

THE ATTITUDE OF ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX TOWARD THE JEWS

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St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) was a pivotal figure in the intellectual and political changes that shook Western Christendom in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Apostle of the Gregorian reformers, Bernard believed not merely in the primacy of religion but in its right to control all political and social phenomena. Consequently, he became the self-appointed conscience of Europe; he chastised kings, advised popes, and exercised an undeniable influence upon the most significant religious and secular decisions of his time.

Bernard was, furthermore, in the forefront of the revolution in Christian piety that had begun in the eleventh century. He practically founded a new and more rigorous monastic order, contributed to the burgeoning Mary cult, and helped to strengthen popular piety. These intellectual and emotional changes certainly played some role in the broadening and intensification of anti-Jewish feeling in the second half of the Middle Ages.

The question we shall try to answer in this paper is whether Bernard himself was impelled by these forces toward a more strongly anti-Jewish attitude than his predecessors. As we shall see, he presents a fascinating case study of the increasing tension between the standard theological rationale for tolerating Jews in its most liberal form and the growing hatred for Jews in twelfth-century Europe.

Bernard is a good example of a Christian who formed his attitude toward the Jews almost entirely on the basis of theoretical and theological considerations, for aside from some knowledge of their usurious activities, his contact with Jews was minimal. Malcolm Hay writes that “not a single word (in Bernard’s works) suggests

the possibility of friendly personal relations with them.”¹ Stephen Harding, Bernard’s predecessor as head of the Cistercian movement, had used rabbis to help him with textual problems in the Hebrew scriptures, but there is no evidence at all that Bernard continued this practice, and there are some positive indications that he did not do so systematically.²

Consequently, his action during the one time of his life when he was faced with a Jewish crisis is reflective of the effects of official Christian theology rather than of any personal relationship with Jews. This action came during the preparations for the second crusade, a crusade that was preached by Bernard, when a Cistercian monk named Radulph left his monastery and began encouraging the mobs to massacre Jews. Bernard heeded an urgent appeal and wrote a number of letters opposing Radulph; ultimately, he even preached to the mobs in order to prevent the massacres.

Part of the texts of Bernard’s letters at this time will serve as an excellent basis for a discussion of some of his central positions on Jewish questions:

For the rest, not I but the Apostle warns you, brethren, not to believe every spirit. I have heard with great joy of the zeal for God’s glory which burns in your midst, but your zeal needs the timely restraint of knowledge. The Jews are not to be persecuted, killed, or even put to flight. Ask anyone who knows Sacred Scripture what he finds foretold of the Jews in the

¹ *Europe and the Jews* (Boston, 1961), p. 40.

² On Harding, see Watkin Williams, *St. Bernard of Clairvaux* (Westminster, Maryland, 1952), p. 259. As for Bernard, there is one sermon, for example, where he expresses doubt as to whether the phrase “meliora sunt ubera tua vino” (Cant. 1.2) was spoken by the bride or bridegroom. A reference to the Hebrew “dodekha” would have resolved the issue (assuming the acceptance of Massoretic vocalization). See *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* (henceforth referred to as *SCC*), 9.4, *S. Bernardi Opera*, ed. by J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and H. M. Rochais (henceforth referred to as *LTR*) (Rome, 1957), I, p. 44; *Life and Works of St. Bernard*, tr. by Samuel J. Eales (henceforth referred to as *Eales*) (London, 1896), IV, p. 45. Translations from *SCC* are, with occasional changes, taken from *Eales*.

Psalm. 'Not for their destruction do I pray,' it says. The Jews are for us the living words of Scripture, for they remind us of what our Lord suffered. They are dispersed all over the world so that by suffering for their crime they may be everywhere the living witnesses of our redemption. Hence the same Psalm adds, 'only let thy power disperse them.' And so it is: dispersed they are. Under Christian princes they endure a hard captivity, but 'they only wait for the time of their deliverance.' Finally, we are told by the Apostle that when the time is ripe all Israel shall be saved. But those who die before will remain in death. ... If the Jews are utterly wiped out [or 'ground down' — *conterantur*], what will become of our hope for their promised salvation, their eventual conversion? If the pagans were similarly subjugated to us, then, in my opinion, we should wait for them rather than seek them out with swords. But as they have now begun to attack us, it is necessary for those of us who do not carry a sword in vain to repel them with force. It is an act of Christian piety both to 'vanquish the proud' and also to 'spare the subjected', especially those for whom we have a law and a promise, and whose flesh was shared by Christ whose name be forever blessed.³

In another letter, Bernard wrote:

'Put back thy sword into its place; all those who take up the

³ Selections from the Latin of this passage:

Non sunt persecuendi Iudaei, non sunt trucidandi, sed ne effugandi quidem ... propter hoc dispersi sunt in omnes regiones, ut dum justas tanti facinoris poenas luunt, testes sint nostrae redemptionis ... Denique cum introiret gentium multitudo, 'tunc omnis Israel salvus erit,' ait Apostolus (Rom. 11:26).

Epist. 363, *Sancti Bernardi ... Opera*, ed. by Johannis Mabillon, I (henceforth referred to as Mabillon) (Paris, 1719), c. 329-330 = Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (henceforth *PL*) 182, c. 567. The English is based on Bruno Scott James, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux* (London, 1953), Letter 391, pp. 462-463. Henceforth, the enumeration and pagination of letters in James' translation will be placed in parentheses next to the usual number. It should be noted that James translates "poenas luunt" as "expiating their crime," but this is unlikely.

sword will perish by the sword.' Is it not a far better triumph for the Church to convince and convert the Jews than to put them all to the sword? ... Otherwise, when does that saying come in, 'Not for their destruction I pray,' and 'When the fulness of the nations shall have come in, then all Israel will be saved,' and 'The Lord is rebuilding Jerusalem, calling the banished sons of Israel home'?⁴

There are a great number of highly significant statements in these passages. Let us begin with the most basic question: the prohibition of converting Jews at the point of a sword. This prohibition, in the view of Bernard, is based upon two independent considerations. The first is logical and the second Scriptural. The logical argument is what prompts him to say that he would tolerate even subjugated pagans, and this argument appears more clearly elsewhere.

In a famous passage in his *Sermons on the Canticle*,⁵ he says that heretics should be taken not by force of arms but by force of arguments. In this he follows the rather obvious insight of Gregory I that only preaching can effect a sincere conversion.⁶ However, there is a second, less tolerant step in the reasoning associated with this position. Two sermons later,⁷ Bernard adds that though faith is produced by persuasion and not by force, it is better to coerce heretics at sword point than to permit them to "draw away many other persons into their error." This is similar to his argument in Ep. 363 with regard to pagans although there he refers to military attacks rather than pagan persuasion. Thus, the logical consideration operates to grant toleration only to docile pagans and heretics. When they become militant or troublesome, they are to be "coerced by the sword."

The Jews, however, are protected not only by logical argument but also by Biblical injunction. What, may we ask, would be the

⁴ Epist. 365, Mabillon, c. 332 = *PL* 182, c. 57 (James, 393, p. 466).

⁵ 64.8, *LTR*, II, p. 170, Eales, IV, p. 386.

⁶ Gregory's Epist. 1.47. Cf. James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (Cleveland-New York-Philadelphia, 1961), p. 211.

⁷ *SCC* 66.12, *LTR*, II, p. 187, Eales, IV, p. 407.

status of a Jewish people which was attracting Christians away from their faith? Would the Biblical requirement that Jews be tolerated also fall before the fear that they would “draw away many other persons into their error”? There is a passage in his *De Consideratione*⁸ where Bernard implies that the Bible would prevail: “Let them [heretics], I say, either be corrected by your zeal in this way lest they perish or be coerced lest they destroy others.” He then goes on, apparently dealing with a situation in which they might “destroy others,” and says: “But concerning the Jews, time excuses you: They have their own end which cannot be brought earlier. The fulness of the nations must precede it.” This is a radical statement of extreme toleration.

Whether or not Bernard would have maintained such a position in the face of a proselytizing Judaism is surely open to question, but the fact remains that his actual statements in this area are extremely tolerant, especially when we compare them with his attitude toward pagans. He writes in a letter, “We utterly forbid that for any reason whatsoever a truce should be made with these peoples [Eastern European pagans] ... until such a time as, by God’s help, they shall be either converted or wiped out.”⁹ In another letter, after quoting the very verse about putting away the sword which he used in letter 365 to defend the Jews, he argues that it must sometimes be overridden. “I believe that the time has come for both swords to be drawn in defense of the Eastern Church.”¹⁰

Bernard’s letter on the Jews, then, distinguishes them favorably from the pagans and was at least partially effective in halting the massacres. His activity on behalf of the Jews was not forgotten by the beneficiaries, and both the twelfth-century Ephraim of Bonn and the sixteenth-century Yosef HaKohen refer to his actions with varying degrees of enthusiasm.¹¹ Malcolm Hay, however, has re-

⁸ III. 1.3, Mabillon, c. 433 = *PL* 182. 759 = J. Leclerq & H. M. Rochais, *S. Bernardi Opera* III (Rome, 1963), p. 433.

⁹ Epist. 467 (394, p. 467).

¹⁰ Epist. 256 (399, p. 471).

¹¹ Yosef HaKohen is more enthusiastic than his predecessor who had emphasized Bernard’s theological motivations. See Ephraim of Bonn’s *Sefer*

cently proffered a much less favorable appraisal of Bernard's action in this matter.¹² He emphasizes the fact that Bernard's reasons for opposing the massacres were not humanitarian but theological, and his language in condemning Radulph is scarcely as strong as it could and should have been. When he condemned the murder of a Christian, Master Thomas, he was far more indignant than he was on this occasion. Furthermore, he ended his letter by freeing all crusaders from exactions of usury,¹³ a "consolation," says Hay, "for recruits who were now forbidden to exercise their swordsmanship upon defenseless civilians." It should be added that there is no clearcut evidence for Graetz' apologia that Bernard was forced to remit the interest by Papal pressure.¹⁴

The fact is, however, that Hay's strictures are more a condemnation of medieval anti-Semitism generally than they are of Bernard. Few medieval leaders waxed eloquent over their deep humanitarian concern for Jews, and while occasional feelings of genuine sympathy do appear, they are hardly characteristic of the period. Moreover, to the extent that appeals to Christian mercy are made with regard to treatment of Jews, such appeals are found in Bernard's letters as well.¹⁵

Zekhirah in A. M. Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz veSarfat* (Jerusalem, 1946), p. 116 and Yosef HaKohen's *'Emeq HaBakhah*, ed. by M. Letteris (Vienna, 1852), p. 41. There is a reference to the Jewish reaction in Richard S. Storrs' brief and enthusiastic account of Bernard's activities on behalf of the Jews; see his *Bernard of Clairvaux* (New York, 1912), pp. 176-181. See also B. Blumenkranz in K. Rengstorff & S. von Kortzfleisch, *Kirche und Synagoge*, I (Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 121-2.

¹² *Europe and the Jews*, chapter 2, pp. 40 ff.

¹³ Epist. 363, Mabillon, c. 330 = *PL* 182, c. 568.

¹⁴ H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, third ed., VI, (Leipzig, 1894), p. 148 = *Divrei Yemei Yisrael*, translated by S. P. Rabbinowicz (Warsaw, 1894), IV, p. 190.

¹⁵ One medieval leader who appears to have felt some genuine sympathy for Jews was Pope Alexander II. In a letter written in 1063 regarding the murder of Jews by knights in Spain, he called those knights stupid, avaricious, and madly raging for trying to kill people whom divine *pietas* had predestined for salvation, and in another letter he added, "God does not enjoy the shedding

Furthermore, Bernard maintained the most liberal of the views that were possible within the accepted theology. It was, of course, universally maintained that Jews should not be massacred; indeed, Psalm 59.12 ("Do not kill them..."), which Bernard cites in his letter, was a classical proof-text quoted very frequently to buttress this position.¹⁶ Nevertheless, even so extreme an anti-Jewish measure as expulsion was sometimes considered consistent with this and similar verses. Pope Leo VII had written to archbishop Frederick of Mayence between 937 and 939 that Jews should not be forced to convert but that they may be expelled if they refuse.¹⁷ In addition, Bernard's apparent view that even militant Jews should be tolerated, as well as several opinions that we shall discuss below (e.g., the unusual vigor of his insistence on their ultimate salvation and his view that they retain a special favorable status), clearly serve to classify his practical position on the Jews as extremely tolerant. Indeed, even his suggestion that certain debts be voided appears mild in comparison with Peter the Venerable's proposal on the same occasion that Jewish funds be confiscated for use by crusaders.¹⁸ Finally, it ought to be noted that Radulph was held in very high regard in Germany and that vigorous opposition to his preaching was neither easy nor assured of success.¹⁹

of blood nor delight in the destruction of the wicked." See *PL* 146, cc. 1386-7. For a less impressive but similar remark by Bernard, see below, note 25.

¹⁶ See H. H. Ben Sasson, *Peraqim beToldot HaYehudim Bimei HaBeinayim* (Tel Aviv, 1958), pp. 31-32. Cf. also Peter Damian, whose general outlook was quite similar to that of Bernard: "Unde per Psalmistam dicitur... 'ne occidas eos,'" *Epist.* 13, *PL* 144, c. 284-285. On Damian's attitude toward the Jews, cf. my "St. Peter Damian: His Attitude toward the Jews and the Old Testament," *The Yavneh Review*, IV (1965), pp. 80-112.

¹⁷ *PL* 132. 1084-1085.

¹⁸ See *PL* 189.368, and cf. Ch. Merchavia, *HaTalmud BiRe'i HaNašrut* (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 130, and B. Blumenkranz in K. Rengstorff and S. von Kortzfleisch, *Kirche und Synagoge*, I, p. 121.

¹⁹ See the citations in Carl Neumann, *Bernhard von Clairvaux und die Anfänge des Zweiten Kreuzzuges* (Heidelberg, 1882), p. 35. For a fairly recent discussion of some of Bernard's activities in connection with the crusade, see A. Bredero, "Studien zu den Kreuzzugsbriefen Bernhards von Clairvaux und

Now, the same verse which prohibits destruction of the Jews (Psalm 59:12) prophesies their dispersion ("only let Thy power disperse them"). Bernard was strongly imbued with the idea of Jewish serfdom, writing that "there is no more dishonorable nor serious serfdom than that of the Jews; they carry it with them wherever they go, and everywhere they find their masters."²⁰ Furthermore, he used the existence of this servitude as an anti-Jewish argument. "But if that flower [of the Jews] still remains, where, then, is the kingdom? where is the priesthood? where the prophets and the temple? where those mighty wonders etc.?"²¹ This argument was common,²² and in this literary form it is taken straight out of a sermon by Peter Chrysologus who asked, "Where is the temple? Where is the priest? Where is the sacrifice?"²³

This serfdom is, of course, punishment for that greatest of all crimes, the crucifixion. Bernard mentions the Jews' "viperous venom" in hating Jesus and the bestial stupidity and miserable blindness which caused them to "lay impious hands upon the Lord of Glory."²⁴

seiner Reise nach Deutschland im Jahre 1146," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 66 (1958), pp. 331-343.

²⁰ *De Consideratione*, I, translated in S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1957), V, p. 129.

²¹ "First Sermon on the Virgin Mother," *St. Bernard's Sermons for the Seasons and the Principal Festivals of the Year*, tr. by a priest of Mt. Melleray (henceforth *Sermons*) (Westminster, Maryland, 1950), I, pp. 60-61.

²² Cf., e.g., Damian's *Dialogus*, *PL* 145, cc. 65-66, and Jacob ben Reuben, *Milhamot HaShem*, ed. by J. Rosenthal (Jerusalem, 1963), p. 5. For the Jewish response to the Christian argument from the small number, servitude and degradation of the Jews, see *Sefer Yosef HaMeqanne*, *Festschrift Berliner's* (Frankfort A.M., 1903), p. 87; Rosenthal's edition (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 58; Meir ben Simon of Narbonne, *Milhemet Mišvah*, Parma ms p. 14; Joseph Kimḥi, *Sefer HaBerit*, in *Milhemet Ḥovah* (Constantinople, 1710), p. 36a; Solomon Ben Moses de Roesi, 'Edut HaShem Ne'emanah, partly edited by J. Rosenthal, *Sura* III (1948), pp. 260-4; *Sefer Nišṣaḥon Yashan* in J. Wagenseil, *Tela Ignea Satanae* (Altdorf, 1681), II, pp. 253-7; Rupert of Deutz, *Dialogus Christiani et Judaei*, *PL* 170.606.

²³ *PL* 52, c. 512.

²⁴ *SCC* 60.4, *LTR*, II, p. 144, *Eales*, IV, p. 362. See too "Second Sermon for Christmas Day," *Sermons*, I, p. 395. Cf. also *Epist.* 158 (164, p. 233).

Nevertheless, in spite of the length and severity of what Bernard considered a richly deserved servitude, he firmly believed that the Jews will be saved at the final judgment. The brunt of his argument against their destruction is that such a destruction would invalidate Scriptural prophecies, such as the oft-quoted verse (Romans 11:26) that "all Israel will be saved." He is so thoroughly convinced of the anti-Scriptural character of Radulph's preaching that he writes, "Are you the one who makes the prophets liars and empties out the treasures of piety and mercy of Jesus Christ?"²⁵ This form of argument is particularly intriguing, since it was usually used as part of anti-Jewish polemic. Thus, Bernard may subtly be arguing that Radulph is no better than the Jews whom he is attacking.²⁶ In a sermon, he says that the judgment against Israel is only partial (*ex parte*) and quotes the verse that God will not reject them to the end, but will save a remnant ("sed nec repellat in finem, reliquias salvaturus").²⁷ It would not do to press the contradiction between "all Israel" and a "remnant"; Bernard probably felt that the entire last generation of Jews (= all Israel) would be saved, while "remnant" has the wider perspective of all the generations. In fact, Bernard himself mentions both verses one after the other.²⁸

What is especially surprising in this connection is Bernard's

²⁵ "Tunc es ille qui mendaces facies prophetas et evacuebis omnes thesauros pietatis et misericordiae Jesu Christi?" Epist. 365, Mabillon, c. 332 = *PL* 182, c. 571.

²⁶ For the argument that Jews, in effect, proclaim the prophets liars, see John 5.45-47; *Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati*, ed. by N. Bonwetsch (Berlin, 1910), pp. 20-21, 65 (ἐὰν οὐκ ἤλθεν ὁ χριστός, ψεύδεται ὁ προφήτης); *Les Trophées de Damas*, ed. by G. Bardy, *Pat. Orientalia* 15, p. 240 (τὸν πατριαρχὸν ψευστὴν ἐποίησας); Petrus Alfonsi's *Dialogus*, *PL* 157.618 (Christians believe in the incarnation because they don't consider the prophets liars); Rupert of Deutz, *Dialogus*, *PL* 170.596 ("O Judaei, quaecumque loquuntur Scripturae ut vera sunt aut non; sed dicere quis audeat quia non vera sunt?").

²⁷ *SCC* 14.2, *LTR* I, pp. 76-77, Eales IV, p. 75.

²⁸ *SCC* 79.5-6, *LTR* II, p. 275, Eales, IV, p. 486. Raban Maur also quoted the verse on all Israel and a verse mentioning the *reliquiae* without noticing a contradiction. Cf. *PL* 110, c. 582. For other references to Jewish salvation in Bernard, cf. *SCC* 16.15, *LTR*, I, p. 97, Eales, IV, p. 94, and Epist. 467 (394, p. 467).

use of the verse, "The Lord is rebuilding Jerusalem, calling the banished sons of Israel home," as a prophecy of Jewish redemption. In many places, Bernard understands "Jerusalem" as a spiritual term and "Israel" as Christians. He says that at the second advent, God will "rebuild the Jerusalem of your souls."²⁹ He refers to the "true Jerusalem,"³⁰ to the renewal of the "spiritual Jerusalem, the true holy city,"³¹ and to the "free Jerusalem which is above and mother of us all."³² Indeed, this widespread conception goes back to Galatians 4:26: "But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother." Bernard, moreover, agrees with the universal Christian belief that the Christians are *verus Israel*.³³ It would seem, then, that in order to save the Jews, Bernard suppressed what he believed to be a perfectly valid interpretation of this verse and referred it instead to carnal Israel.³⁴ He implies, furthermore, that the ultimate Jewish conversion will take place at least with the consent of the Jews' free will; it cannot be entirely imposed from without.³⁵ Bernard's view of Jewish salvation, then, was of the most positive nature possible within the framework of medieval Christian thought.

It is a matter of particular interest that Bernard appears con-

²⁹ "Fifth Sermon for Christmas Day," *Sermons*, I, p. 42.

³⁰ Epist. 469 (395, p. 468).

³¹ "First Sermon for Septuagesima," *Sermons*, II, p. 60.

³² Epist. 64 (67, p. 91).

³³ "Second Sermon for Christmas Eve," *Sermons*, I, p. 317; "Fourth Sermon on the Virgin Mother," *ibid.*, p. 114; "First Sermon for the First Sunday after the Octave of the Epiphany," *Sermons*, II, p. 37; Epist. 397 (429, p. 499); Epist. 288 (410, p. 479). On the history of this conception, see M. Simon, *Verus Israel* (Paris, 1948), esp. pp. 110-111, and B. Blumenkranz, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins* (Basel, 1946), pp. 164-175.

³⁴ It is also possible that Bernard referred this verse to the Jews because of the phrase "banished sons of Israel," and Christians had never been banished. Indeed, this argument was used by Jewish polemicists in connection with the *Verus Israel* question in general. See the *Sefer Nišṣaḥon Yashan* in J. Wagenseil, *Tela Ignea Satanae* (Altdorf, 1681), II, p. 31, and cf. my doctoral dissertation, *The Nišṣaḥon Vetus*, Columbia Univ., 1970, pp. 31, 111.

³⁵ *The Treatise of St. Bernard Concerning Grace and Free Will (De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio)*, tr. by W. Williams (London-New York, 1920), pp. 16-17.

vinced that Jews retain some special status even after the crucifixion and that some Biblical promises still apply to them. He writes that the Jew, unlike the Christian, has the right to temporal riches, for he "received the promise of a temporal reward."³⁶ It is, of course, possible that this is a rationalization to explain the theologically uncomfortable fact that some Jews were quite successful financially, but this possibility does not render Bernard's remark insignificant. Moreover, his above-quoted statement suggesting that Jews are to be spared partly because Jesus shared their flesh reinforces the impression that he was genuinely convinced that even carnal Israel has a special, favorable status.³⁷

There are a number of other places in his works where Bernard shows some moderate leanings favorable to Jews. Even the infidel, he feels, can love God, though neither Jew nor pagan can love Him as much as the Christian can.³⁸ He attributes a chaste custom to the Jews by saying that Mary was betrothed to Joseph because the intended husband would, according to "a Jewish custom," watch over the virtue of his intended wife.³⁹ In apologizing for Paul's early persecution of Christians, he supplies, perhaps unwittingly, a basis for mitigating Jewish sin, saying, "He 'did it ignorantly in unbelief.'"⁴⁰ While interpreting the verse, "Thou shalt not walk upon the asp...", he avoids an Augustinian interpretation which said that the asp was the Jew.⁴¹ Finally, he says that Christians are

³⁶ "First Sermon for the Feast of All Saints," *Sermons*, III, p. 338.

³⁷ See Epist. 363, Mabillon, c. 330 = *PL* 182, c. 567 (James 391, p. 463). It must be granted that he is not being theologically rigorous in this sentence (note his "proof-text" regarding vanquishing the proud and sparing the subjected from the *Aeneid*, a work that was hardly canonical despite Vergil's medieval reputation as a near-prophet).

³⁸ *The Book on the Love of God (De Diligendo Deo)*, ed. and tr. by E. G. Gardner (London, 1915), pp. 38, 42, 64.

³⁹ "Second Sermon on the Virgin Mother," *Sermons*, I, p. 82. This interpretation, however, is theologically motivated and was current before Bernard.

⁴⁰ "Third Sermon for the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul," *Sermons*, III, p. 212.

⁴¹ "Fourteenth Sermon on Psalm XC," *Sermons*, I, p. 278 (cf. translator's note).

worse usurers than Jews, a statement we shall discuss below.⁴²

Nevertheless, despite the pro-Jewish tendencies discussed above, the general tenor of Bernard's sermons and letters is strongly anti-Semitic. As a loyal member of an anti-Jewish tradition going back to the classical world, Bernard strongly condemns Jewish exclusiveness. "He desired them [the Gentiles] to draw near; but the Synagogue forbade them... For Judah has in abundance the oil of knowledge of God, and keeps it to herself, as a miser... She desires to possess alone the worship, the knowledge, the great name of God, not because she is jealous of her own happiness, but because she is envious of mine." He then adds that the Jews desire that "the unction of salvation remain upon Aaron's beard alone."⁴³

Bernard's negative assessment of Jewish character is not confined to their rejection of Jesus alone, for he refers to Jewish *perfidia* during the first Jewish Commonwealth.⁴⁴ He says, with Acts, that the Jews always resist the holy spirit,⁴⁵ and, with the Psalmist, that they are ungrateful and "not mindful of His benefits."⁴⁶

However, Bernard discusses most of the repulsive traits of the Jews in connection with their rejection of Jesus and the circumstances surrounding his advent. He is quite emphatic, for example, in his discussion of their extreme cruelty. Joseph had to hide the pregnant Mary lest "that stiff-necked people..., those cruel and incredulous Jews, would have mocked at him and stoned her.... What would they have done to him whilst yet unborn, on whom afterwards, when glorified by miracles, they did not hesitate to lay sacreligious hand?"⁴⁷ Now, this particular passage is motivated by exegetical considerations and is, in any case, inspired by Jerome who wrote that Mary was betrothed so that she might not be stoned

⁴² Epist. 363, Mabillon, c. 330.

⁴³ SCC 14.1-2, *LTR*, I, pp. 75-77, Eales, IV, pp. 74-75.

⁴⁴ SCC 46.5, *LTR*, II, p. 59, Eales, IV, p. 284: "Ita intonans [propheta] in perfidiam Judaeorum."

⁴⁵ Epist. 311 (374, p. 445).

⁴⁶ SCC 11.2, *LTR*, I, p. 56, Eales, IV, p. 56.

⁴⁷ "Second Sermon on the Virgin Mother," *Sermons*, I, pp. 86-87. For the passage from Jerome mentioned next, cf. translator's note, p. 85.

by the Jews as an adulteress (“ne lapidaretur a Judaeis ut adultera”). Emphasis on Jewish cruelty, however, appears in numerous other passages in Bernard. He remarks that the Apostles had good reason to fear the Jews even after the crucifixion,⁴⁸ and he describes the Synagogue as a “cruel mother” for having “cast forth the child of thy womb [Jesus] with none to receive or to care for him.”⁴⁹ He makes this criticism even though, in another sermon, he praises Jesus for having “left the Synagogue, his mother, so that you might cleave to him.”⁵⁰ Elsewhere, he says that the Synagogue acted like a stepmother in crowning Jesus with a crown of thorns.⁵¹

In various places, anti-Jewish stereotypes color Bernard's vocabulary. Like many writers, he uses the word synagogue as a term of opprobrium. When speaking of the heretic Henry, he writes, “Churches are regarded as synagogues.”⁵² In another letter, he commends Abbot Warren of the Alps for “destroying those synagogues of Satan, the cells where three or four monks live without order or discipline.”⁵³ On the basis of the conviction that Jews are unusually hard-hearted, he says that Jesus engraves his law on a “heart of flesh,... that is to say, not hard, not stubborn, not

⁴⁸ “Fifth Sermon for the Feast of the Ascension,” *Sermons*, II, p. 285, and “First Sermon for Pentecost,” *ibid.*, p. 289. There was even a Christian view that the major cause of the punishment of the Jews was their persecution of the apostles after the crucifixion. See Pseudo-Bede in *PL* 93.460, cited in B. Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs Chrétiens Latins du Moyen Age sur les Juifs et le Judaïsme* (Paris, 1963), p. 138, and esp. Gregory I, *PL* 75.862, cited in *Auteurs*, p. 86.

⁴⁹ Sixth Sermon for Christmas Eve,” *Sermons*, I, pp. 379–380.

⁵⁰ “Second Sermon for the First Sunday after the Octave of the Epiphany,” *Sermons*, II, p. 46.

⁵¹ “Fifth Sermon for the Feast of All Saints,” *Sermons*, III, p. 393.

⁵² Epist. 241 (317, p. 388). See L. I. Newman, *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements* (New York, 1925), pp. 134–135. Newman (p. 195) compares the following passage with Bernard's: “Sunt autem Burgares seu ‘Burgari’ secta Catharorum quorum Ecclesiam vel potius Synagogam memoriat Reinerius.” Cf. also p. 230.

⁵³ Epist. 254 (329, p. 408). The phrase “synagogue of Satan” is based on Revelations 2.9 and 3.9. Cf. also Agobard, *PL* 104, c. 88, cited in Merchavia, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

Judaic.”⁵⁴ We shall later examine another, more significant stereotype which affects Bernard’s vocabulary — that of the Jewish usurer. The final, most common, and least significant stereotype is, of course, that of the proud and hypocritical Pharisee.⁵⁵

Other Jewish characteristics that Bernard criticizes are hypocrisy⁵⁶ and envy of Christians.⁵⁷ Moreover, in one sermon, he goes so much out of his way to criticize Jews that he begins in the following awkward manner: “My brethren, it seems to me that these assemblies of ours are far from deserving that reproach of the Prophet addressed to the Jews: ‘Your assemblies are wicked.’ For our assemblies are not wicked.”⁵⁸

Does Bernard attribute to the Jews a diabolical hatred of God in explaining their rejection of Jesus, or does he say that they are simply stupid? Both points of view were current at this time, and Bernard does not seem to have chosen between them, for at times he expresses the one and at times the other. He says in one sermon, “But the Jews, ever mindful of the hatred wherewith they hate his Father, take this opportunity to vent it on the Son.... What then will these wicked men do to him, the mere sight of whom they cannot bear?”⁵⁹ “Judea,” he says elsewhere, “hates the light.”⁶⁰

⁵⁴ “First Sermon for the Feast of the Dedication of a Church,” *Sermons*, II, p. 389. See also “Second Sermon for Lent,” *Sermons*, II, p. 81; *SCC* 65.2, *LTR*, II, p. 173, Eales, IV, p. 394 (“O foolish and hard of heart, filled with the spirit of the Pharisees”). Cf. Peter the Venerable, *PL* 189.551.

⁵⁵ Epist. 6 (7, p. 28); 94 (91, p. 141); *SCC* 13.2, *LTR* I, p. 69, Eales, IV, pp. 67–68; “Second Sermon on Lent,” *Sermons*, II, p. 91; “Third Sermon for the Feast of the Annunciation,” *Sermons*, III, pp. 162, 164; *De Gradibus Humilitatis*, tr. by G. B. Burch (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1942), pp. 152–154.

⁵⁶ This, of course, was standard Christian procedure. “Second Sermon for Christmas Eve,” *Sermons*, I, pp. 317–318.

⁵⁷ *SCC* 25.9, *LTR*, I, p. 168, Eales, IV, p. 154 (“aemulis posse respondere Judaicis”); “Third Sermon on the Virgin Mother,” *Sermons*, I, pp. 103–104; “Second Sermon for the First Sunday after the Octave of the Epiphany,” *Sermons*, II, p. 45.

⁵⁸ “Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist,” *Sermons*, III, p. 173.

⁵⁹ “Sermon for the Octave of the Feast of the Circumcision,” *Sermons*, I, pp. 438–439.

⁶⁰ “Third Sermon for the Feast of the Epiphany,” *Sermons*, II, pp. 22–23.

In another sermon, he explicitly calls the Jews the instruments of Satan.⁶¹ In other places, however, he implies that the Jews reject Jesus only out of blindness, for in attacking the heretic Henry he suggests two possibilities for his heresy: either he is afflicted with Jewish blindness, or he resents the truth.⁶² The latter possibility is not attributed to the Jews. Moreover, in a long and famous passage, he attributes the intransigence of the Jews to their stupid and bovine intellect. It is in this passage that Bernard tells the Jews that he is kinder to them than Isaiah, for the latter placed them below the animals in intelligence. Incredibly, Watkin Williams quotes this statement as an example of Bernard's "peculiarly tender feeling toward the Jews," because he *was* kinder to them than Isaiah.⁶³

Bernard strongly criticizes Jewish character in economic matters as well. He proclaims, in an important anti-Jewish statement, that Jews are "coarse,... for their action carried them into wars, all their inclinations were devoted to the pursuit of gain (*affectus in lucris totus erat*), their intelligence stopped short in the thick husk of the Law, and their worship consisted in shedding the blood of sheep and cattle."⁶⁴ Bernard's other important statement on the Jews in economic affairs (aside from his theological justification of

⁶¹ "Second Sermon for the Feast of St. Andrew," *Sermons*, III, p. 60.

⁶² Epist. 241 (317, p. 388).

⁶³ *St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, p. 259. See SCC 60. 4-5, *LTR*, II, p. 144, Eales, IV, p. 362. The old phrase "bovine intellect," was also applied to the Jews by Peter the Venerable, *PL* 189.539 (cf. also c. 602); see note 76 below. On Jewish blindness, cf. also Bernard's epist. 365, Mabillon, c. 332 = *PL* 182, c. 571, where he refers to the Church's prayer that God "will remove the veil from their heart and draw them out from their darkness to the light of truth." Regarding this "veil," see II Cor. 3.13-18, and cf. B. Blumenkranz, *Le Juif Médiéval au Miroir de l'Art Chrétien* (Paris, 1966), pp. 52-54, 64 and W. Seiferth, *Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1970), pp. 95-109. On the diabolical Jewish rejection of what they know to be the truth, see J. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (New York, 1966), pp. 15 ff., and cf. Parkes, *Conflict*, p. 103.

⁶⁴ SCC 60.3, *LTR*, II, p. 143, Eales, IV, p. 361. Jews, of course, brought no animal sacrifices in the middle ages, but some Christians continued to raise this issue. See my "St. Peter Damian..." *Yavneh Review*, IV, (1965), p. 102.

their possession of temporal wealth) is his above-quoted statement that Christian usurers are taking more interest (*pejus. judaizare*) than the Jews. Though Bernard is apparently making an anti-Christian statement, Baron maintains that he “introduced a novel term of opprobrium” against the Jews here (*judaizare* = lend at interest) and thus lent authoritative support to the stereotype of the Jew as usurer.⁶⁵ By using this term, he managed to focus blame on Jews even while blaming Christians.

Bernard, in fact, commonly used Jews as a standard of comparison for various forms of heresy and sin. A Christian who forgets the sufferings of Jesus becomes “a sharer in the unparalleled sin of the Jews.”⁶⁶ The heretic Henry is charged with “more than Jewish blindness.”⁶⁷ Those who sell relics differ from Judas Iscariot only in that they are more avaricious.⁶⁸ Jesus “suffers a greater persecution from the man who ...attempts to wrest from him the souls he has ransomed than from the Jews by whom that blood was shed.”⁶⁹ The excommunicate is worse than the Jew, the heretic, and the heathen, for the Church prays for the latter and not for the former.⁷⁰ It is presumably possible to argue that these remarks represent pro-Jewish tendencies since they argue that at least some groups are worse.⁷¹ Nevertheless, this widespread medieval habit

⁶⁵ Baron, *Social and Religious History*, IV, pp. 121, 301. That Bernard was the first to use *judaizare* in this sense had been pointed out by S. Posener, *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Berlin, 1929), IV, p. 294. Cf. also Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁶⁶ “Sermon for Spy Wednesday,” *Sermons*, II, p. 149.

⁶⁷ Epist. 241 (317, p. 388).

⁶⁸ SCC 10.3, *LTR*, I, pp. 49–50, Eales, IV, p. 50.

⁶⁹ “First Sermon for the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul,” *Sermons*, III, p. 75.

⁷⁰ *De Gradibus Humilitatis*, 22.56, *The Steps of Humility*, tr. by Burch, p. 232. For the status of the evil Christian in Bernard, cf. Pierre Dérumaux, “St. Bernard et les Infidèles,” *Mélanges St. Bernard* (Dijon, 1954), p. 74.

⁷¹ Agobard, for example, had regarded Jews as worse than pagans: “Judaei... nationibus pejores inveniuntur: quia illae quidem nec legem acceperunt, isti vero post datam sibi legem, post missos ad se prophetas, etiam Dei filium occiderunt,” *PL* 104, c. 96. Cf. B. Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs Chrétiens Latins du Moyen Age sur les Juifs et le Judaïsme*, p. 166. Cf. the same author’s *Juifs*

of regarding the Jews as a standard for evaluating all sorts of sinners, heretics, and pagans was hardly a phenomenon at which Jews could rejoice.

Against this background of Bernard's anti-Jewish prejudices, we can approach his role in the Anacletus controversy with greater understanding. In 1130, a schism developed between Gregory, a Cardinal-Deacon of St. Angelo, and Peter Pierleoni, Cardinal-Priest of St. Calixtus. The former was elected Pope Innocent II, and the latter, in a slightly later and larger election, Pope Anacletus II. What is significant for us in this affair is that Anacletus was of Jewish descent and Bernard opposed him bitterly. The question we must ask is whether his opposition was based on the Jewish parentage of Anacletus.

Bernard writes that he supports Innocent because "his reputation is more fair and his election more sound."⁷² "When the first election has taken place, a second one is no election at all."⁷³ The fact is, however, that Bernard undermines this argument in the very same letter by saying that the supporters of Anacletus could have demanded immediate reconsideration, but to make a new convention now would cause more faction. This sort of backtracking leads one to suspect deeper motives. Bernard, moreover, uses the most vicious sort of language against Anacletus. "The fruitless growth, the rotten branch has been lopped off," he writes to Peter the Venerable.⁷⁴ It may be of some interest that the images of a flower without fruit, of withered grass, and of a fruitless tree are used by Bernard elsewhere about the Jews.⁷⁵ In another passage, he calls Anacletus,

et Chrétiens dans le Monde Occidental 430-1096 (Paris-The Hague, 1960), pp. xvii-xviii. See also Merchavia, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁷² Epist. 125 (128, p. 190).

⁷³ Epist. 126 (129, p. 195).

⁷⁴ Epist. 147 (147, p. 216).

⁷⁵ *Exhortatio ad Milites Templi*, chapter 7, Mabillon, c. 556 = PL 182, c. 930 ("Florīs odor fructus saporem praecederit... Judaeisque teni odore contentis"); "First Sermon on the Virgin Mother," *Sermons*, I, pp. 60-61 ("Jews must be withered as the grass"); SCC 60.3-4, LTR, II, pp. 143-144, Eales, IV, pp. 361-362 (the Jews are a sterile fig-tree which had to be pruned).

a beast.⁷⁶ There can be little doubt that in view of the anti-Jewish prejudices that we have seen in Bernard, his objection to Anacletus' Jewish descent must have been among the complex motives which led to the virulence of his attack. And in an oft-quoted letter, he explicitly mentions that "it is to the injury of Christ that a man of Jewish race has seized for himself the see of Peter."⁷⁷ It should, however, be remembered that others were far more virulent in specifically attacking Anacletus' Jewishness. Bishops Arnulf and Meinfredus wrote that in his face he presents a Jewish image, that he is worse than a Jew, and that he is still not free of Jewish leaven.⁷⁸ Thus, Bernard was motivated to some extent by Anacletus' Jewishness but was more circumspect than others in emphasizing it. In any event, Baron's remark that "the racial issue was seized upon by Anacletus' enemies as an excuse for, rather than as a major cause of, their opposition" is probably valid at least as far as Bernard is concerned.⁷⁹ Moreover, as Vogelstein and Rieger point out, "We have no evidence that the opponents of Anacletus aroused the fanaticism of the mob against the Jews."⁸⁰

A general appraisal of Bernard's actions during the Second Crusade and the reasons he gives for them together with an examination of his anti-Jewish sermons and letters and his role in the Anacletus schism leads to the conclusion that he was an unusually

⁷⁶ Epist. 126 (129, p. 195). Peter the Venerable himself was strongly opposed to Anacletus, causing James (*Letters*, pp. xi, 187) to say that "even Peter the Venerable, usually so careful and so moderate," made pejorative statements about Anacletus. James was apparently willing to overlook Peter's strongly anti-Semitic writings. On Peter the Venerable and the Jews, see Merchavia, *op. cit.*, pp. 128 ff., and cf. esp. p. 131 for varying appraisals of Peter's attitude. See also Blumenkranz in *Kirche und Synagoge*, I, pp. 119 ff. It should also be noted that the term *bestia* was often applied to Jews by Peter. See Merchavia, p. 132.

⁷⁷ Epist. 139 (142, p. 210).

⁷⁸ "Petrus iste... judaicam facie repraesentat imaginem... Jam nec Judaeus quidem, sed Judaeo deterior...." Quoted in Latin in Newman, *Jewish Influence*, p. 250.

⁷⁹ *Social and Religious History*, IV, p. 11.

⁸⁰ *Geschichte der Juden in Rom* (Berlin, 1896), I, p. 222.

strong opponent of the destruction of Jews, yet an equally strong spokesman for anti-Jewish stereotypes and prejudices. Bernard himself, because of his very strong belief in the Biblical promises which he cites and his devotion to canon law, was able to overcome his prejudices and protect Jews from physical violence, but this achievement was no simple matter.

Indeed, he appears to have been conscious of the inner tension involved in his position toward the Jews, for he points it out quite explicitly in several passages in his sermons. In these passages he combines fierce denunciations of the Jews with a description of the incredible mercy shown toward them by Jesus and the Church.

His "First Sermon for Easter Sunday"⁸¹ includes the following passage: "What will you do now, O ye Jews, who on the day of the crucifixion were wagging your sacreligious heads before the cross, and heaping insults on Christ... O venomous tongues!" He then adds: "He received with humility the blasphemous reproaches of the Jews." In another sermon,⁸² he marvels that Jesus did not murmur against "his own peculiar people, from whom he received so much evil in return for so much good" and adds, "You are stones, O ye Jews, but you have struck against a softer stone, calling forth therefrom the sweet sound of mercy and the oil of charity." Jesus, he says elsewhere, is merciful toward the Jews, for "if he had treated them according to their merits, he would inflict judgment without mercy upon those who show no mercy (cf. James 2:13)."⁸³ The Church wishes the Synagogue to be saved though they are enemies. "This degree of charity would be incredible, were it not that the words of the bride here recorded compel us to believe them."⁸⁴ There can be no doubt that a person listening to such sermons would be inspired to hate Jews rather than love them through imitation of Jesus and the Church. *Imitatio (misericordiae) Dei* is no easy task after hearing such invective.

⁸¹ *Sermons*, II, pp. 162-165.

⁸² "Sermon for Spy Wednesday," *Sermons*, II, pp. 136, 147.

⁸³ *SCC* 14.2, *LTR*, I, pp. 76-77, *Eales*, IV, p. 75.

⁸⁴ *SCC* 79.5-6, *LTR*, II, p. 275, *Eales*, IV, p. 486.

Consequently, Bernard himself was not led to violence by his prejudices, but the hatred which he preached was fanning the flames of violence in lesser men. The great Christian protector of twelfth-century Jewry sowed seeds which would claim the life of many a Jewish martyr.