Isles up to the Norman Conquest, divided by immigrating peoples (Romans, Angles, Saxons, Normans). Then comes a longer geographical survey of England, county by county, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland (which in 1586, at least, is accorded much the shortest space, being a separate kingdom). In generic terms, then, it is both a history of a territory and a sort of gazetteer or guidebook (it is important to note that the gazetteer included plenty of historical information as well).

Camden's work is important on a variety of levels. Perhaps most striking is his use of source criticism. Without much of a tradition of investigation to rely on, Camden tried to dig out as much evidence as possible, and to use that rather than hearsay (the "popular credulity" mentioned above). He is admired for his use of archaeological evidence of various genres – hence my initial interest – including ruins, inscriptions, and coins (the 1600 edition incorporated a short digression on coinage, with plates illustrating Roman and post-Roman examples).<sup>9</sup> Armed with his evidence, he was able to uproot some particularly tenacious myths about Britain's past, most famously the idea that the origin of the Britons lay with Brutus the Trojan, fleeing the fall of Troy. Another important aspect, which is less recognizably 'modern', is his interest in etymology and the significance of names, not surprising given the work's origins, but also an attitude characteristic of the time. He assumed that place names and other titles must have some sort of meaning: in the words of a contemporary, a member of an informal discussion group of which Camden was a member, he thought there was a "consonancy and a correspondency between the name of a thing and the thing named."<sup>10</sup> This belief led Camden to try to learn the various languages spoken on the British Isles between the Latin of the Romans and the English of his day, which in turn further expanded the range of sources available to him.

Here, though, rather than on Camden's methodological choices, I want to focus on the format that he selected for his book. For me, the work's origins as an inves-

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Stuart Piggott, "William Camden and the *Britannia*" (Reckitt Archaeological Lecture), *Proceedings of the British Academy* 37 (1951), 199-217 and more recently Leslie W. Hople, "Sir Robert Cotton, Camden's *Britannia* and the early history of Roman Wall studies," *Archaeologia Aeliana* 5th ser. 27 (1999), 1-19.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Hearne, *A Collection of Curious Discourses* (London: Richardson, 1771), 2:90.

tigation into Roman Britain and its remains determined its structure. As I see it, having considered the history of the Roman invaders, Camden moved on to the Angles for his next section of the historical survey, and so on; his search for evidence of Roman sites led him to create a systematic gazetteer. Crucially, this bipartite approach in turn revealed another way of looking at the history of the state compared to the two most common models up to that point. They were a simple year-by-year chronicle format (favored by institutions, like churches, and their historians, who required a simple record of relevant events), and a history that focused on monarchs (think of Shakespeare, looking for information for his history plays while Camden was writing). For Camden, *Britannia* was made up of peoples and places.

As Camden's efforts to understand British antiquity took him beyond the Romans, he emancipated himself from a slavish classicism. The humanist celebration of classical antiquity at the expense of the Middle Ages, so characteristic of fifteenth-century intellectual movements, evolved with Camden and people like him into something else. In addition, as he worked, Camden went further, and prioritized one particular set of invaders at the expense of the Romans. We can see this most clearly by looking at maps in the various editions of the work. In a work so concerned with topography, and one inspired by the map-maker Ortelius, it is surprising to find no maps at all in any of the first four editions. Camden conceded as much: "Perhaps there will be those who expect maps, which, I admit... are of great importance to geographical study, and especially if the light of letters is applied to the silent images: but I do not have abilities in this area."<sup>11</sup> Instead, he referred his readers to the maps that Christopher Saxton made of the individual English counties in the 1570s. By 1607 versions of Saxton's maps were included in the *Britannia*, along with some by John Norden. These maps, with further supplements, then appeared in the 1610 English translation. As we saw above, though, by the time Camden was writing, scholars had also developed another cartographic genre, the historical map. Maps of this sort could accompany the first part of the *Britannia*, the historical survey, and in 1600, Camden included two: one of Roman Britain, and another of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy, a division of England into seven kingdoms.

<sup>11</sup> William Camden, *Britannia* (London: Ralph Newbery, 1586), sig. [A5]v, "Nonnulli fortasse erunt qui tabulas Chorographicas hic expectent, quas... Geographicis studiis plurimum interesse fateor, maxime, si mutis tabulis literarum etiam lumen accedat. Hoc tamen praestare facultatis non est nostrae..."



The latter was re-engraved for the 1607 edition, and then appeared in the subsequent English editions. But the map of Roman Britain appeared in 1600 alone.

This is quite surprising: while maps were expensive to engrave and insert in books, the heptarchy map, along with Saxton's maps, made it into the 1607 edition, and so it does not seem that Camden's publisher was short of funds. One basic reason for the omission could be that Camden simply felt that he had not done quite good enough a job. He introduced the map with the following, rather doleful comment: "I think it will interest the reader to insert at this point a map of Britannia – which was the Roman province – with the ancient names, but it is not quite accurate. But who could manage that? If nothing else, learn this from it, that every day something on this world changes, new foundations of cities are laid, and new names of people arise, and the previous ones become extinct."<sup>12</sup> The introduction to the Saxon heptarchy map, by contrast, is more direct: "you may be pleased to learn from this map what the Saxon heptarchy in England was, and what new names of places sprouted in that century."<sup>13</sup> Although the Roman map disappeared, Camden's introductory comment, with the reflection on fate, was actually kept in the 1607 and 1610 editions; Ortelius, in fact, had published a historical map of Roman Britain in 1595, and so perhaps Camden had actually decided that any reader who wanted such a map would have been able to find it. I want to suggest another answer, hinted at in the introductions to the two tables. Whereas in the case of the Roman map, Camden stresses the mutability of human foundations, in the Anglo-Saxon one, he simply points to the new names of places that sprouted – with the implication that they remained. Is the retention of the Anglo-Saxon map, then, an indication of where Camden decided that modern Britain should look for its most important impetus? This is a speculative suggestion, but gains some support from what Camden says of the Anglo-Saxons: "we have preserved their language," Camden wrote, "now for 1,150 years, more or less uncorrupted, and with it the possession of the land... The subject, and the place in my narrative seem to require that something should be added about the ancient customs of the

<sup>12</sup> William Camden, *Britannia* (London: George Bishop, 1600), 82, "Lectoris etiam interesse putamus Chorographicam Britanniae tabellam (cum fuerat Romanorum provincia) priscis nominibus hoc in loco interserere, non quidem illam accuratam. Quis enim praestabit? sed e qua si nihil aliud hoc tamen ediscas, quotidie aliquid in hoc orbe mutari, nova urbium fundamenta iaci, nova gentium nomina extinctis nominibus prioribus exoriri..."

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 107, "Quae nam fuit Saxonum in Anglia Heptarchia, & quae nova locorum nomina illo seculo enata, ex hac tabella Chorographica, si libet intuearis."

Saxons, out ancestors, and I will indeed add what I have found."<sup>14</sup> These sentences did not appear before the 1607 edition.

In his historical survey of England, therefore, Camden decides to give priority to the Saxons in terms of custom and language. This is important because they were established before the Norman settlement – a hugely disruptive invasion, in which William the Conqueror killed twenty percent of the population, made considerable administrative changes, and replaced most of the indigenous landowners with his followers – and before the creation of the modern British monarchy. Custom and language predate, and are independent of, those monarchs. That fact does not sound so very surprising now, but in a sixteenth century context it had a considerable political charge. Camden had several friends interested in the institutional history of England; if customs were independent of the monarch, it is a short step, theoretically at least, to claim that the English constitution and law are also independent entities. With characteristic caution, Camden did not take that step in the *Britannia* – he happily dedicated one edition to Queen Elizabeth, and then another to James I after her death – but his friends did so, and some scholars have argued that by doing so they offered important intellectual impetus to the rebels against the king in the English civil war of the 1640s.

By focusing on peoples in his historical overview, and then by switching straight to a geographical survey, Camden also avoids having to confront the single most contentious topic of sixteenth century English life, the question of confessional identity. King Henry VIII had broken away from Rome in the 1530's to establish the Anglican Church, and as I wrote above, Camden seemed broadly supportive of the Anglican settlement reaffirmed by Henry's daughter Elizabeth. But the issue had not gone away, as Camden's experiences at Oxford suggested, and the question of the religious allegiances of the childless Elizabeth's heir meant that it became increasingly pressing in the late sixteenth century. In the *Britannia*, by not considering sixteenth century history directly, Camden suggests that the exact brand of Christianity practiced in Britain is not vital to its identity. Camden's narrative makes the conversion of Britain to Christianity in the sixth century CE unquestionably important. Later religious events are less so, at least in the *Britannia*;

<sup>14</sup> William Camden, *Britannia* (London: George Bishop and John Norton, 1607), 95, "Quam nos cum illis annos iam quoddammodo illibatam, simulque regionis possessionem conservavimus... Res et locus nunc postulare videntur ut de priscis Saxonum maiorum nostrorum moribus aliquid attexatur, et attexam sane quae observavi."

Camden did have to confront the question in his later history of Elizabeth's reign.

The nature of sixteenth century Christianity and the Saxon origins of English customs take us a long way from learning Latin and studying Roman history. It would be easy to argue that they have little to do with one another; yes, Camden studied classics, and ended up teaching it, but his political and religious beliefs were what really determined his presentation of the British Isles in the *Britannia*. But what I hope to have suggested here is that we can go a little farther than that. By looking for Rome in Britain, Camden saw that the Roman occupation was just one stage in Britain's history, and that prompted him to examine the other stages and to present his history of the country in terms of invading peoples rather than monarchs. That, in turn, allowed him to downplay a history that focused on recent kings and queens, and to posit England's origins in relatively distant medieval history. By doing so, he presented a state whose important and well-established features were independent of particular rulers. For political and historical theorists, this was a powerful argument, and I like to think that however small, Camden's vision played an important role in later constitutional settlements.