

Freemasonry and Judaism¹

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Introduction

The relations between Freemasonry, Judaism, Jews, and Freemasons have attracted the attention of many buffs, bigots, and conspiracy theorists, and as a result the vast majority of information on the topic is pernicious and delusional drivel. In this contribution I seek to offer some solid ground amidst the quicksand by means of a very quick overview of the *religious* and *social* aspects of these real or imagined ties while providing a more substantial discussion of the *political* and *apocalyptic* aspects. The intrinsic significance of all four connections is little, yet, tragically, the extrinsic importance of the limited political association between Jews and Freemasons has been significant, while the extrinsic impact of the imagined apocalyptic aspect has been catastrophic.

The Religious Aspect

Both Freemasons and Jews and their enemies have commented on the apparent influence of Judaism on Freemasonry. In the late eighteenth century the German officer Ernst August Anton Göchhausen, who is today remembered as a whistleblower about the allegedly nefarious aims of the Illuminati, confidently proclaimed that “no order bears more revealing marks or birthmarks—let me emphasize this very appropriate word—than the symbolism of masonry, which is centered on the purest Jewish hieroglyphics. All its implements, cloths, institutions, instructions, as well as its history—it has been published—are a heap of Hebraic imagery” (Göchhausen 1786: 398). In the 1890s the Most Reverend Johann Gabriel Léon Louis Meurin, Titular Archbishop of Nisibis and Bishop of Port-Louis (Mauritius) wrote that “everything in Freemasonry is fundamentally Jewish, exclusively Jewish, enthusiastically Jewish, from the beginning to the end” (Meurin 1893: 260). And in the late nineteenth century

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the Italian rabbi Elijah Banamozegh, a radically unorthodox and universalist thinker who believed in the unity of Judaism with all other religions, observed in his *Israel et Humanité* (*Israel and Humanity*) that “Judaism has been accused of forming a sort of Freemasonry” and that it is certain that “the theology of Freemasonry is quite similar to that of the Kabbalah” and that “the Aggadah was the popular form of a secret discipline whose initiation methods bore the most striking resemblances to Freemasonry” (Benamozegh 1995: 78). But are such assertions and allegations true?

Freemasonry developed in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain. It was created by mostly Anglicans in the midst of a Christian society. In the early modern period Christians were completely ignorant of and disinterested in the reality of rabbinical Judaism, that is the form into which Pharisaic Judaism evolved after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Whatever they thought they knew about Judaism was the result of the fact that the Christian Bible encompassed the so-called ‘Old Testament’, which was by and large identical to the Judaic *Tanakh*. Judaic in origin, the Old Testament was a Christian document, interpreted by Christian theologians from a Christian perspective in order to show the so-called economy of salvation—that is the idea that Christ recapitulated and fulfilled in his passion and resurrection the whole of human history (Tillich 1972: 43 ff). But the Old Testament was not equal to the New Testament.

As one of the founding texts of Christendom, the Old Testament was a source of inspiration for those who created and developed within Christian, European civilization institutions, organizations, and movements, including Freemasonry. But does that mean that as a result we may speak here of Jewish influence? I do not think so. The Hebrew religion influenced Pharisaic Judaism, which in turn influenced Christianity, which influenced Christian culture, which influenced European civilization. Therefore if we find Old Testament themes in, for example, Freemasonry, then we must follow the chain of influence in proper order, moving from the closest relation to the most remote. In other words, we have to assume first that the presence of the Old Testament theme is a manifestation of the dominance of Christian culture within European Civilization, then we might look at the Christian religion, and so on. Only if we can see that the apparently Old Testament theme is in fact directly derived from the Tanakh without the mediation of the Christian Bible, Christian religion, and Christian culture may we define it as a token of influence of Pharisaic Judaism—but even then not necessarily of rabbinical Judaism, which is, like Christianity, a daughter of Pharisaic Judaism.

There is no evidence that the most important Old Testament stories, themes and symbols that found their way into Freemasonry were directly derived from

the Tanakh (these texts are 2 Samuel 24, 1 Chronicles 21, 1 Kings 5, 2 Chronicles 2; see Nepveu 2003a: 102–134). In fact, they are clearly derived from the King James translation of the Bible. Therefore these are all examples of a Christian legacy. Stories or themes from the five books of Moses, which is the core text of Judaism, do not figure much in the lodge, and the key story in the Jewish tradition, the Exodus from Egypt and God's revelation of the Law to Moses, has no place in it at all. The main Old Testament theme that is used in Freemasonry, the construction of the Temple of Solomon, is used in an allusive, Christian sense in that it always refers to what is essentially a New Testament concept: a spiritual temple that is not built by hands but arises as a building of living stones, which of course refers to the community of Freemasons in particular or humanity in general in its perfected state (these ideas go back to 1 Peter 2, 1 Corinthians 3, 2 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 6, Ephesians 2; see Nepveu 2003b: 135–168).

Rabbinical Judaism had no influence on Freemasonry. Christian theologians did not accept the Jewish tradition that God had revealed to Moses not only the written law, but also an oral law that allowed interpreters of the Torah to resolve apparent puzzles and contradictions within the written law. Therefore they rejected the three important bodies of sacred writings that were generated by the oral law and that were codified by the rabbis in the centuries after the destruction of the Temple. In fact, Christian theologians considered the transcript of the oral tradition known as the *Mishnah*, the record of the debates on the Mishnah known as the *Talmud* and a collection of commentaries on the Tanakh known as the *Midrash* with great hostility. They postulated that Christianity had superseded (Pharisaic) Judaism, and that therefore Judaism had only one purpose: to remain as a fossilized witness of the legitimacy of Christianity until the return of Christ. While Christian theologians accepted that pre-Christian Judaism had a historic significance in so far that it was the location of the Old Covenant, they could not accept that Judaism had continued to evolve in the Christian era (Maccoby 1982: 20 ff). The importance which Jews gave to the rabbinical writings, especially the Talmud, was seen as an attack on the authority of the Christian Scripture because it suggested that the New Testament was not the only possible conclusion to the Tanakh.

A few isolated fragments of these rabbinical writings ended up in Freemasonry by means of the Judaic and after that also Christian *Kabbalah* ('receiving') (see Eched 2000: 9–46). The Kabbalah is a medieval offshoot of rabbinical Judaism. Most rabbis consider this phenomenon with suspicion if not hostility because kabbalists crossed an important epistemological and ethical boundary set by the Talmud: Jews, the Talmud suggested, ought not try to unveil the secrets of Creation. Therefore the Talmud forbid scholars to

expound on the passages of Genesis that described the creation of the world, and to comment on the first chapter of Ezekiel, which told of the prophet's vision of the celestial chariot. In the thirteenth-century some Jewish scholars challenged this (voluntary) limitation of enquiry, and claimed the existence of a *secret* tradition that went back to Moses and that provided access to the hidden meanings of the Tanakh, Mishnah, Talmud and Midrash. This secret tradition focused on the very chapters of Genesis and Ezekiel that the Talmud had declared to be forbidden territory and was embodied in (allegedly) ancient texts hitherto unknown to the rabbis. The most important of these were a treatise entitled *Sefer Yezira* ("Book of Creation") and the book *Zohar* ("Splendor"). These books united in an absolutely original manner theogony, cosmogony, cosmology and the earlier rabbinical traditions.

In the fifteenth century Christian philosophers adopted some parts of the Kabbalah in a Christian mystical tradition that blended neo-Platonism, Hermeticism, science, magic, some Jewish non-kabbalistic writings and elements from the Kabbalah proper in an amalgam of speculations that amongst other purposes, aimed at the conversion of Jews to Christianity. While main-line Christian theologians continued to reject the rabbinical writings because they competed with the New Testament, these heterodox if not heretical philosophers were willing to accept the Jewish esoteric teachings because their Jewish champions claimed that they either went back to God's Revelation on Mount Sinai, or that they dated from around the time of Christ—and also because they carried an explicit universalistic message. Yet the Christian interpreters kept a distance to the core elements of kabbalistic teaching, which related to the secret of Creation, the emergence of the world out of the Godhead, or the mystical concept of the *Shekinah* (literally 'dwelling'), which envisions the presence of God on earth. Christian traditions offered all of that. But Christian exegesis did not offer something like the kabbalist speculations on the meaning of words which centered on the ambiguity, flexibility and numerological values of the Hebrew alphabet, and which the Kabbalah had borrowed from the rabbinical writings. Christian kabbalists were fascinated by the way numerology allowed them to draw new meanings from well-known texts (Dan 2006: 66). And it gave sanction to an existing tradition that had a neo-Platonic genealogy and which, by labeling it with Kabbalah, was pulled into the Christian tradition. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, alchemy and astrology became part of the mix, as well as so-called Rosicrucian ideas. The result was that, as the historian of Kabbalah Joseph Dan observed, "Kabbalah, in different spellings, became a common term in European Languages, indicating in an imprecise manner anything that was ancient, mysterious, magical, and to some extent dangerous. It became an adjective that

was used in various ways, often without a clear connection to either the Hebrew sources or even the original works of the Christian kabbalists" (Dan 2006: 67). Christian kabbalists now focused on magic, and European Kabbalah fully separated from Judaic Kabbalah. It appears that this de-Judaized form of Kabbalah had some influence on various masonic ideas and practices. As in the case of the possible influence of the Tanakh on Freemasonry, also here we observe that a non-Judaic link connects the Judaic original to the masonic interpretation.

A final observation. While Freemasonry is ostensibly built on the traditions of common workmen, it has consistently pushed these into a realm of an aristocratic concern with the larger questions of life. When Masons come together, they aim at no less than to build a universal Temple of Humanity. Judaism, however, has a much more limited aim. It offers, in the words of the eminent Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel, "a theology of the common deed, of the trivialities of life, dealing not so much with the training for the exceptional as with the management of the trivial" (Heschel 1951: 271). The masonic temple and the synagogue stand universes apart.

The Social Aspect

The story about the social significance of Freemasonry for Jews is of some interest. In the eighteenth century most of the institutions, organizations, societies and clubs of European civil society did not admit Jews. Yet in England, the Netherlands and France, Jews who were deemed to have the necessary manners, education and sophistication were able to become Freemasons without having to accept Christianity. This tolerance of—admittedly selected—Jews in the lodges arose from the wording of Anderson's *The Constitutions of the Freemasons* which stated that Freemasonry obliged its members "to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves; that is, to be *good Men and true*, or Man of Honour and Honesty, by Whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguish'd" (Anderson 1723: 50). Anderson had drafted this language to allow Christians of different denominations to join the lodge, but because the text did not stipulate explicitly that the candidate had to be a Christian, it suggested that non-Christians might be welcome also. When in 1732 a Jew sought admission to a London lodge, he was admitted, and a precedent having been set, middle-class Jews could join British Freemasonry (Katz 1970: 16). A small number of Jews made use of the opportunity offered. Because in the eighteenth century Jews could not interact elsewhere with gentiles in a structured social setting, the

emancipation of the Jews within Freemasonry can be considered to be an interesting laboratory to study various aspects of Jewish-Christian relations before the political and civic emancipation of the modern age (Katz 1970; Van Pelt 1979: 59–64). There is no doubt that some Jews may have derived great satisfaction from the participation in the work of the lodge. And we must assume also that friendships with non-Jewish Freemasons may have resulted from this. But it does not appear that, in the eighteenth century, the presence of a few Jews in a relatively small number of lodges influenced the emancipation of Jewry as a whole. And neither does it appear that each Jewish Freemason gained much social credit from his initiation in society at large. The Russian philosopher Alexander Piatigorsky noted that Freemasonry does not require its members to change their lives. While Freemasonry provides an “additional religious and ethical quality” to the private mode of life of each Freemason, the focus of activity remains “inward within Masonry itself” (Piatigorsky 1997: 14). The core of this activity is, of course, the ritual—but in contrast to religious rituals, masonic ritual does not intercede with the world outside the lodge. “It is the game that matters most, not the team or the club, nor even obtaining a result that has any meaning beyond the Ritual itself”. As a result Freemasonry “became abstracted—for want of a better word—from the socio-cultural conditions of the world” (Piatigorsky 1997: 345f.). Remaining something apart from the world, Jewish membership of the lodges in the eighteenth century remains at best a footnote in the history of the origins of the Jewish emancipation.

In the nineteenth century, when Jews (had) gained in most European countries political and civil rights, the lodges remained generally irrelevant to the social emancipation of the Jews. I use the qualifier ‘generally’ because in nineteenth-century France and Italy Freemasons sometimes chose to actively engage in the religious, civic and political realms as representatives of what they defined as masonic values or a masonic ideology, and membership of a masonic lodge could also pay significant dividends in a person’s social position. Such an engagement with society earned these Freemasons the hostility of political opponents and also led to an automatic break with the United Grand Lodge of England and the ‘regular’ masonic jurisdictions connected to it. Regular or not, these men considered themselves as Freemasons; everyone around them saw them as Freemasons, and so they’re part of the history of Freemasonry—even if many members of the regular jurisdictions wished this were different. In the nineteenth century the so-called Jewish Question became a focus in political battle of the Catholic Church against the Government of the Third Republic and the since 1877 ‘irregular’ Grand Orient de France. While this story has a significant *social* dimension, and might have been

discussed in this section of this contribution, it is primarily remembered for its massive political significance, and hence I have chosen to discuss it in the section on the political aspect of Jewish-masonic relations.

The twentieth century has also provided enough evidence of the general irrelevancy of Freemasonry within the social history of the Jews. When, in 1920s Germany, National Socialists and others on the right began to call for a reversal of the emancipation of the Jews, the great majority of German Freemasons did not offer any resistance, and the chill that began to characterize the attitudes of most Germans towards German Jews also changed the atmosphere in the lodges. By 1930 a few principled Christian and many Jewish Freemasons had enough of it, and established the *Symbolische Grossloge von Deutschland* (Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany). The creation of this new masonic jurisdiction which was to have mainly Jewish members was a symbol of the failure of German Freemasonry as a tool of emancipation. Significantly, the Symbolic Grand Lodge was the first masonic jurisdiction to close its doors after the Nazi *Machtsübernahme*. Yet it did not close down as an organization. In June 1933 Grand Master Leo Müffelman, a Christian, convened in a (for once) explicitly conspirational manner the key members of the Grand Lodge in a secret meeting in Frankfurt am Main, and they decided on the transference of the Symbolic Grand Lodge to Palestine. In November 1933 Müffelman brought the masonic light to Jerusalem. On his return to Germany, Müffelman was arrested. He died that same year as a result of the mistreatment during his imprisonment. Working in the German language, the members of the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany in Exile were almost all German-Jewish refugees. Between 1935, when the last remaining German Grand Lodge closed, and 1949, when Freemasonry officially returned to Germany, the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany in Exile preserved, in conjunction with a lodge in Chile established by the Grand Lodge of Hamburg, the continuity of German Freemasonry. Thus German Freemasonry, which had not even tried to protect its Jewish brethren when they faced social and political discrimination, remained alive thanks to the fidelity of German-Jewish Freemasons working in Palestine (Neuberger 2001: 129ff., 165, 226f.; Appel 2002: 10, 44).

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the topic defined by the concept of social emancipation, Freemasons and Jews acquired a new twist. Israel was established as a Jewish State, and while non Jews have full civil and political rights, the fact remains that many of them feel that they are second-class citizens nevertheless. In addition, Israel has been since the day of its proclamation in a state of war with first all and now some of its Arab neighbors, and this has also contributed to unease and distrust between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. Has Israeli Freemasonry been able to make a difference?

Let's begin with some history. If we ignore the mythic beginnings of Freemasonry in biblical times, modern masonic activities in the Holy Land officially began in 1873 when American-Christian settlers living in Jaffa obtained a charter from the Grand Lodge of Canada for the Royal Solomon Mother Lodge. The lodge did not prosper, and after a few years it effectively closed. Around 1890 Arab and Jewish Freemasons established a lodge under the Rite of Memphis-Misraïm, based in Paris. This lodge blossomed when French engineers involved in the construction of the Jaffa-Jerusalem railroad joined. In 1906 the lodge changed its affiliation to the Grand Orient of France. During the British Mandate (1921–1948) various lodges operated in Palestine under the Grand Lodges of Egypt, Scotland and England, the Grand Orient of France and, of course, the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany in Exile. It appears that most Arab Freemasons belonged to the Grand Lodge of Egypt. In 1948 many of the Arabic-speaking lodges closed—a reflection of the politics of separation that resulted from the partition vote in the United Nations and the war that followed the end of the British Mandate.

In 1953, five years after the proclamation of the State of Israel, the lodges organized in the various masonic jurisdictions in Israel joined into the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel. This Grand Lodge includes Arabic-speaking lodges in the Galilee and Acco, and in its symbolism it affirmed the equality of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions. Within the lodges Jewish-Arab encounters appear easy—a clear contrast to the suspicion that characterizes Jewish-Arab relations in civil society. But, in the same way that in the past European Freemasonry did not make any difference to the emancipation of European Jews, so today Israeli Freemasonry does not seem to have much, or any, impact on Jewish-Arab social relations in general (see Zeldis n.d.; Zeldis 2004).

The Political Aspect

The story of the assumed and real political relationships between Freemasonry and Jews—or between Jews and Freemasons, or organized Judaism and Freemasons—is a tale that has become part of a toxic mythology that is full of lies, confusions, falsifications, half-truths and, at best, badly-understood truths.² The plot of this story is the way ultramontane Roman Catholics in Italy

2 Anyone who seeks to do original work in the field does well to begin with consulting the following works: the entry 'Jude' in Lennhoff and Posner (1932: 790–798); Cohn (1967); Katz (1970); Roberts (1972); Neuberger (1980); Cubitt (1991: 121–136); von Bieberstein (1992);

and France came to believe that Jews and Freemasons were joined in a global conspiracy that aimed to overthrow the union of Throne and Altar and create a secular and democratic society that turned its back to the revealed truths of Christendom.³

The narrative begins in the shadow of the guillotine. In 1791 the forty-nine-year-old Jesuit priest Augustin Barruel fled revolutionary France (on Barruel see Roberts 1972: 188–202). In England he joined other exiles who spent their time looking for causes of the disaster that had befallen them. Barruel picked up a simple but brilliant explanation first proposed by the conservative English man of letters Edmund Burke: everything, from the fall of the Bastille to the establishment of the Republic and the execution of the former King had been the result of a conspiracy. Burke believed that the plot had been hatched by Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Voltaire, Diderot and their associates (Burke 1968: 211ff.). The French exiles appreciated the notion that a ‘cabal’ had caused the revolution: no need to consider the possibility that they might have harvested what they had sown.

Barruel picked up Burke’s idea, and made it more combative when he substituted the Freemasons for the *philosophes*. The ideas of men like Voltaire and Rousseau may have been attractive to those who believed in the emancipation of the human being from the tutelage of the Church or objectionable to those who believed in the unity of Altar and Throne, but neither friend or foe had any doubt as to what they proposed. But no-one really knew what the Freemasons stood for—if they stood for anything at all. Piatigorsky noted that because the lodge was divorced from the social reality of the world surrounding it, it became an object of unease because society did not know how to read this social, political and religious non-involvement. “It is irritated by the non-involvement of Freemasonry, which it condemns for its unseriousness, while strongly suspecting at the same time that it *must* be maliciously or anti-socially involved: no social institution can *really* be indifferent to society” (Piatigorsky 1997: 345). In addition the fact that Freemasons could not talk about the rituals with outsiders was a problem. “Whatever cannot become the object of discourse ... may find a human voice through which to sound into the world, but it is not exactly human” (Arendt 1968: 24f.), the German-Jewish political philosopher Hannah Arendt observed. By symbolically removing

Taguieff (1992); Pfahl-Traugher (1993); Nefontaine and Schreiber (2000); Heil (2002: 40–48); Meyer zu Utrup (2003); Goldschläger and Lemaire (2005); Wippermann (2007: 47–57).

3 The adjective ultramontane refers to Roman Catholics who defend the temporal and spiritual sovereignty of the Pope over the Papal States against modernizers in the Church.

itself from the shared space of society, the lodge came to occupy an ambiguous in-between-state that disturbed the visible order of society and suggested its nature as an immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady force (Kristeva 1982: 4).

The secrecy of the lodges had already led in 1738 to a Papal condemnation of Freemasonry, and since that date Catholics who became Freemasons were excommunicated. This had led to a breakdown between the Church and the lodge, which had led to distrust, suspicion, fear and even hatred. For a Catholic it made eminent sense to identify Freemasons as conspirators. And for a Jesuit like Barruel it made even more sense because the Jesuits had been often identified as Machiavellian plotters. The Jesuit Order was a product of the Counter-Reformation, and Protestants and the Catholic establishment regarded the centralized, efficient and global organization with awe, suspicion, and fear. Jesuits were credited with the assassinations of the leader of the Dutch Revolt, William of Orange, of King Henry III and King Henry IV of France, and they were accused of having been responsible for the Massacre of St. Bartholemew, the invasion of Ireland, the Gunpowder Plot, the Thirty Years War, and the Great Fire of London. Jesuits stood accused of being agents of the King of Spain, and as the Spanish Kingdom was in the sixteenth century a global power, Jesuits came to be seen as agents of a global ambition (Burke 2002: 165–182). Barruel had experienced the full impact of the legend when in 1764 he and other Jesuits were expelled from France on suspicion of plotting against the monarchy, finding a refuge in the Habsburg lands. Accused of being a part of a conspiracy, Barruel had no difficulty to delineate another such conspiracy when he found himself a refugee over again in the 1790s. In fact, he was to project on the Freemasons many of the accusations that had been formulated against the Jesuits. But, as we shall see, he introduced also some significant innovations.

In 1797 Barruel proposed in his *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire du Jacobinisme* (*Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*) that the French Revolution was a masonic plot to destroy Christendom in revenge for the suppression of the Order of the Templars in the fourteenth century. Barruel posited that the Templars had survived in secret, and infiltrated the Freemasons and a Bavarian secret society known as the Illuminati who, in turn, had laid the foundations for the Revolution and directed the policies of its most radical faction, the Jacobins. Every development in the French Revolution had been premeditated in secrecy (Barruel 1799: Vol. 1, xii). Barruel provided the basic narrative that postulated a single, centuries long conspiracy to destroy Christendom. In that, he moved ahead from earlier forms of conspiracy theories which usually concerned intrigues at court or

plots against a foreign power conducted by public figures. Hatched for reasons of immediate and personal gain, the nefarious schemes that held the attention of the eighteenth-century public had a limited aim and a relatively short duration. Barruel broke with precedent. If the earlier descriptions of conspiracies had aimed to reveal the hidden agendas of a few public figures that could be described in a pamphlet, Barruel claimed to reveal the activities of thousands hidden political actors who were all members of a few tightly-knit and interconnected organizations that were involved in a single, enormous conspiracy that covered the world, spanned centuries, and required the compilation of four massive volumes. Because the conspiracy that connected Templars, Freemasons, Illuminati and Jacobins had proven to be both durable and global, it was capable of absorbing crushing defeats without losing its ability to destroy Christendom. The theory of a single, large and durable conspiracy also made the conspiracy-theory itself universal and sturdy, creating a flexible framework of interpretation that would be able to assimilate new developments (see Cubitt 1993: 298ff.).

Shortly after the publication of the first two volumes of Barruel's *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire du Jacobinisme* appeared *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies* (Robison 1797). Its author was the Scottish physicist John Robison. The latter's book covered some of the terrain explored by Barruel, but did not push the idea of a centuries' long conspiracy that went back to the Templars. For Robison, the conspiracy had begun with the Illuminati. In his magistral *Warrant for Genocide*, Norman Cohn claimed that while he was working on his *Mémoires*, Barruel visited Robison in Edinburgh, and that the latter had shown the Frenchman his own manuscript—suggesting that the Scotsman inspired the Frenchman. Sadly, Cohn did not provide a source for this interesting assertion (Cohn 1967: 31). What is clear is that Barruel's *magnum opus* both created and defined the subsequent public discussion on the topic, and that Robison's book, justly or unjustly, only played a marginal part.

In his vision of a centuries' old global conspiracy, Barruel had no place for the Jews. From the twelfth century onwards Jews had been accused of being engaged in local, small-scale conspiracies to obtain the blood of Christian children, and when the Black Death hit Europe in the mid fourteenth century they also faced the accusation of having poisoned wells. But they had never been accused of being involved in a massive political conspiracy of the sort described by Barruel. And it would not have made sense: Jews were too powerless and too much segregated from Christian society, and they were not seen as a challenge to Christian dominance. This also explains the odd conclusion that the

Protestant Göchhausen made when, in 1786, he had defined the symbolism of Freemasonry as “purest Jewish hieroglyphics” and “a heap of Hebraic imagery”. Göchhausen did not see this as signs that Freemasons were the tools of Jews, but that the Jesuits ran the lodges (Göchhausen 1786: 398ff.). In Göchhausen’s time, a global *Jewish* conspiracy was still unimaginable.

The perceived position of the Jews changed when Emperor Napoleon I re-established in 1807 the Great Sanhedrin and established Judaism as the third official religion in France. For the first time in the history of Christendom, Jews were officially linked to political power (on Napoleon’s motivation to associate himself with the Jews see Schechter 2003: 198ff.). In Russia the Holy Synod was the first to raise the alarm. “[Napoleon] is daring to bring together all the Jews whom the anger of God has dispersed over the face of the earth, and launch all of them into the destruction of the Church of Christ” (as quoted in Poliakov 1975: Vol. 3, 278f.). In France conservatives and the Catholic hierarchy were equally enraged, but they had to approach the matter more diplomatically. Barruel approached Joseph Cardinal Fesch, Archbishop of Lyon and an uncle of Napoleon, and Joseph Fouché, the Minister of Police. He informed them that an Italian soldier Jean-Baptiste [sic] Simonini had berated him in a letter for having forgotten to describe the conspirational role of the Jews. Simonini claimed that the apparent separation between Jews and the Freemasons, the Jacobins and the Illuminati was only an appearance. “The Jews with all of these other sects are a single faction that seeks to annihilate, if possible, the Christian name”. Their goal was “to be within the next century masters of the world, to abolish all other sects in order to make their own supreme, to make as many synagogues as there were Christian churches, and to reduce the remaining [Christians] to genuine slavery” (“Lettre de Jean-Baptiste Simonini au Père Augustin Barruel (1878)”, in Airiau 2002: 56ff.). The letter was most likely a fabrication, produced by collaborators of Fouché, who disapproved of Napoleon’s policy towards the Jews. Barruel’s intervention seemed to have the desired effect. Cardinal Fesch leaned on his nephew, and the Sanhedrin was disbanded. The Jewish Question disappeared from the frontpages. Barruel decided not to revise his *Mémoires pour servir à l’Histoire du Jacobinisme*—fearing that it would lead to a massacre of the Jews.

While the assumption of the existence of a universal masonic conspiracy and Napoleon’s establishment of the Great Sanhedrin had created the possibility of a convincing narrative of a Judeo-masonic conspiracy, the story had not found yet what Thomas Mann defined as the particular *Geist der Erzählung*, or “spirit of story-telling” which is the necessary form the story of a Judeo-masonic plot must assume in order to be believable (Mann 1951: 3ff.). Two examples illustrate this. In 1815 appeared an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Le Nouveau*

judaïsme ou la Franc-Maçonnerie dévoilée: Réflexions nouvelles sur les malheurs de l'Europe et de la France en particulier (*The New Judaism and Freemasonry Unmasked: New Reflections on the Misfortunes of Europe and France in Particular*). Picking up on references to the tribe of Judah and the village Nazareth in the masonic degree of Knight of the Rose Croix, the author expanded on these obviously Christian symbols (Jesus belonged to the Tribe of Judah and grew up in Nazareth) by writing that “we are not at all surprised that the Freemasons are the strongest persecutors of the children of the Church: they are Jews, . . . they come from Juda, they have passed Nazareth, they look for the Nazarean Jesus; and, on the orders of King Herod, they have massacred the innocents under the age of two ...” (Anon 2007: 44). This association between Freemasons and regicides and Jews as Christocides did not go far: no-one followed up the suggestion. Also Johann Christian Ehrmann’s *Das Judenthum in der Maurerey: Eine Warnung an allen deutschen Logen* (*Judaism in Masonry: A Warning to all German lodges*) had little impact. Ehrmann lived in Frankfurt—a city that was home to the largest Jewish community in Germany. In 1816 he claimed that a Jewish lodge, established during the Napoleonic era in Frankfurt under the auspices of the French Grand Lodge, might become a tool of Jews to penetrate into Freemasonry. German Freemasons should resist this because Jews were secret agents of the exiled Emperor “holding the threads of a conspiracy which extends not only to France, but also to Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands, and whose goals consist of nothing less than world revolution” (as quoted in Poliakov 1975: Vol. 3, 284). Bad enough—but in scope this plot still belonged to the Eighteenth Century as it was linked to one mortal individual, and not to a timeless organization.

During the years of the Restoration few people were interested in the actual or possible conspiracy of Freemasons and Jews to overthrow Throne and Altar. With the Congress of Vienna, Europe had been reconstructed around “the Holy Alliance” of three conservative monarchies—Russia, Prussia and Austria, and the statesmen in Moscow, Berlin and Vienna were united in their opposition to the ideals of 1789. The Pope recovered the Papal States, re-established the Jesuit Order, and forced the Roman Jews back into the ghetto (Kertzer 2001: 25ff.). In France the Bourbons restored the monarchy. If in the 1790s, opponents of the revolution had turned to conspiracy theories to explain the sudden and dramatic destruction of the old order, liberals did not need the hypothesis of a large conspiracy to understand Napoleon’s defeat and the muddle of the Restoration. The word hubris and the memory of the ill-fated March on Moscow explained enough. Yet there were many who believed that the Jesuits had played a central role in the Counter-Revolution of 1813–15 (Michelet and Quinet, 1846: 3).

In many of its elements, the fantasy of a global Jesuit conspiracy that had steered events towards the Restoration was a mirror-image of the earlier fantasy of a masonic plot to destroy the *Ancien Régime*. Yet there were also important innovations which, after they had been articulated for the Jesuit conspiracy, would subsequently shape the perception of a Judeo-masonic plot. The first one is that the concept of a masonic plot had remained the concern of a small group of reactionaries, while the belief in a Jesuit plot was shared by the man in the street. Furthermore, discussions of the alleged masonic plot were abstract, while the alleged Jesuit plot became the object of romantic imaginings. The French novelist Eugène Sue made Jesuit machinations the plot of his best-selling novel *Le Juif Errant* (*The Wandering Jew*), and described the international reach of the infernal Jesuit Order in graphic detail (Sue n.d.: 111f.). Novelists like Sue breathed life into the abstraction of conspiracy by making it part of popular culture. A romantic view of sinister conspirators would soon be applied to Jews: influenced by Sue's novel, the German journalist Hermann Ottomar Fredrich Goedsche published under the pseudonym Sir John Retcliffe the thirteen-volume novel *Biarritz* (1868) in which he described in the first volume a mid-nightly meeting in the Jewish cemetery in Prague of a sinister cabal of rabbis, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, who reported on the success of their efforts to achieve world domination (Retcliffe 1868–1878: Vol. 1, 141–193). If *Le Juif Errant* firmly planted the subversive Jesuit in the popular imagination, *Biarritz* did the same for the perfidious Jew. Finally an important innovation in the conspiracy theory was that Jesuit influence operated through the so-called Congrégation, a large lay organization devoted to piety and good works. As the lay members of the Congrégation were fully integrated in society in general and the political institutions in particular, the extent of the reach and impact of the conspiracy became even more difficult to define (Cubitt 1993: 81f.). This construction of a compact inner body controlling society through a large outer circle had, of course, its roots in Barruel's theory of the conspiracy of the Illuminati. But with Barruel everything had remained at the level of abstract speculation. The Jesuit Order and the Congrégation were actual and powerful organizations that visibly influenced social and political developments.

Sue's *Le Juif Errant* and Goetsche's *Biarritz* suggest how romanticism allowed the concept of a global conspiracy to enter the collective imagination. Romanticism also influenced the topos of a Judeo-masonic plot in a second manner by proclaiming the value of personal journeys into the depths of the soul. Charles Baudelaire brought back from this shadowy world of repressed imagination his *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857). Another Frenchman, Alphonse Louis Constant, found a gate that opened to the forgotten world of magic. A lapsed

priest and an intellectual charlatan, Constant, who became known under the alias Éliphas Lévi, single-handedly revived magic in the modern age. In his main work *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (published in English as *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual*) Lévi postulated the existence of a single esoteric doctrine that spanned history from the beginning of time to the present. Lévi believed that Freemasonry was a late manifestation of this single tradition, and that it had been shaped by the Kabbalah (Lévi 1910: 3, 19f.).

Lévi's romantic postulation that Kabbalah was the core of an esoteric tradition that went back to the beginnings of time and that embraced also Freemasonry convinced the reactionary, ultramontane aristocrat Henri Roger Chevalier Gougenot des Mousseaux that Freemasons and Jews had been involved in a centuries- if not millennia-long conspirational association, and that their conspiracy was responsible for the decline of traditional values in the Second Empire. If it had not made much sense to identify Jews as a powerful force at the time of the meeting of the Great Sanhedrin, it was a more plausible proposition sixty years later. In 1807 less than 3,000 Jews lived in Paris; sixty years later their numbers had increased eightfold (Szajkowski 1946: 314). While many of them were involved in petty commerce, enough of them had created prosperous businesses or joined the professions for the Jewish community as a whole to be seen as up-and-coming. And then there were successful financiers like Emile and Eugene Pereire, Louis Bischoffsheim, and the man who became the face of Jewish finance: James Mayer Rothschild. If one got nervous when one thought about the influence of the Jewish financiers, what about the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (The Universal Israelite Alliance), an international organization established in 1860 that aimed to guarantee the human and civic rights of Jews around the world? The motto of the organization was "all Jews bear responsibility for one another", and it needs no explanation that both its global ambition and its motto provided an antisemite with the evidence of a centralized Jewish policy. The fact that the founder of the Alliance, Adolphe Crémieux, was well-known as a Freemason created another reason for suspicion (see Leff 2006).

Gougenot des Mousseaux saw plots, conspiracies and connections only hinted at before, and in 1869 he published his conclusions in a 570-page long, apparently scholarly tome entitled *Le Juif, Le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des peuples Chrétien* (*The Jew, Judaism and the Judaization of the Christian Nations*). As the title indicated, the central theme of the book was the fact that nineteenth century French society was not only in a process of 'dechristianization'—a worn complaint—but that it was undergoing a process of 'Judaization'. This process was steered by 'the Cabalistic section' of Jewry, a cabal which aimed at world domination and which, according to the writer, used a group of men

“raised with antisocial prejudices, indifferent to any belief, or animated by secret hatred against Christianity”. This was, of course, Freemasonry, which he characterized as “an immense association of which *the few initiates*, that is to say, its real leaders (which one should not confuse with its nominal leaders), live in a tight and intimate alliance with the militant members of Judaism, the princes and initiators of the high Kabbalah!” Gougenot des Mousseaux drove the point home relentlessly. “It is important enough to repeat”, he wrote, “that the elite of the [masonic] Order, the *real* leaders who are only known by *a few initiates*, and then only under assumed names, work in a profitable and secret dependence on Israelite kabbalists”. This elaborate system of control and deception worked because Freemasons were bound by oaths and intimidated by terrible threats. But also because, thanks to the “mysterious constitution” of Freemasonry, its “sovereign counsel” consists of “a majority of Jewish members” (Gougenot des Mousseaux 1869: 339f.). The proposition that Jews used Freemasonry to Judaize the world was clearly inspired by the earlier conspiracy theory that a relatively small cabal of Jesuits controlled the French state through the Congrégation.

Initially *Le Juif, Le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des peuples Chrétien* had little impact. Gougenot des Mousseaux pretended to be a serious scholar, and he wrote in a dense, impenetrable prose. In addition people had other worries at that time: in the year following the publication Napoleon III declared war on Prussia, and this led to a chain of disasters that included the destruction of the French imperial army, the German siege of Paris, the revolutionary government of the Commune, and a civil war in which French troops massacred tens of thousands of Frenchmen. Under such circumstances few had the time or inclination to wrestle with Gougenot des Mousseaux’s language.

The book had a future, however. When the Prussians invaded France, Napoleon III had rushed the French units that had protected the city of Rome from occupation by the Italian army to the frontlines, and the Italian government made use of the opportunity to enter Rome, complete Italian unification, and amongst other things provide full civic and political rights to the Jews. Pope Pius IX, who had begun his papacy as the sovereign ruler of the Papal States and who had consistently resisted Italian unification, refused to accommodate himself to the situation and withdrew into the Vatican as a voluntary ‘prisoner’, excommunicating the whole Italian political establishment (Carlen 1981: Vol. 1, 396f.).

In Italy secularism had triumphed with the Italian occupation of Rome. In France the Church also faced a more difficult time with the collapse of the Second Empire and the establishment of the Third Republic in 1871. Unlike the leaders of the two earlier republics, the leaders of the Third Republic

preferred reform over revolution. They rejected the Jacobin legacy and embraced liberalism and democratic parliamentarism (see Nord 1995: 1ff.). In the Third Republic civil society, which had languished under Napoleon II, revived. Freemasonry became an important political force: forty percent of those who served in the governments of the Third Republic belonged to a lodge. And, unusual in the history of Freemasonry, politics, including religious politics, became a topic of debate within the lodges. This development, which led to a break between the Grand Orient de France and the regular jurisdictions, had its origin in the tight control which the governments of the Second Empire had sought to impose on the lodges. In response to the pressure many Masons had radicalized politically, becoming as a group also opposed to the tight connection between Church and state and supportive of a total secularization of French society. If the general character of the Third Republic was moderate and its elites bourgeois, the Freemasons claimed to preserve ideals that went back to the First Republic, and they did not hesitate to make their position clear in the public realm. In continental Europe, this had not happened before: in society, Freemasons had been invisible as Masons. In the Third Republic they were visible, and to the outsider, they seemed everywhere (Nord 1995: 15ff.).

Not only Freemasons were visibly committed to the Third Republic. Also the Jewish elites embraced the new dispensation (Nord 1995: 64ff.). They believed that Jewish moral teachings had prepared the ground for the republican ideals, that the Republic was a secular incarnation of Jewish values. In the eighteenth century the German Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelsohn had stressed how the many contradictions in the Talmud (which was a record of a discussion and not an authoritative doctrine) forced Jews to live in a spirit of ecumenicism: contradiction between rabbinical opinions had led to freedom of conscience (Moses Mendelsohn, letter to Abraham Nathan Wolf, July 11, 1782, in Mendelssohn 1969: 137f.). Ecumenicism within Judaism generated an ecumenicism towards other faiths—which fitted the fundamental republican notion that faith and religion was a private matter. The convergence between the secular and humanitarian ideals of the Third Republic and the Grand Orient de France and what were now seen as Jewish ideals was symbolized in the voluntary ambulance service of the Franco-Prussian war. Its organizers were General Émile Mellinet, former Grand Master of the Grand Orient, and Rabbi Elie-Aristide Astruc, one of the founders of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Degas was to immortalize this alliance in a famous double portrait (Nord 1995: 85).

To many ultramontane Catholics the wretched condition of the Pope, the sufferings of France in 1870–1871 and the establishment of the Third Republic were signs that the End of Days was near. One of those engaged in millenarian speculation was the vicar of the church of Saint André in the 2,600 inhabitants

strong town of Mirebeau, located in the Poitou region (on Chabauty see Multon 1999: 315–331). Speculating on the signs of the time, Father Emmanuel-Augustin Chabauty read how the Pope interpreted in his Encyclical *Etsi Multa* (1873) the attacks on the Church as part of a single global war directed by Freemasons gathered in a ‘synagogue of Satan’ (Carlen 1981: Vol. 1, 433).⁴ The concept the ‘synagogue of Satan’ derived from the book of Revelation, where it refers to those “who say that they are Jews and are not” and who slander Christians—that is Jews who do not accept Christ (as Christians have become the true Jews) (Revelation 2:9; 3:9).⁵ By using the term, the Pope had suggested that Jews might be involved in the conspiracy to destroy Christendom. Then Chabauty got his hands on *Le Juif, Le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des peuples Chrétien*. He read the book cover-to-cover (one of the few to do so), and then read in 1878 in a Catholic journal a memoir written by the Jesuit priest Fidèle de Grivel. De Grivel recorded that in 1817 he had obtained from his fellow-Jesuit Barruel a letter written by a certain Simonini that suggested a collusion between Jews and Freemasons. The article published the text of the letter (Grivel 1878: 49–70; Simonini’s letter is pp. 58–61, and Barruel’s note on it on page 62). Chabauty now saw the conspiracy in terms of a cosmic drama. He published in 1881, under the alias of C.C. de Saint-André, a 600-page rant entitled *Les Francs-Maçons et les Juifs: Sixieme Age de l'Eglise d'apres l'Apocalypse* (*The Freemasons and the Jews: The Sixth Age of the Church According to the Apocalypse*). According to him, Satan, through the Judeo-masonic conspiracy described by Gougenot de Mousseaux, was preparing the way for the Jewish Antichrist. Interesting theory, but Chabauty had no substantial evidence to back it up. Yet by the time the book was available he had found a smoking gun. In 1880 the newly established journal *Revue des études juives* had published two letters which purportedly came from the late fifteenth century. The first letter, written by the Rabbi of Arles to the Jewish community in Constantinople, reported that the King of France had given the Jews of Provence the choice of conversion or departure, and he welcomed advice. The second letter, written by the “Prince of the Jews in Constantinople”, counseled them to convert, but remain secretly Jews. The bulk of the letter contained advice how these crypto Jews could take revenge on the Christians by taking over the economy as merchants, by killing them as physicians, by undermining their faith as priests, and

4 The part of the encyclical referring to the Masonic conspiracy as a synagogue of Satan was later appended to the Syllabus of Errors that Pius IX issued in 1864 with the encyclical *Quanta cura*.

5 See also Romans 2:29: “He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal”.

by gaining political control by becoming lawyers (Darmesteter 1880: 119–123). The letters were seventeenth-century forgeries, but for Chabauty they provided the missing link that proved the connection between the masonic attack on Christendom and a Jewish cabal and in 1882 he rushed a new book in print to reveal the conspiracy to the world. The book carried the catchy title *Les Juifs, nos maitres!* (*The Jews: Our Masters!*) and was written in an easy-to-read style. Obviously he felt confident about the work as he published it under his own name.

Chabauty postulated that a single, secret Jewish government had existed throughout the diaspora. This government had focused for the first 1,400 years to ameliorate the situation of the Jewish communities, waiting patiently for the arrival of the Messiah. The two letters revealed that in the late fifteenth century this cabal had shifted gears, and from that time until 1789 the Jews had exploited opportunities of penetration as they arose. Since the beginning of the French Revolution Jews were engaged in a holy war “to *destroy* the Christian idea and the Christian social order”. In this campaign, “the Republic, Freemasonry, and Jewry are one and the same thing. The Republic is *usually* the standard, the label, the display; Freemasonry is *everywhere* the instrument, the footsoldier, the army; Jewry is *always* the soul, the direction, the command. OUR ENEMY IS THE JEW!” (Darmesteter 1880: 243, 247f.).

Chabauty's book appeared when the prospects for the Church had darkened. In the late 1870s radical republican politicians had gained electoral ground on the basis of an anti-ultramontane campaign, and in 1879 they controlled the Presidency, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The clergy responded by preaching hatred against the Republic. The Government realized that it could not afford a direct attack on the Church, as it would upset the middle classes. Therefore it focused on private schools run by the Jesuits and other religious orders who were hostile to the secular ideals of the Republic and who sought to create an indelible ultramontane imprint on the mind of young people. The great majority of the children of the elites attended those schools, and most of the men admitted to the military had been educated by priests and nuns. Doubting their loyalty to the Republic, the government launched a program that would provide compulsory education to all children that would be provided free of charge and without any religious instruction. Priests and nuns would only be allowed to teach if they belonged to ‘authorized’ congregations. The Jesuits and the other orders refused to apply for an authorization, and as a result the government forcefully closed their houses and evicted their occupants. Between nine and ten thousand priests and monks found themselves on the street and without work. Many French Catholics were disgusted. Chabauty's book helped them to identify the real

cause of the cataclysm: the Grand Orient controlled the Third Republic and, in turn, the synagogue controlled the Grand Orient.

Pope Leo XIII, who had succeeded Pius IX in 1878, was under pressure to respond to the events that unfolded in France. Yet he was not willing to attack the French Republic directly. Caught in a conflict with the Italian state, he needed France as an ally, and he realized that a restoration of the French monarchy in which the Catholic Church would be once again a state church was unrealistic. The Pope counseled French Catholics to accommodate themselves to the state. But he was willing to initiate a public counter-offensive against the Freemasons. In 1884 he published an Encyclical in which he identified, following Saint Augustine, an opposition between two communities in the world: the first was 'the Kingdom of God', represented by the Catholic Church, and the second 'the Kingdom of Satan', represented "by that strongly organized and widespread association called the Freemasons. No longer making any secret of their purposes, they are now boldly rising up against God Himself". Presenting itself to the outside world as charitable clubs of educated men, the lodges were in reality part of a terrible organization that aimed at the "utter overthrow of that whole religious and political order of the world which the Christian teaching has produced" (Carlen 1981: 2, 91, 93).

The Encyclical did not mention the Jews. But that did not really matter. The Pope had blessed important elements of the conspiracy theory with his infallible authority, and those below him could fill in the details. The Assumptionist Order, which had been established in 1850, and quickly acquired popularity amongst the Catholic masses as the creators and guardians of the new shrine in Lourdes, had taken a leadership role in the defense of the interests of the Church against the Republic. The Assumptionists recruited the sons of peasants who compensated for their lack of education with religious zeal. In 1880 they launched a magazine, *La Croix* (*The Cross*), which became a daily paper in 1883 and which, in a few years, had a daily readership of half a million people. *La Croix* was orthodox, clerical, sensationalist and Manichean, and offered only one choice: Christ or Satan (Chapman 1955: 24). And *La Croix* was not afraid to name the agents of Satan: articles denouncing the dechristianization of France as the result of a conspiracy between Jews and Freemasons became a staple after Pope Leo's Encyclical, and not only helped to bring the topic to the attention of the masses, but also kept it alive (Sorlin 1967: 79ff., 192f.). *La Croix* also ran an electoral organization that established local committees all over the country. Its aim was to prevent the election of Jews and Freemasons (Larkin 1974: 67). While *La Croix* addressed the public at large, the magazine *La Franc-Maçonnerie Démasquée*, founded in 1884 by Amand-Joseph Fava, Bishop of Grenoble, specifically aimed to inform the more educated classes

about the revolutionary ambitions of the Freemasons and the way they had made the Third Republic into their tool to de-christianize society. While Bishop Fava's magazine showed some restraint in pushing the idea of a Jewish-masonic conspiracy, it was quite happy to show the way Jews were dramatically over-represented in both the lodges and in the administration of the Third Republic (on the history of the magazine see Jarriage 1999).

The government eviction of the monks and nuns had galvanized the journalist Edouard-Adolphe Drumont into writing a two-volume, twelve-hundred page book entitled *La France Juive* (*Jewish France*). Drumont blamed the Jews for all the misfortunes of France. Written in a chatty and racy style and replete with colorful anecdotes, *La France Juive* became a best-seller both in its original edition as in an abridged edition directed at the masses. Its chapter on the Freemasons begins with the question: "Who are the instigators, the instruments and the accomplices of the persecution who have begun with the expulsion of the religious saints, who then focused their attacks on the soul of the child, and who subsequently refused the unhappy person who is suffering in the hospital her last consolation and the final hope ...?" (Drumont 1898: 395f.). These were, of course, the Freemasons. Drumont claimed that Freemasonry was an organization that brought together maliciously mediocre people: the credulous, perverts, vain and timid people. Governed by invisible masters, the lodge was a kind of "open Judaism, a starter home so to speak ... where the Jews fraternize with men whom they wouldn't like to invite into their own homes" (Drumont 1898: 402).

The commercial success of *La France Juive* showed that conspiracy theories were good business, and a certain Marie Joseph Gabriel Antoine Jogand-Pagès decided to capitalize on it. An anti-clerical literary hack who had tried to earn his living by writing revelations about the alleged love-life of Pope Pius IX and other dark sides of life in the Church, Jogand-Pagès suddenly returned as a repentant sinner into the bosom of the Church in 1885. By now he had assumed the name Léo Taxil. Claiming that he had been a Freemason, Taxil published in 1886 four books about the going on in the masonic lodges. The central motive of his revelations was that Freemasons worshipped the devil. Satanism was a popular topic in *fin-de-siècle* France, and to understand it in its proper context, it is useful to consider the manner in which in the late nineteenth century critical thought and corrosive doubt had opened up a new appreciation of polytheism. In his *The Gay Science* the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed polytheism as the root of individualism while monotheism had pushed humans back to the status of herd animals (Nietzsche 1974 [1882]: 191f). Nietzsche's re-evaluation of polytheism as the cradle of the individual and monotheism as a religion fit for herds helps us to appreciate

the modernity of Éliphas Lévi's turn to magic, the invention of new polytheistic traditions such as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's Theosophy or MacGregor Mathers' Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, or the popularity of books that explored the worlds that lay outside the bounds of Christian morality. Hence Taxil's accusation that Freemasonry was devoted to Satanism was nothing extra-ordinary—especially as it was backed by the authority of Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical that had identified the lodges as “the Kingdom of Satan” (Harvey 2006: 187).

Taxil's allegations made their way to the distant island Mauritius, where they inspired the local bishop, the Most Reverend Johann Gabriel Léon Louis Meurin, Titular Archbishop of the dead archdiocese of Nisibis. Meurin had been for a long time Vicar Apostolic of Bombay but when Pope Leo XIII established in India an Episcopal Hierachy, he did not appoint Meurin as the first Archbishop of Bombay, but invested him with the titular archiepiscopate and shipped him off to the Island of Mauritius where he was to run the diocese of Port-Louis. In the midst of the Indian Ocean there was nothing to discipline his increasingly paranoid imagination, and so he began to work on the book that had to open the eyes of the faithful back home to the conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons to destroy Christendom. Relying on the writings of Gougenot des Moussaux, Chabauty, Drumont and Taxil, Meurin wrote *La franc-maçonnerie: Synagogue de Satan* (*Freemasonry: Synagogue of Satan*). Meurin's thesis was simple: “Everything in Freemasonry is fundamentally Jewish, exclusively Jewish, enthusiastically Jewish, from the beginning to the end” (Meurin 1893: 260), Meurin wrote. The thesis of the book, as a contemporary reviewer summarized it in a somewhat ironical fashion, was “that Freemasonry is connected with Satanism, by the fact that it has the Jews for its true authors, and the Jewish Kabbalah for the key of its mysteries; that the Kabbalah is magical, idolatrous, and essentially diabolical; that Freemasonry, considered as a religion, is therefore a judaized devil-worship, and considered as a political institution, it is an engine designed for the attainment of universal empire, which has been the dream of the Jews for centuries” (Waite 1896: 86). Writing three years after the publication of the book, the reviewer noted that Meurin's book had become upon its publication “a source of universal reference in anti-Masonic literature”—an achievement which was largely due to “the exalted ecclesiastical position of the author” (Waite 1896: 82).

Indeed, while the thesis of the book was not that original, the book became important because of Meurin's archiepiscopal dignity (even when it was a titular one based on a dead archdiocese). It gave the idea of a Jewish-masonic conspiracy a legitimacy it had not had before. Gougenot des Moussaux had been a layman, Chabauty had been a country priest, Drumont was a journalist, and Taxil a pornographer. Bishop Fava of Grenoble had lent the authority of

the Church to *La Franc-Maçonnerie Démasquée*, but in this magazine the Jews figured not very prominently. This was different in *La franc-maçonnerie: Synagogue de Satan*. And it appeared that Meurin spoke with the authority of the Catholic Church as a whole.

The effect of this authority proved corrosive. A first intimation of this was the manner in which it protected a massive, three-year hoax perpetrated by Taxil. This hoax was the sequel to the unprecedented literary and commercial success of Joris Karl Huysmans' best-selling novel *La-Bas (Down There)*, which centered on a scholar's obsession with Satanism in medieval and contemporary France and which contained a very graphic description of a Satanic mass (Huysmans 1958: 268ff.). Huysmans had not mentioned the Freemasons, and Taxil realized that he could use the interest that *La Bas* had created to push his own agenda—and make a great deal of money. Beginning on November 20, 1892 Taxil published on a monthly basis revelations of a global conspiracy centering on Devil worship in masonic lodges. The series, entitled *Le diable au XIXème siècle (The Devil in the Nineteenth Century)*, purported to be the results of investigative journalism that began when a certain Dr Bataille, a physician serving on a merchant frigate, learned of a satanic cult in Calcutta. Bataille decided to investigate the rumors, obtained through the good offices of a Napolitane Freemason knowledge of the masonic degrees, and with these credentials gained access to the Satanic temples where he witnessed disturbing ceremonies. Bataille quickly realized that this was not a local phenomenon, but a small part of a world-wide phenomenon which had its headquarters in Charleston, South Carolina. This city was “the Rome of the Luciferians” and the seat of the Pope of Satanism which Bataille identified as the Freemason Albert Pike (see Harvey 2006: 177ff.).

Taxil's outrageous story echoed Huysmans' tale and dovetailed with what Meurin had written, and hence both ordinary people and the educated classes were willing to believe it. The Catholic Church embraced Taxil's revelations. On New Year's day of 1894 the periodical *L'Écho de Rome* noted that Freemasonry was “the principal force and the indispensable arm by which Judaism seeks to expel from this world the reign of Jesus Christ and to substitute for it the reign of Satan” (as quoted in Harvey 2006: 196). Remarkably, in the early installments Taxil did not mention the Jews. Yet responding to questions of his readers he began to stress their role in later installments. A turning point in the revelations occurs when the protagonist Doctor Bataille criticized the French author Léo Taxil for not having investigated ‘masonic Jewry’. He ought to have recognized that Jews had taken “a leading role in the direction of the sect. M. Drumont, for his part, was more perceptive, and a false convert, in whom he would have sensed the Jew, would not have fooled him” (as quoted in Harvey 2006: 204).

The increasing prominence of the Jewish connection in Taxil's revelations reflected the prominence of 'The Dreyfus Affair'. For eleven years France was torn apart by a case that began when, in 1895, the Jewish Captain Alfred Dreyfus was arrested on suspicion of having betrayed army secrets to German military intelligence. Within days of his arrest Drumont's paper *Le Libre Parole* (*Free Speech*) began a hysteric campaign of vilification. On the basis of flimsy evidence a Court-Martial condemned Dreyfus for High Treason and sentenced him to military degradation and perpetual deportation to Devil's Island. In 1896 a senior intelligence officer in the French army realized on the basis of new evidence that Dreyfus was innocent, and that the spy was a certain Major Ferdinand-Walsin Esterhazy, but the generals refused to re-open the case, believing that such action would harm the reputation of the army. Information about the new evidence began to circulate, and as a result the whole country got involved, with progressives rallying to the support of Dreyfus, most Catholics supporting the generals' contention that they arrested and convicted the right man, and antisemites using the case to stir up hatred against the Jews. Sales of *La Croix* went through the roof. In the midst of all the excitement about plots and counter-plots, one conspiracy came to an ignoble end. On April 19, 1897 Taxil gave a press conference in which he admitted that all his revelations about devil worship in the lodges had been part of a large hoax perpetrated to reveal the credulity and stupidity of all Catholics, laymen and priests, bishops, cardinals, and the Pope (Harvey 2006: 200).

In the end Dreyfus was exonerated, and the army brass, the clergy, the members of the religious orders and all the others who had refused justice for Dreyfus were shown to have acted in bad faith. Many Frenchmen felt betrayed. They were ready to forgive the army, which they believed to have been misled, and turned their rage to those who had fomented the unrest. Anatole France identified the men who had fanned the flames as "emissaries of the Roman church". They had "scattered malign reports, whispered alarming rumors, spoke of treasons and plots, disquieted people through their patriotism, disturbed their security, steeped them in fear and anger" (France 1964: 49f.). The Jesuits, Frenchmen were told, had seduced the army and made the people acquiesce in the seduction. Elections produced a victory for the left, and the new Prime Minister, the Freemason and radical anti-clerical politician Émile Combes, decided to complete the task that had been begun in 1880, and forcefully end the role of the Jesuits and other religious orders in education. In 1901 the Combes government, in which every minister was a Freemason, adopted the so-called Associations Law that allowed the Government not only to close any association that was seen to be, in character, design or influence, contrary to existing law. It also stipulated that associations that resided in

France but were controlled from abroad, were to show cause why they should be allowed to exist within the jurisdiction of the Republic. While the primary targets were the militant orders like the Jesuits and the Assumptionists, the Benedictines, Capucins, Dominicans, and other orders were also affected as they also had to apply for authorization to operate in France. Most Religious Orders refused to submit themselves to this and closed their abbeys, priories and convents, and left France (Littlefield 1902: 525f.).

The Dreyfus Affair began with the wrongful conviction of a Captain who happened to be a Jew, evolved because the army could not admit a mistake and antisemites couldn't believe that a Jew might be innocent and a Catholic guilty, and ended with a cabinet of Freemasons that shut down a crucial operation of the Church. For a conspiracy theorist this was a fine example of Judeo-masonic cooperation. Yet in France the hysteria about a conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons subsided—at least in the public realm. The verbal violence and the riots had ruptured the social fabric of France, but no-one had been killed. Many had surrendered to paranoid fantasies, but for the anti-Dreyfusards the revelation of Taxil's hoax had taken the diabolical sting out of the alleged conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons, while the Dreyfusards could not fully turn against the army—the most important symbol of the nation.

Publicly preached antisemitism went out of fashion. The chimera of a Judeo-masonic plot became the focus of the cranks that made up *L'Action Française*, established by Charles Maurras. An important voice in this period was that of the journalist Paul Joseph Copin (1851–1939), a onetime Freemason who published in 1908 a virulent treatise about the Judeo-masonic conspiracy under the name Paul Copin-Albancelli (Copin-Albancelli: 1908). Yet, in the French discourse, the obsession with a Judeo-masonic conspiracy would remain at the political margin until the defeat of 1940, when embittered traditionalists saw another opportunity to undo the achievements of the French Revolution under the aegis of Nazi Germany.

The French speculations from the nineteenth century became in the twentieth century the foundation of the Catholic discourse in Ireland, Spain and Latin-American countries where the Church successfully opposed the modernization of society. In the early 1920s the well-known Irish Jesuit academic Edward Cahill wrote an influential book on the anti-Christian character of the lodges that included a chapter exploring in great detail “the Jewish element in Freemasonry”. Cahill packed his punch in a velvet glove, and as a result the book influenced the Irish and, to a lesser extent, the American Irish-Catholic discourse on Jews and Masons until the late 1950s (Cahill 1929). Cahill's book went through many editions, but it is now out of print. The influential anti-masonic treatise written in the 1920s by the Chilean priest José Maria Caro y Rodríguez, at that time titular

bishop of the dead diocese of Mylasa and Apostolic Vicar of Tarapacá remains in print today. According to Caro y Rodríguez, Freemasonry was the “legitimate child” of Satan and the “instrument” of the Jews in their 1900-year struggle against Christianity (Caro y Rodríguez 2006: 201ff.). An ugly and hateful book based on Gougenot des Mousseaux, his successors, and most important Copin, it did not prove an obstacle for his rise to the Archbishopric of Santiago (1939) and Primate of Chile and Cardinal (1946). The exalted ecclesiastical rank that the author obtained certainly suggested that the book spoke with the authority of the Church as a whole, and from 1939 onwards the theory of a Judeo-masonic plot was to be presented with obligatory references to both the Encyclical of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, and the book by His Eminence José Maria Cardinal Caro y Rodríguez.

The Apocalyptic Aspect

The fantasy of a political conspiracy between Jews and Freemasons had evolved in the Third Republic, but was to have its catastrophic culmination in the Third Reich. Within the nineteenth-century discourse about the conspiracy between Jews and Freemasons apocalyptic elements had been present. Gougenot des Mousseaux, Chabauty, and Meurin had seen a formidable and global threat. Yet they believed that it could be countered by traditional means—that is a general return to the embrace of the Catholic Church. They believed, in other words, that a restoration of the old world was both desired and possible. While their conservatism would be shared in the twentieth century by many, and shape the anti-masonic politics of authoritarian regimes in Spain, Portugal, or South America, the center of our story shifts to the cataclysmic reality created by Nazi Germany, a reality that was to culminate in the death camps.

The road between Paris and Auschwitz led via Saint Petersburg. As we have seen, the myth of a conspiracy between Jews and Freemasons was created and developed by Catholic conservatives who experienced a loss of status as a result of the at times revolutionary and at times evolutionary changes in the period between 1789 and 1914. The myth was the product of French circumstances, but the Russian aristocrat Matvei Golovinsky, who was a proud and self-confessed antisemite and who was employed as a member of the Russian secret police in Paris, recognized its potential to discredit those who propagated political, social and economic change in Russia.⁶ Around 1898 he took

6 The Russian scholar Mikhail Lepekhin established the authorship of Golovinsky. See Conan 1999.

the notion of a Judeo-masonic plot, developed within the context of the Third Republic, and combined it with Goedsche's narrative of the meeting of the representatives of the twelve tribes in the Jewish cemetery in Prague. Then Golovinsky plagiarized whole sections from Maurice Joly's *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu* (*The Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*) (a good English-language edition is July 2002), which in turn was largely based on a conspiracy scene in one of Eugen Sue's novels, and he grafted all of that on an event which had galvanized many Russian Jews and which some non-Jews saw as the herald of earth-shattering change: the First Zionist Congress in Basel. Golovinsky's fabrication purported to be a series of 'protocols' or minutes of secret deliberations held by a cabal of Jewish leaders gathered in Basel. If the public proceedings spoke of the desire to create a Jewish homeland, the document alleged that these secret proceedings of the so-called 'Elders' reported on a conspiracy to destroy Christendom and obtain universal power. Freemasonry was one of their main tools. "Gentile masonry, blindly serves as a screen for us and our objects", the fourth protocol proclaimed. The eleventh protocol stated how "the goy cattle" was allowed into "the 'show' army of Masonic lodges in order to throw dust in the eyes of their fellows", and the fifteenth protocol stated that "we shall create and multiply free Masonic lodges in all countries of the world, absorb into them all who may become or who are prominent in public activity, for in these lodges we shall find out principal intelligence office and means of influence". Unbeknownst to the Masons themselves, the lodges would be ruled by the Jewish elders. "In these lodges we shall tie together the knot which binds together all revolutionary and liberal elements" ("Selections from the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*", in Bronner 2000: 15, 22, 25).

Few of Golovinsky's ideas about the Judeo-masonic conspiracy were original. But he showed some innovation in using as the setting a well-documented gathering of Jews from all over the world. The second innovation of the *Protocols* was the explicit overwhelming dimension of the threat. Gougenot des Mousseaux and Meurin had been nostalgic for a harmonious unity of Altar and Throne (that had in fact never existed) and shared a disgust for the secularization and modernization that they witnessed in nineteenth-century Europe. But those who believed in the conspiracy did not believe that the world that the Jews tried to create with help of the Masons would be qualitatively different from the present. But the language of the *Protocols* suggested a future that had little resemblance to even the most secularized present. The *Protocols* were finally important in that they showed an important shift in the relative function of the Jews and the Freemasons in their relationship. Since Gougenot des Mousseaux the Jews had been the senior partner in the

conspiracy in providing a constancy of purpose over time, but the Freemasons had always provided the more cosmopolitan, international if not global dimension to the relationship. In the *Protocols* the Jews were presented as a global force in their own right, which allowed Golivinsky to reduce the Freemasons to the role of mere tools. As we will see, this reduction of the significance of the Freemasons in the relationship was to have dire consequences for the Jews.

The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* had been written in Paris, but for the first two decades of their existence only circulated within Russia. Only after the end of the First World War were they to gain influence in the West, and especially in Germany. Until 1919, the notion that Jews and Freemasons were involved in a conspiracy to destroy Christendom did not have any traction in Germany. Like in France, the Catholic Church had been forced to retreat in the last decades of the nineteenth century, but this decline had not occurred within a Republic that seemed to be controlled by Freemasons and that was supported by Jews. The main opponent of the Church had been the conservative and Protestant Reichs Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, and if the German Catholics looked for an enemy, it was the Lutheran Church. In addition, German Freemasons had become during the nineteenth century increasingly conservative. Many lodges did not accept Jews, and in those that did, Jews had a marginal role. The idea of a Judeo-masonic conspiracy had been politically useful in France. It made no political sense in Germany. Significantly the only substantial German reflection on the relations between Jews and Freemasons occurred within the context of an intra-masonic discourse about the role of Jews within the German lodges (Findel 1893). Thus when in 1883 the notorious German antisemite Paul de Lagarde (born as Paul Bötticher) mentioned a Jewish organization and Freemasonry in the same sentence, he did so only in a metaphorical sense. “The *Alliance Israélite* is nothing else than a Freemason-like conspiracy with the aim of Jewish world domination, a Semitic equivalent to the Jesuit Order within Catholicism” (De Lagarde 1940: 295. The *Deutsche Schriften* originally appeared in 1883.). He did not believe that the Jews and Freemasons were joined in a common conspiracy. De Lagarde may have been an antisemite, but he was a rational antisemite.

However rationalism had lost some of its glamour in the first decade of the twentieth century. “Men who are participating in a great social movement always picture their coming action as a battle in which their cause is certain to triumph”, the French philosopher Georges Sorel wrote in his seminal *Réflexions sur la violence* (Reflections on Violence), published in 1908. “These constructions, knowledge of which is so important for historians, I propose to call myths”. Every revolutionary movement had at its core its own myth, which made it into a historical force. According to Sorel, such a myth was not a

rational description of reality, but an expression of a determination to act. "Contemporary myths lead men to prepare themselves for a combat which will destroy the existing state of things" (Sorel 1941[1908]: 22). Because the myth was rooted in a shared conviction of how things should be, it could not be refuted. As such, a social or political myth shares essential characteristics with religion. Sorel believed that when the anticipation of the future took the form of a myth, this form became vital because it enclosed in one coordinated and intense picture the strongest desires, noblest passions and most moving inclinations of a group.

Sorel's concept of myth became very influential after 1914 because it offered a made-to-measure response to the catastrophe of war. No-one had wanted it, but when it arrived, all got caught up in it, and reason proved powerless. The moral and social structures that had seemed matter-of-fact and unchangeable crumbled and were revealed to be contingent. Within days after the outbreak of the war, writers in all participating nations began to adopt Sorel's advice and began to naturalize the historical by subsuming the events of the moment within a universal and providential unfolding of destiny. The sudden opposition of nations that had cooperated peacefully for a century became a display of opposing essences. In the war of attrition that followed writers invoked each nation's 'historical mission'. There was no place in this understanding of history for an appreciation of the contingent: everything was now understood as fated—and this, of course, made it possible for the politicians and the generals to call for immense and what turned out to be senseless sacrifices.

With the outbreak of the war began what the Italian antifascist resistor and cultural critic Nicola Chiaromonte labeled as "the age of bad faith", a time in which nothing seems natural and self-evident, and in which people cling to beliefs in order to oppose other beliefs. The universal currency in the age of bad faith are "useful lies" which are "consciously created and consciously accepted fictions that take the place of truths not only because they are serviceable, easily handled, and universally employed but because truths that give even a semblance of unity and meaning to the world in which we live do not exist". And Chiaromonte concluded that "these useful lies finally constitute a language in which even the truthful man finds himself fatally enmeshed if he wishes to live and communicate with others" (Chiaromonte 1985: 137f.).

In the spring of 1918 many Germans believed that, after three and half years of struggle, they were to taste final victory. The Russians had agreed to a humiliating peace in which they had surrendered enormous territories, and in the West the German army seemed close to a breakthrough. Then, suddenly, military catastrophe. Sailors and soldiers mutinied, and revolutionary upheavals began in the cities. The monarchy fell on November 9 and two days later a

German delegation accepted the draconian terms of an armistice in a railway carriage in the forest in Compiègne. "The German people suffered a collapse, physical and mental ... as history, doubtless, had never known before", Thomas Mann wrote a few years later. "The demoralization had no limits; it could be seen in the *deep and almost fatal anxiety of a whole nation that despaired of itself* [sic], of its history, of its finest treasures" (Mann 1986: 620). The German people did not receive leadership in those difficult days: the former leaders of the collapsed Reich and the defeated army refused to accept responsibility. Unwilling since Verdun to admit military failure, German generals openly insisted that revolution on the home front and not defeat on the battlefield had caused the collapse. "The German army was stabbed in the back" (Paul von Hindenburg, "The Stab in the Back", in Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg 1994: 15f.), Field Marshal von Hindenburg testified in a Reichstag inquiry. The only question that remained was who had held the dagger? Many answered: the Jews and the Masons. As a rational proposition it did not make much sense. But as a *mythos* and useful lie it proved very powerful.

Already in 1917 the German Jesuit Hermann Gruber published a book entitled *Freimaurerei, Weltkrieg und Weltfriede* (Freemasonry, World War and World Peace). Gruber argued that in the same way that Freemasons had triggered the French and other revolutions, so they were also responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914. Their aim was to use the war as the tool to break up the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German empires. Others such as Karl Heise, a well known occultist associated with the Theosophic and Anthroposophic movements, followed Gruber's lead with his rambling *Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg* (Entente-Freemasonry and World War) (Heise 1918). Heise was careful to exculpate the German and Austrian lodges, and also did not mention a possible Jewish connection. Antisemitic periodicals such as Captain Ludwig Müller von Hausen's *Auf Vorposten* (On Guard), the organ of the *Verband gegen die Überhebung des Judentums* (League against Jewish Arrogance) and Theodor Fritsch's *Hammer* (Hammer) ran articles that described the alleged anti-German machinations of the Grand Lodge of Italy and the *Grand Orient de France* (Pfahl-Traugher 1993: 23f., 41ff.). In July 1918 Prince Otto zu Salm-Horstmar spoke in the Prussian Upper House that in the war the "Jewish-democratic" worldview stood opposed to a "German-aristocratic" one, and that in this titanic struggle Jews used Freemasonry as their tool (Pfahl-Traugher 1993: 24). Such language was still rare in 1918, but became commonplace after the Armistice when a flood of publications appeared which blamed a Judeo-masonic plot both for the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo and the mutinies that had ended the German ability to resist. The most important of these early publications was Friedrich Wichtl's

Weltfreimaurerei-Weltrevolution-Weltrepublik (World-Freemasonry-World Revolution-World Republic). The title neatly summed up the central thesis: a global organization of Freemasons had triggered a global collapse of the old order, embodied in the German and Austro-Hungarian empires in order to arrive at a global regime. Wichtl devoted a whole chapter to the role of the Jews in Freemasonry, and that they had achieved control of the lodges in many countries and had begun to make use of it. While Wichtl did not accuse the Jews directly of having triggered the war in 1914 and the revolution in 1918, the fact that he did assume that Freemasons were responsible for these events and that Jews controlled the lodges suggested as much (Wichtl 1919: 49ff.). Wichtl's argument convinced many, including a nineteen-year-old youngster named Heinrich Himmler. In September 1919 he noted in his diary that the book "provides enlightenment about everything and tells against whom we have to fight" (as quoted in Ackermann 1970: 25).

In early 1920 appeared a German translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Zur Beek 1920). Using the alias Gottfried zur Beek, Ludwig Müller von Hausen acted as editor, and Prince Otto zu Salm-Horstmar and his friends from the former Prussian Upper House provided the financial resources. In 1922 Müller von Hausen claimed with some justification that "our translation of the Secrets of the Elders of Zion ... has contributed more to the illumination of the Jewish Question than one hundred other books were able to achieve" (as quoted in Pfahl-Traugher 1993: 43). Wichtl would have agreed, if he had not died in 1920. Shortly before his death he read the German edition of the *Protocols*, and rushed a booklet into print in which he sharpened the arguments from his first book, turning a suggestion of Jewish control of Freemasonry into a statement of fact, and subsuming the particular conspiracy that had led to the outbreak of war to the age-old conspiracy of the Elders of Zion. And he predicted that when the Germans would realize all of this, "the Furor teutonicus will erupt like never before ..." (Wichtl n.d.: 31).

The Jewish Question had become a focus of general interest because Jews seemed to do well in post-war Germany. While Jews in Bismarck's German Reich had enjoyed full political emancipation, social discrimination had remained common practice. At the same time racial antisemitism—the notion that by virtue of birth alone, every Jew was a threat to civic society and should be barred from full citizenship, socially isolated and, if possible, expelled—held little traction in the political sphere. People who held such views remained in the Second Reich on the fringes, their 'Jewish Question' was of marginal importance, and their form of antisemitism socially taboo (Kauders 1998: 160ff.; also Pulzer 1998: 271f.). The Weimar Republic offered Jews significant improvement on Bismarck's Reich. Jews ascended to ministerships, joined the

diplomatic and civil services, advanced to professorships in the universities, and made a great mark in the economy, literature, the arts, humanities and science. Yet manifest success also generated both fear and envy amongst non-Jews. The brutalization in political rhetoric triggered by the First World War and normalized in the maelstrom of post-war social violence melted the social taboo that had prevented a dislike of Jews from degenerating into racial anti-semitism. The “Jewish Question” now became an obsession for many on the right, and rabid antisemites’ “solutions” to that “Jewish Question” became commonplace. They changed the terms of the debate (quoted in Kauders 1998: 171).

Hatred for the capitalism represented by Great Britain and the United States and the belief that these countries were dominated by Jews easily combined with the paranoid imaginings of defeated nationalists such as Wichtl and Müller von Hausen. The ancient Roman concept of *cui bono?* (who benefits?) suggested a link between the evident success of German Jews in post-war Germany and the defeat. In the next two decades many Germans would speculate about the exact nature of the relationship, and in the 1920s the assumption of a masonic connection would continue to play an important role. All of this occurred within the context of a voluntary abandonment of reason as the principle of political life. When Sorel had formulated his concept of myth, French politicians had not paid any attention to it. They remained conventional in their view of the nature and purpose of politics. They continued to believe in debate and objective power relations based on the vote. But in post-war Germany there was little confidence in democratic practices. Sorel’s understanding of myth as a political force became the order of the day. Thomas Mann observed that “mythical fictions, devised like primitive battle cries”, became the basis of politics, allowing “fables, insane visions, chimaeras, which needed to have nothing to do with truth or reason or science in order to be creative” to become the engines of change, “and thus to prove themselves dynamic realities” (Mann 1948: 366).

Alfred Rosenberg was to play a crucial role in the transformation of the conspiracy theory that credited Jews and Freemasons for some of the world’s ills into a *Mythus* (myth) that blamed them for all of the world’s ills (see Meyer zu Utrup 2003: 99ff.). Born as an ethnic German but Russian citizen in Reval (today Tallinn), Rosenberg had witnessed in 1917 the Bolshevik Revolution in Moscow. He was horrified, but thanks to a copy of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* he knew who was responsible for the destruction of Throne and Altar: the Jews, aided by Freemasons. In early 1919 Rosenberg left for Germany, and found himself in Bavaria where he witnessed a revolution and a very bloody counter-revolution which provided the breeding ground of the early Nazi party. In the Fall of 1919 he met the veteran Adolf Hitler and both joined the Deutsche

Arbeiterpartei. Rosenberg quickly assumed the role of the party's public intellectual. In 1920 he published his *Die Spur des Juden im Wandel der Zeiten* (The Trace of the Jew in the Course of History), in which he argued amongst other things that Jewish interests had been identical with British imperial policy. In the years before the outbreak of the war Jews had penetrated into the highest British circles. But also Freemasonry proved a point of connection between Jewish financiers and the leaders of the Entente (the alliance of Great Britain, France, Russia and the other nations that had fought Germany and Austria-Hungary) (Rosenberg 1943a: Vol. 1, 230–256). Taking much inspiration from Gougenot des Mousseaux and other French writers, Rosenberg claimed that Freemasonry was an international conspiracy to destroy the old order and establish a world-republic, and that Jews were attracted to it as they are “an innate conspirational nation”. Rosenberg quoted Simonini's letter to Barruel as a particular good introduction to “the workshop of the Judeo-masonic conspiracy” (Rosenberg 1943a: Vol. 1, 243).

In 1921 Rosenberg published a German translation of Gougenot des Mousseaux's opus magnum, an undertaking that clearly demonstrated his dependence on the French discourse (Gougenot des Mousseaux 1921). That same year appeared his *Das Verbrechen der Freimaurerei: Judentum, Jesuitismus, Deutsches Christentum* (The Crime of Freemasonry: Judaism, Jesuitism, German Christianity). In this book Rosenberg claimed that “Jews and Masons stand at the top and behind the scenes of current world politics”. Freemasons had tried to destroy the natural distinctions between peoples, allowing the Jews to penetrate into the body of each nation, creating bastard peoples. In addition French Freemasons, led by Jewish bankers who had chosen to remain in the wings, had created the basis of the anti-German *Entente* by pulling France, Great Britain and Italy together. “It has become a truism for Judaism to consider the principles of Freemasonry as the most effective seeds of destruction of Christian society”. Behind everything were the “never tired hands of the greatest plotter, the internationally connected owner of gold—those of the Jew”. Jews exercised “a secret dictatorship and financial dominance; in all countries delegates of Jewry are present in the lodges and thus form the cement of a world-wide society of conspirators” (Rosenberg 1943b: Vol. 1, 397, 416f., 482, 496).

In 1923 Rosenberg published a lengthy commentary on the *Protocols*. He introduced the text by identifying the decline of a real sense of national identity as the disgrace of his own time, a disgrace that had been prepared by the materialism and cosmopolitanism of the preceding century. The Jews had used these to their advance. *The Protocols*, Rosenberg argued, had unveiled these schemes, and created an opportunity for the world to awaken. In all of this

global Freemasonry remained an important tool of the Jews, helping to create a flexible network that made Jews invulnerable. At the end of his commentary on the *Protocols* Rosenberg declared “the Jew” to be the age-old “metaphysical opponent” of the German. “Never before have we really understood this ... For the first time in history instinct and insight unite in a clear understanding. As a result the Jew, standing on the highest pinnacle of power which he so greedily ascended, faces the abyss. The last fall. After that fall there will be no place anymore for the Jew in Europe” (Rosenberg 1943c: Vol. 2, 251, 275f., 283, 322f., 428).

“For the first time in history instinct and insight unite in a clear understanding”. Rosenberg meant what he said, and it is true that he brought indeed a new and what proved to be catastrophic dimension to the speculations about a conspiracy between Jews and Freemasons by embedding it in a particular form of *mythos*: a so-called *Weltanschauung*. Coined by the eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, the word *Weltanschauung* is usually translated in English as a ‘world view’ or ‘ideology’. In fact it was something more (for a useful introduction to the Nazi use of the word ‘Weltanschauung’ see Schmitz-Berning 1998: 686–689). The philosopher Emil Fackenheim, who grew up in Germany to end up in Israel after a shorter sojourn in Great Britain and a longer one in Canada, observed that a *Weltanschauung* had three important characteristics: “cosmic scope, internal coherence or *Geschlossenheit*, and a sincere commitment on the part of its devotees”.

Hence, when the *nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung* appeared, it was respected simply *because* it was a *Weltanschauung*: not despite the fact that it was cosmic but because of it; not despite the fact that it slandered “good” as well as “bad” Jews but—indiscriminate attacks on *das Judentum* being necessary for *Geschlossenheit*—because of it. And the pimp Horst Wessel became a saint, not despite the fact that he died needlessly but, having died because he had refused a Jewish doctor’s aid, because of it.

FACKENHEIM 1988: 204

As Fackenheim’s definition reveals, Sorel’s myth and Nazi *Weltanschauung* were closely related.

In Rosenberg’s writings the conspiracy between Jews and Freemasons lost all traces of historical contingency. It became a part of an eternal drama that pitted those who were rooted in a particular place and who carefully and responsibly cultivated the earth and themselves (exemplified by racially-pure Germans) against those who had no roots and who were unable to produce culture, and who sought to make by means of lies and deception a parasitical

existence wherever this was possible (exemplified by ‘international Jewry’ which in Rosenberg’s view controlled both Bolshevism, the world of capitalist finance, and its global ally: Freemasonry) (for a useful introduction to the Nazi use of the word ‘international’ see Schmitz-Berning 1998: 322–325). Rosenberg’s view was totalitarian because it refused to acknowledge that social life occurred in a number of autonomous spheres, in which art and science, religion and politics, economics and technology can develop independently of each other. Now everything was connected, offering indeed *Geschlossenheit* (Burin 2005: 43–45).

In ideological matters in general, and in Judeo-masonic matters in particular, Rosenberg was Hitler’s mentor. In 1924 the latter used his very comfortable nine-month confinement in the Landsberg fortress to pen down his own *Weltanschauung*. This *Weltanschauung* he had acquired during his years in Vienna, and it had become “the granite foundation of all my acts. In addition to what I then created, I have had to learn little; and I have had to alter nothing”, he wrote in *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) (Hitler 1943: 22). His *Weltanschauung* centered on the eternal and relentless threat of ‘the Jew’. “To strengthen his political position [the Jew] tries to tear down the racial and civil barriers which for a time continue to restrain him at every step. To this end he fights with all the tenacity innate in him for religious tolerance—and in Freemasonry, which has succumbed to him completely, he has an excellent instrument with which to fight for his aims and put them across” (Hitler 1943: 315). Remarkably enough, Hitler was happy to invoke the *Protocols* as evidence whilst remaining not convinced about their authenticity. “They are based on a forgery, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* moans and screams once every week: the best proof that they are authentic. What many Jews may do unconsciously is here consciously exposed. And that is what matters. It is completely indifferent from what Jewish brain these disclosures originate; the important thing is that with positively terrifying certainty they reveal the nature and activity of the Jewish people and expose their inner contexts as well as their final aims” (Hitler 1943: 307f.). If Rosenberg had analyzed and explicated *The Protocols* because he believed them to be true, Hitler used them because they were useful within propaganda. In *Mein Kampf* he explained that the fundamental principle of propaganda was that it should “confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over” (Hitler 1943: 184). Obviously “Jews and Freemasons” provided a powerful slogan and, as Hitler explained, simple if not simplistic slogans provided the basis of all propaganda.

In the late 1920s, however, Hitler and Nazi propagandists began to simplify even further the slogan by focusing only on the conspiracy of “International Jewry”. It appears that this move was not influenced by the well-argued

responses to the host of accusations about the nefarious role of Freemasons published by the *Verein deutscher Freimaurer* (Society of German Freemasons) (Verein deutscher Freimaurer 1928–1931). There is no evidence that the Nazis took note of these books: they never referred to them. Instead it appears that the shift of focus from Jews and Freemasons to ‘International Jewry’ was dictated by Hitler’s understanding of the relationship between the simplicity of the message and its political effectiveness, an understanding that was in tune with Sorel’s theory of myth. “In general the art of all truly great national leaders at all times consists among other things primarily in not dividing the attention of a people, but in concentrating it on a single foe”, he had observed in *Mein Kampf*. “It belongs to the genius of a great leader to make even adversaries far removed from one another seem to belong to a single category, because in weak and uncertain characters the knowledge of having different enemies can only too readily lead to the beginning of doubt in their own right” (Hitler 1943: 118f.). Given a choice to focus either on ‘the Jew’ or Freemasonry, it was clear that the former provided a more useful target. Not only had the discourse on a Judeo-masonic conspiracy always assumed that ‘the Jew’ was the true but hidden master of the lodge and the rank-and-file Freemason a blind dupe, but also the politically motivated hostility to ‘the Jew’ could count on a broad base of popular support created by Christian anti-Judaism and racist antisemitism. For French ultramontanes, who saw the world as a struggle between precious tradition and dangerous innovation, Freemasons were true and credible opponents. But for Hitler and the Nazis, who believed in the struggle between races, the ultimate enemy could only be a racial enemy—and most Freemasons were within the Nazi *Weltanschauung* racially acceptable. They may have been deluded, but like Social Democrats and other political opponents of the Nazis they could be reformed and brought back into the *Volksgemeinschaft* (community of the people). Unlike antisemitism, anti-masonry had not been a non-negotiable foundation of Hitler’s *Weltanschauung*. It had been Rosenberg’s hobbyhorse, and Rosenberg’s influence had begun to wane in the late 1920s. And so the Nazis dropped Freemasonry as a major target, transferring its international dimension to the symbolic target of ‘the Jew’ by labeling the now single, universal enemy as ‘International Jewry of Finance’ or ‘International Jewry’.

If political strategy suggested that a single focus on a global Jewish threat would be more effective than a double focus on a Jewish-masonic conspiracy, it also appears that the rambling ravings of Erich Ludendorff, the German war leader and early supporter of Hitler, had largely discredited the discourse on the Jews and Masons not only by pushing the argument into the absurd by including also Jesuits and even Christians into the conspiracy, but also because

he made by that time no secret of his disdain for Hitler. After the publication of Ludendorff's *Vernichtung der Freimaurerei durch Enthüllung ihrer Geheimnisse* (The Destruction of Freemasonry through the Revelation of its Secrets) the topic lost much of its power to convince (Neuberger 2001: 153; Meyer zu Uptrup 2003: 203f.). While individual Nazi writers continued to write books that attacked Freemasonry and its alleged ties to 'International Jewry', these writings became a niche product.

The result is that the Nazi *Machtsübernahme* (assumption of power) in 1933 did not prove a catastrophe to German Freemasons. Of course: the Nazi government pursued a policy that led to the closure of all lodges. But as a rule individual Freemasons did not suffer as a result of their onetime masonic affiliation. As long as they accepted the new *fait accompli* and were not Jewish, they could fully participate in the new society. In 1938 Hitler even went so far as formally declaring a general amnesty of all those who had been Freemasons (see Melzer 1999). In 1939 the publicist Max Everwien stressed in his popular history of secret societies that before the Great War Freemasons of the Entente powers had played a crucial role in whipping up enmity against Germany, but he also conceded that there was no proof that German Freemasons had actively supported their foreign brethren in their hate propaganda. Nevertheless, "pre-war German Freemasonry will never be able to shake off the reproach of an undeterminate and ambiguous attitude to all truly national issues. And that was almost worse than an active and honest opposition" (Everwien 1939: 352). They had erred, but could be forgiven.

This was of course different with the Jews. While Freemasonry and Freemasons had by 1939 largely disappeared from the target-finder of the Nazi government, the caricature of the conspirational Jewish financier who controls governments and societies behind the scenes now dominated Nazi rhetoric and guided German actions. On 30 January 1939, the sixth anniversary of his ascent to power, Hitler addressed the newly expanded Greater German Reichstag. He had been a prophet before, he said. "Once again I will be a prophet: should the international Jewry of finance succeed, both within and without Europe, in plunging mankind into yet another world war, then the result will not be a Bolshevization of the earth and the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe" (quoted in Domarus 1990–1997: Vol. 3, 1449). The "international Jewry of finance" was, of course, that very group of people who had been first identified by French ultramontanes as the source of all their troubles.

Three years later Hitler spoke again about the Jewish financiers who ruled Great Britain and the United States from the wings, and who had in their search for profit and gain caused those nations to become Germany's enemies.

And now he told the world that his prophecy from three years earlier was to be realized. Another three years later the Nazis and their allies had murdered six million Jews in their war against the spectre of International Jewry—an apparition that had been created as the shadow of the lodge in the party politics of nineteenth-century France, to come to its own in 1930s Germany.

In Auschwitz, Belsen, Chelmno and all the other places where Jews were gassed, shot or worked to death the ultramontane fantasy of a Jewish-masonic conspiracy came to its horrible conclusion. The Nazis killed only a few Jewish financiers, and not too many of the victims had been initiated into Freemasonry. Almost all of the victims were totally ignorant of such matters. I believe that there is some significance in the fact that this apocalyptic ending of a history that had begun with Barruel's theory about a masonic conspiracy without Jews only occurred after the Nazi propaganda and policies had effectively severed the assumption of a relationship, forcing the Jews to bear alone the whole burden of the legacy created, on the base laid by Barruel, by the likes of Gougenot des Mousseaux, Chabauty, Drumont, Meurin, Golovinsky, Wichtl, Müller von Hausen, and Rosenberg. It appears unlikely that the Holocaust would have happened if Hitler had chosen to ignore his deep-held conviction that one should focus on a single enemy alone, and if he had continued to credit both Jews *and* Freemasons as the shared authors of Germany's (and Europe's) misfortunes.

This, then, shows an interesting light on the conclusion of the late Jacob Katz, who wrote one of the few serious studies on the relation between Jews and Freemasons, and who inspired my own work on the topic. At the end of his seminal *Jews and Freemasons in Europe, 1723–1939*, Katz observed that the apocalyptic narrative of a Jewish-masonic alliance became in the Third Reich a “magic formula” that, manipulated by Hitler and his henchmen, “revealed the immense proportions of its destructive power, and then exploded before the eyes of the terror-stricken and horrified spectators” (Katz 1970: 229). While it was true that ‘Jews and Freemasons’ had been a powerful formula for the sixty years that preceded the Third Reich, it only acquired its magic, genocidal force when Hitler decided to remove the Freemasons from the equation.

Conclusion

“Hegel says somewhere that all great historic facts and personages recur twice. He forgot to add: ‘Once as tragedy, and again as farce.’” (Marx 2005: 1). Thus Karl Marx at the beginning of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. The theory of a world-wide conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons, first proposed by

Abbé Barruel, inspired such different characters as Gougenot des Mousseaux, Drumont, Golovinsky, Wichtl and Rosenberg to lay the sleepers that carried the track to Auschwitz. The theory was mad, but the hatred that pushed it to its apocalyptic conclusion was real, and so was the suffering and devastation that it created.

In 2010 the Italian scholar of semiotics, novelist, and public intellectual Umberto Eco published a rambling novel that covers the history of the belief of a Jewish conspiracy, in its dialectic with the idea of a Masonic conspiracy, from its beginnings to the creation of the *Protocols*. In his *Cimitero di Praga* (The Prague Cemetery), Eco arraigned almost all the authors of the hateful fiction that produced the Holocaust. Only the main protagonist of the book, the man who brings it all together into a one-man conspiracy (if such can exist), is a fictional himself: the schizophrenic, antisemitic forger Simone Simonini, a fictional character based, of course, on the historical, semi-fictional or fictional Jean-Baptiste Simonini who would have revealed to Barruel the Jewish dimension of the great conspiracy. In Eco's book, Simone Simonini may have learned to hate Jews on his grandfather's lap, but he ended up choreographing the unfolding of the theory of the conspiracy and the writing of the *Protocols* as a way to make some money—at least initially. “I was doubtful that documents against the Jesuits would be saleable,” Simonini jotted down in his diary. He did not know enough about the Freemasons. “Who was left? The Jews, for heaven's sake. Deep down, I thought it was only my grandfather who had been obsessed, but after listening to Toussenet I realized there was an anti-Jewish market not just among all the descendants of Abbé Barruel (and there were quite a few of them), but also among revolutionaries, republicans and socialists . . . I had to work on the Jews.” As he develops his narrative, he finds many who share his mindset. One of them, with whom Simonini draws up a division of the labor of research (the one will focus on the Jews, the other on the Freemasons), boldly articulates the ultimate conclusion to be drawn from the existence of the Judeo-masonic conspiracy.

“If the world were rid of Jews . . . we'd have a hundred years of happiness.”

“And so?”

“And so one day we'll have to try out the only reasonable solution, the final solution—the extermination of all Jews. Even children? Yes, even children. I know the idea might seem Herodian, but when the seed is bad it's not enough for the plant to be cut down—it has to be eradicated. If you don't want mosquitoes, you kill the larvae.

Written in an unrelenting ironical tone, Eco's labyrinthine novel is a playful and undoubtedly fascinating intellectual game that provides a good read to those interested in the history of the idea of the Judeo-masonic conspiracy. Yet somehow the idea doesn't work to plot as a farce the history of the idea that a cabal of Jews conspired in the lugubrious setting of the cemetery of the Prague synagogue to rule the world, and that they used Freemasons as their unwitting tools, and that the only "reasonable solution" to this threat is a genocide of all Jews. "Are there some subjects too dark to be treated as intellectual games?," British journalist and historian Sinclair McKay asked in his review of Eco's book in *The Daily Telegraph*. McKay appreciated Eco's skill to "combine the most chilling of ideas—the origin of a hoax that led to genocide—with, elsewhere in the novel, an often funny lightness of touch" (McKay 2012). Yet, still, he did not answer the question he had posed. As a scholar of the wreckage represented by the death camps that arose from the odious fantasies explored in this chapter, I believe that the answer to McKay's question is a firm "Yes."

Today speculations about the alleged ties between Jews and Masons do not only provide the material for a bestseller like *The Prague Cemetery*, but also fill countless webpages. Few of the arguments move beyond the theories described above. Bedded in an ocean of counterknowledge that credits conspiracies for UFOs, the AIDS epidemic, satanic ritual abuse, the New World Order, 9/11 and countless other phenomena, the 'Jews and Masons' formula appears to have lost its former power to shape social and political agendas. Of course: antisemitism is alive and well, and in a modern variation of the old conspiracy theory there are many who postulate that the Mossad and American neocons planned and executed the destruction of the World Trade Center (Jaeger 2005). But within the antisemitic discourse itself such speculations belong to the margins. Today the central focus is the allegedly colonial nature and supposedly fascist policies of the State of Israel. In this 'new' antisemitism Freemasonry has not acquired a place—yet.

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