

How German nationalism between 1871 and 1890 restructured and fueled antisemitism.

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Abstract: This essay seeks to explain through textual analysis of speeches and writings of key antisemitic figures of the time, how German nationalists used antisemitism as a unifying force for citizens, who were disappointed with the lack of German cultural homogeneity in the wake of German unification in 1871. Taking a distinct turn from the religious prejudice suffered by many Jews in what became the German Empire, a new form of racialized antisemitism emerged and created a legacy of racialized hatred that was most commonly associated with the Third Reich.

Introduction

The 1870s witnessed a different and new kind of antisemitism, one that was racialized in its nature and took a distinct turn from the religious prejudice under which Jews had suffered so far in the German empire.¹ Modern antisemitism had, according to Hannah Arendt, “emerged with the birth of the modern nation-state.”² Indeed, as Klaus Holz wrote, “modern antisemitism constituted itself more than anything else through its association with nationalism.”³ Nationalism is a very contested idea, and its meanings and interpretations have varied over time. As Eric Hobsbawm summarizes it, nationalism is an idea that stresses the convergence of the state, the nation, and society.⁴ For Ernest Gellner, nationalism stresses the idea of a culturally unified state.⁵ This idea is seen most evidently in the evolution of German nationalism within Germany in the late 19th century. German nationalism evolved from a predominantly liberal movement into a xenophobic ideal after the failed 1848 revolutions.⁶ It is important to note, however, that the rise of nationalism in the late 19th century was not unique to Bismarck’s unified Germany. As Julie Thorpe highlights, German unification spurred greater debates about Pan-German nationalism outside Bismarck’s borders, such as in Austria-Hungary.⁷ Yet for the purposes of this essay, the German nationalistic goal, within the borders of an 1871 Germany, became one based on identity. Even after unification in 1871, Germans felt they lacked an identity and sought to construct one based on ethnic exclusion.⁸

This idea of ethnic exclusion and its relationship to nationalism is the subject of this essay; more specifically, the exclusion of the German Jews through the new form of antisemitism that was created. The term “antisemitism” today is simply a synonym for “Jew-hatred.”⁹ However, this essay will showcase its original meaning and why “antisemitism” is so specific in its racialized nature and how the German Nationalist movement helped motivate it. Whilst many associate racial antisemitism with the Third

¹ Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder, and the Building of the German Empire* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1977), 498.

² Hannah Arendt, *The Burden of our Time* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1951), 8, quoted in Shulamit Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23, no.1 (January 1978): 25, <https://doi.org/10.1093/leobaeck/23.1.25>.

³ Klaus Holz, *Nationaler Antisemitismus: Wissenssoziologie einer Weltanschauung* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), 12, quoted in Peter Pulszer, “Third Thoughts on German and Austrian Antisemitism,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 4, no.2 (July 2005):155, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725880500133293>.

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1983] 2012), 265, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107295636>.

⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, [1983] 2008), 132.

⁶ Peter Pulszer, “Third Thoughts on German and Austrian Antisemitism,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 4, no.2 (July 2005):154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725880500133293>.

David J. Wertheim, “German Jewry and the Development of the Jewish Question in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Oxford History of Modern German Theology, Volume 1: 1781-1848*, eds. Grant Kaplan and Kevin M. Sander Schel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 691, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198845768.003.0036>.

⁷ Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist state, 1933-38* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

⁸ Marcel Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation, and the Jews: liberalism and the antisemitism dispute in Bismarck's Germany* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 286.

⁹ Shulamit Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23, no.1 (January 1978): 39, <https://doi.org/10.1093/leobaeck/23.1.25>.

Reich, the foundations for such beliefs were created within Imperial Germany.¹⁰ This essay will look at the socio-economic conditions, specifically the economic crash of 1873, and subsequently argue that the ensuing German identity crisis laid the groundwork for this new form of antisemitism.¹¹ This context fueled new secular, racialized ideas that declared that Jewish Germans constituted a separate race, as opposed to a religion. Due to the secular nature of this antisemitism, this essay will go on to analyze the religious antisemitism that had persisted and now accompanied this new racial antisemitic movement. However, as will be evidenced, even this religious antisemitism became racialized in its movement. Through an analysis of the key antisemitic figures of this period and their writings and speeches, we can understand how the two ideologies of nationalism and antisemitism converged and mutually reinforced each other to create a unifying factor for Germans who craved an identity and a true nation-state.

The relationship between the 1873 economic crash and the German Jewry

Despite the physical unification of Germany in 1871, many Germans still felt a lack of unity.¹² Nationalism within Germany thus far had often been a local movement due to the reality of the German confederation prior to unification in 1871.¹³ Furthermore, due to the success of many of these individual German states, “regional patriotism” continued even after German unification.¹⁴ As Yehuda Cohen summarizes, “unification was more structural, the machinery of governance, than unification on a psychological or cultural level.”¹⁵ Yet, as Paul de Lagarde, an infamous German antisemite and scholar, said,

When people talk of the unity of Germany, they almost always think of the unity of political leadership; I contend that unity has to be understood as the unity of the governed. The former without the latter would be mere force; to demand the former when the latter prevails would be unnecessary, for it would come about by itself.¹⁶

¹⁰ Yfaat Weiss, “Identity and Essentialism: Race, Racism, and the Jews at the Fin de Siècle,” in *German History from the Margins*, eds. Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer, and Mark Roseman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 52.

¹¹ Harold James, *A German Identity: 1770 to the Present Day*. 2nd ed. (London: Phoenix, [1989] 1994), 103.

¹² Saul K. Padover, “Treitschke: Forerunner of Hitlerism,” *Pacific Historical Review* 4, no.2 (June 1935):161, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3633727>.

¹³ Christian Jansen, “The Formation of German Nationalism, 1740–1850,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 235, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199237395.002.0003>.

¹⁴ Nancy R. Reagin, “Recent Work on German National Identity: Regional? Imperial? Gendered? Imaginary?” review of *Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*, by Celia Applegate, review of *Music and German National Identity*, by Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, review of *The Nation as Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918*, by Alon Confino, review of *Körper der Nation: Habitusbildung und die Politik des Turnens, 1860-1890*, by Svenja Goltermann, review of *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth Century Germany*, by Abigail Green, review of *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916*, by Jean Quataert, review of *Denkmal im sozialen Raum: Nationale Symbole in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. Jahrhundert*, by Charlotte Tacke, review of *Political Poetry in Periodicals and the Shaping of German National Consciousness*, by Lorie A. Vanchena, *Central European History* 37, no.2 (2004): 281.

¹⁵ Yehuda Cohen, *The Germans: Absent Nationality and the Holocaust* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), 29.

¹⁶ Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 53.

Importantly, he said later in 1888 that despite German unification, “our life is more joyless than anyone can imagine.”¹⁷ Germans were evidently disappointed by Bismarck’s unification and felt a lack of cultural homogeneity, defined in this essay as a shared sense of identity. It was a “national and cultural crisis of identity,” according to Reinhard Rürup.¹⁸ Whilst this essay only covers the period from 1871-1890, it is important to note that even Hitler, decades later, “found it necessary to boast that his greatest achievement was the creation of a united-totalitarian- Reich.”¹⁹ It is clear how important it was for Germans to have a strong sense of unity. Marcel Stoetzler summarizes these ideas well by arguing that Germany was founded before developing “a strong national consciousness.”²⁰ It makes sense then that many German Nationalists then sought to discover it.

This disappointment in German unity was also compounded by the fact that Germany was dealing with a dramatic societal shift as a result of industrialization and urbanization, with many Germans yearning for a “pre-industrial past.”²¹ This meant many Germans began seeking a societal change in the 1870s, which was compounded in the 1890s, summarized by Shulamit Volkov who writes,

The unique German culture emerging in the 1890s was expressed in the “German ideology”; in a radical anti-modern mentality, rejecting liberalism, capitalism, socialism; in a nostalgic passion for a long-lost world. It implied a series of political views including an opposition to democracy and a call for the reestablishment of a national community of harmony and justice.²²

These ideas showcase a contradictory group of Germans who sought a new culturally unified Germany while simultaneously yearning for Germany’s pre-industrialized past that had existed prior to unification.

¹⁷ Anna de Lagarde, *Paul de Lagarde. Erinnerungen aus seinem Leben für die Freunde zusammengestellt* (Göttingen: W. F. Kaestner, 1894), 163, quoted in Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, [1961] 1974), 32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.5972996>.

¹⁸ Reinhard Rürup, *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus: Studien zur “Judenfrage” in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 123, quoted in Peter Pulzer, “Third Thoughts on German and Austrian Antisemitism,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 4, no.2 (July 2005):154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725880500133293>.

¹⁹ Padover, “Treitschke,” 161.

²⁰ Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation, and the Jews*, 288.

Peter Pulzer, *Jews and the German State* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, [1992] 2003), 30.

²¹ Stern, *Gold and Iron*, 498.

Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, [1961] 1974), <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.5972996>.

Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif, 1967), 164-179, quoted in Shulamit Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23, no.1 (January 1978): 30, <https://doi.org/10.1093/leobaek/23.1.25>.

²² Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code,” 31.

Antisemitism and pogroms were rife in times of economic uncertainty in Germany prior to 1871.²³ Therefore, when Germany experienced the stock market crash in 1873, due to the prevalence of German Jews within the financial industry, many sought to blame the disaster of the crash and the subsequent collapse of the German economy on them.²⁴ Indeed, the Jews “were widely portrayed as an excessive powerful minority that had financial control over the German host society.”²⁵ The issue was that the modern Jew was now a “symbol of the modern world,” as Norman Cohn wrote.²⁶ German Jews gained full emancipatory rights in 1871, and they took the opportunities associated with assimilation and emancipation more than any other minority group, becoming “disproportionately active” in industries and professions that provided an income and societal standing higher than the average German.²⁷ As Peter Gay writes, Jews “stationed themselves across the social, political, and stylistic map.”²⁸ Ironically, this was probably due to the Jewish assumption that the more a Jew acculturated to German society, the more likely they were to be accepted. Yet, as Rürup highlights, the more assimilated German Jews became, the more aggrieved German society was as a result.²⁹ For those who strove to turn against modernity and the supposed evils that accompanied it, the Jews were the easiest target. This can be seen most evidently with the antisemitism associated with Bismarck’s banker Bleichröder, a key target of this new virulent strain of antisemitism as he “embodied all that the socially aggrieved came to detest.”³⁰

These ideas were summarized well by Harold James who described this new emergence of antisemitism as resulting from, “an intellectual uncertainty in national identity; an increase in uncertainty when there are powerful fluctuations on housing, farming, money or stock markets; and a definition of national identity against an “enemy” associated with market operations.”³¹ The “enemy,” and reason for this uncertainty was found in German Jewry.³²

The relationship between German Jewry and nationalism

One of the most prominent figures in the German antisemitic and nationalist movement, who sought to relate the question of the German Jews to the question of nationalism and cultural unity, was Heinrich von Treitschke.³³ As a university professor,

²³ James, *A German Identity*, 101.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Matthew Lange, *Antisemitic Elements in the Critique of Capitalism in German Culture, 1850-1933* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 122.

²⁵ Alexander Jacob, “Introduction,” in *Political Ideas*, eds. Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Alexander Jacob (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, [1915] 2005), 6.

²⁶ Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 23–24, quoted in Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code,” 30.

²⁷ Geoffrey G. Field, review of *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Parties in Imperial Germany*, by Richard S. Levy, *Journal of Social History* 11, no.1 (Autumn 1977): 99.

Stern, *Gold and Iron*, 499.

²⁸ Peter Gay, “Encounter with Modernism: German Jews in German Culture, 1888-1914,” *Midstream* 21, no.2 (February 1975): 41

²⁹ Rürup, *Emancipation und Antisemitismus*, 82-84, quoted in Pulszer, “Third Thoughts on German and Austrian Antisemitism,” 100.

³⁰ Stern, *Gold and Iron*, 495.

³¹ James, *A German Identity*, 103.

³² *Ibid.*, 101

³³ Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code,” 42.

Treitschke had the social and “intellectual stature” required to formulate and popularize a new form of nationalism based on exclusionary, anti-Jewish factors.³⁴ Furthermore, for those seeking a “respectable argument” for antisemitism, Treitschke’s standing provided the intellectual validation they sought.³⁵ For Treitschke, the overwhelming success of Jews within Germany showcased a “lack of nationalism,” whereby Germany lacked its own culture, which in turn had allowed for the success of Jews.³⁶ In his infamous piece “Our Views,” published in the Prussian Yearbook in 1879, he declared,

The Jews in France and England have become a harmless and in many ways beneficial, element of civil society. That is in the last analysis the result of the energy and national pride of these two ancient culture-bearing peoples. Our culture is a young one. Our being still lacks a national style, an instinctive pride, a thoroughly imprinted character. That is why for so long we stood defenseless against alien essences. Now, however, we are at the point of acquiring those goods. We can only wish that our Jews recognize in time the transformation that is the logical consequence of the rise of the German state.³⁷

Treitschke here is pointing to the idea that Germany was “behind” its European counterparts in terms of nation-state building, thus it needed to “catch-up.”³⁸ It is clear from this writing that in Treitschke’s mind, France and England could accommodate the Jewish minority as they already possessed a strong sense of national culture and pride. Yet, Germany clearly did not. German Jews purportedly shared the unity and commonality that the Germans could not possess, whilst simultaneously subverting Germany’s attempt to gain it.³⁹ The Jews supposedly sapped the culture of those who surrounded them, seen most evidently in the work and writings of Richard Wagner who declared that Jews “have no authentic culture of their own.”⁴⁰ Lagarde, meanwhile, said that the Jews were “the carriers of decay and pollute every national culture.”⁴¹ In the eyes of German Nationalists in the new German state, it was clear the state could not thrive with such a parasitic presence within its society.

Therefore, the German nation-state was to be constructed by process of “othering,” defining minorities such as Jews as not real Germans.⁴² As has already been established, Germany desired cultural homogeneity, which invariably requires a degree

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Michael A. Meyer, “Great Debate on Antisemitism: Jewish Reaction to New Hostility in Germany 1879-1881,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 11, no.1 (January 1966):143, <https://doi.org/10.1093/leobaeck/11.1.137>.

³⁵ James, *A German Identity*, 101.

³⁶ Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation, and the Jews*, 47.

³⁷ Heinrich von Treitschke, “Unsere Aussichten,” in *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts*, trans. Richard S. Levy (Lexington, Mass. and Toronto: D.C. Heath Canada, 1991), 73.

³⁸ Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation, and the Jews*, 55.

³⁹ Stern, *The Politics*, 61.

⁴⁰ James Loeffler, “Richard Wagner’s “Jewish Music”: Antisemitism and Aesthetics in Modern Jewish Culture,” *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no.2 (Winter 2009): 2, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jss.2009.15.2.2>.

⁴¹ Paul de Lagarde, *Deutsche Schriften* (Mainz: Dieterich, 1892),41, quoted in Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, [1961] 1974), 61, <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.5972996>.

⁴² Reagin, “Recent Work on German National Identity: Regional? Imperial? Gendered? Imaginary?,” 286.

of exclusion unless a minority is willing to wholly assimilate.⁴³ Treitschke, for example, demanded the complete assimilation of Jews into Germany—which would in turn “strengthen national unity”—writing in “Our Views,” “[the Jews] they should become Germans. They should feel themselves, modestly and properly, Germans... For we do not want to see millennia of Germanic morality followed by an era of German-Jewish hybrid culture.”⁴⁴ As Donald L. Niewyk describes, “at the heart” of most of the early antisemitic attacks by the likes of Wagner, Treitschke, and Lagarde was the idea that the Jews had failed to “live up to their part of the bargain” of emancipation by amalgamating to German culture fully.⁴⁵ Yet, as has been mentioned, many Jews had already assimilated. Indeed, Marion Kaplan’s work “Refining Judaism in Imperial Germany” highlights how modern Judaism was reformed to better suit Germanic society, more specifically the German middle class.⁴⁶ She writes, “measured in lagging synagogue attendance or in rising rates of intermarriage or conversion, “Judaism” as a practice declined, especially in the cities.”⁴⁷ The cultural changes Jews attempted to make within this period, alongside their success within Germanic society, shows that Jews did assimilate, or at least showed an attempt to which, according to German Nationalists, led to the conclusion that the German Jew was to be despised if they were rich or poor, working or middle class.⁴⁸ Hence, whilst this demand for complete assimilation that many antisemites put forward may not have appeared “extreme,” it was an impossible task for German Jewry.⁴⁹ Therefore, the “racist position” many antisemites began to take was that Jews were physically “unable to assimilate.”⁵⁰ Thus, for the Jews that had technically assimilated, especially into the middle class, Germans had to find a new way to distinguish, as Jonathan Judaken refers to it, the now “evermore-indistinguishable Jewish Other.”⁵¹ This could only be achieved with a new construction of anti-Jewish hatred based on racism.⁵²

Racializing antisemitism

Racial antisemitism of this period was very specific because the idea of racial difference itself was not dangerous; rather, racial difference denoted a “shorthand to differences of cultural, religious, moral, and economic behavior.”⁵³ This was everything the new Germanic state did not want, and was, in turn, what the German Jew had been accused of by German Nationalists. Racial antisemitism was not a wholly new concept. There were many examples of scholars who wrote about Jewish racial theories in the latter half of the 19th century, such as Theodore Fritsch in 1881, who described theories that revolved around the idea that Jesus was an “Aryan.”⁵⁴ However, racial theory had, in

⁴³ Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation, and the Jews*, 286.

⁴⁴ Von Treitschke, “Unsere Aussichten,” 71.

⁴⁵ Donald L. Niewyk, “Solving the “Jewish Problem”: Continuity and Change in German Antisemitism, 1871–1945,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 35, no.1 (January 1990): 338.

⁴⁶ Marion Kaplan, “Redefining Judaism in Imperial Germany: Practices, Mentalities, and Community,” *Jewish Social Studies* 9, no.1 (Autumn 2002): 1–33.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁸ Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code,” 37.

⁴⁹ Meyer, “Great Debate on Antisemitism,” 145.

⁵⁰ Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation, and the Jews*, 286.

⁵¹ Jonathan Judaken, “Antisemitism and the Jewish Question,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 8: The Modern World, 1815-2000*, eds. Mitchell B. Hart and Tony Michels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 561, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139019828.021>.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation, and the Jews*, 303.

⁵⁴ Cohen, *The Germans*, 19.

fact, appeared throughout the first half of the 19th century, with works such as Count Arthur de Gobineau's essay that cited the "supremacy of the Nordic-Aryan race."⁵⁵ Indeed, as early as 1835, the Königsberg historian Friedrich Schubert, in his criticism of Jewish emancipation, declared that a Jew could never be a true "member of the German nation" because the Jews were "an Asiatic tribe."⁵⁶

The coining and proliferation of the term "antisemitism" was itself a direct product of the racialization of Jews in Europe. The man most associated with popularizing this term was Wilhelm Marr.⁵⁷ Marr, a German journalist, was another figure frustrated with the state of Germany in the 1870s.⁵⁸ The term "antisemitism" had been coined by the Austrian-Jewish scholar Moritz Steinschneider in 1860.⁵⁹ However, it was Marr that revolutionized the anti-Jewish movement by popularizing the term "*antisemitismus*," whereby it "far exceed[ed] its direct communicative value."⁶⁰ Indeed, as Richard Levy writes, "over the next fifteen years, variants of *anti-Semitism*, *anti-Semite*, and *anti-Semitic*, made their way out of the German-speaking world into nearly every European language."⁶¹ "Antisemitism" was more than a word. Even the very construction of the word- using "*ismus*"- meant it was viewed within the same discourse as words such as "liberalism" (*liberalismismus*) or "conservatism" (*konservatismus*), added more power, weight, and respect to the term.⁶² The most important thing to note about this new term is that it did not denote being anti-Jewish, a religious idea. Instead, it denoted an opposition to a race, the Semites.⁶³ As Judaken writes,

In this new era, the discourse of race replaced the earlier theological and then social distinctions between Christians and Jews with new scientific-sounding criteria based on blood and descent that could be easily welded onto an exclusionary nationalist, ethno-racial vision of "the people." The language of race was secular, scientific, and positivist. The invention of "Semite" as a category suggested objectivity and science, making Jewish qualities fixed and unchanging, from which neither conversion nor assimilation was possible.⁶⁴

⁵⁵ Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964), 49.

⁵⁶ Friedrich Schubert, *Handbuch der Allgemeinen Staatskunde in Europa* (Königsberg: Bornträger, 1835), 161-62, quoted in Till van Rahden, "Germans of the Jewish *Stamm*: Visions of Community between Nationalism and Particularism, 1850-1933," in *German History from the Margins*, eds. Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer, and Mark Roseman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 29.

⁵⁷ Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-semitism*, 49.

⁵⁸ Mosche Zimmerman, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Antisemitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 75.

⁵⁹ Armin Lange, "Jew-Hatred in Antiquity: Cultural, Legal, and Physical Forms of Antisemitic Persecution," in *Volume 3 Confronting Antisemitism Through the Ages: A Historical Perspective*, eds. Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Berlin: De Greuter, 2021), 44, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110671995>.

⁶⁰ Volkov, "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code," 38.

⁶¹ Richard S. Levy, "Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria, 1848-1914," in *Antisemitism: A History*, eds. Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 123.

⁶² Volkov, "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code," 39

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁴ Judaken, "Antisemitism and the Jewish Question," 568.

Marr wanted to make it very clear that his Jewish hatred was not religious in its nature, even writing “how nonsensical the religious aspect of this [Jewish] hatred was” in his infamous work “The Victory of Judaism over Germanism” in 1879.⁶⁵ He goes on to say that “from the very beginning it was not a religious war, it was a battle for survival against the foreign rule of Judaism, of whose character we only now have become clearly aware.”⁶⁶ Marr successfully connected the idea of racial difference to anti-Jewish hatred despite the clear similarities between this new racial hatred and the older theological anti-Jewish ideals.⁶⁷ As Volkov writes, “Semitism provided sufficient, though indirect indication of Marr’s real target, but it was also conveniently inaccurate, enabling him to infuse it with a meaning that transcended hatred of Jews yet elegantly became identical with it.”⁶⁸

Marr, who had three Jewish ex-wives, once believed in the concept of assimilation, albeit through intermarriage.⁶⁹ However, by the time of his published work in 1879, he had concluded that assimilation was impossible as Jews were “impelled to dominate others.”⁷⁰ For Marr, Jewishness was “an irreversible matter of heredity,” and in his eyes, a Jew could never win his favor.⁷¹ Therefore, “antisemitism” meant that no matter what, the Jew, on account of their inherent racial difference, would forever be a societal outcast. Furthermore, Marr’s antisemitic writing highlights the idea that in order for Germany to become a strong nation, it must rid itself of the parasitic presence of the Jews, writing that “Germanism did not possess sufficient spiritual endurance to protect itself from Judaization.”⁷² This idea alludes to Tretschke’s work, which talked of Jewish culture prevailing as a result of Germany’s lack of cultural unity.

Another figure to which we can attribute the success of racial antisemitism is Otto Glagau. Another German journalist, Glagau also sought to blame the economic crash on the German Jews.⁷³ In 1879, in a published pamphlet, he wrote against the dominance of “a foreign race,” writing “*Die soziale Frage ist die Judenfrage*,” translating to “The social question is the Jewish question.”⁷⁴ Whilst Marr supplied the name of “antisemitism,” Glagau provided the perfect slogan to accompany it, successfully distributing it through mass media and in turn, “permanently linking a specific view of social reality and a particular method in attempting to improve it with open and virulent opposition to Jews.”⁷⁵ Thus, antisemitism became, as Volkov calls it, a unifying “cultural code,” that signified one’s cultural identity and was “a way of communicating an acceptance of a particular set of ideas.”⁷⁶ “Antisemitism” became such a powerful statement that even the

⁶⁵ Wilhelm Marr, *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism*, trans. and ed. by Gerhard Rohringer. 8th ed (Bern: Rudolph Costenoble, 2009), 9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁷ Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code,” 39

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Niewyk, “Solving the “Jewish Problem,” 351.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Meyer, “Great Debate on Antisemitism,” 143.

⁷² Marr, *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism*, 14.

⁷³ Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-semitism*, 89.

⁷⁴ Otto Glagau, *Deutsches Handwerk und historisches Bürgertum* (Osnabrück: Verlag von Bernhard Wehberg, 1879), quoted in Shulamit Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23, no.1 (January 1978): 40, <https://doi.org/10.1093/leobaeck/23.1.25>.

⁷⁵ Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code,” 40.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

word “Jewish” seemingly lost all religious connotations.⁷⁷ Steven Aschheim talks of the “Jewification” of German society that many spoke of in this period, whereby the term “Jewish” just denoted something believed to be a degenerative force.⁷⁸

This new virulent racist antisemitism found its way into the speeches of many other prominent Germans of the time. Otto Böckel, a German politician, successfully “became the first antisemite in 1887 to win a seat in a Reichstag.”⁷⁹ He also declared the Jewish question to be racial, as opposed to a religious issue.⁸⁰ Böckel described the German Jews as “a tenacious, ancient race that is remote from our own and that cannot be disposed of through baptism or mixed marriages.”⁸¹ Böckel saw Jews and Germans as two mutually exclusive nations that couldn’t exist alongside one another.⁸² Once again, this points to the concept of an alien or parasitic presence of the Jews within German society and showcases the idea that assimilation was no longer a viable option. Whilst antisemitism was not necessarily a winning idea for many politicians at the time, Böckel’s success shows how these new racial ideas were not left to the fringes of society; they penetrated all areas of life. Antisemitism had transformed the age-old religious anti-Jewish hatred into a “symbolic” and respectable movement that sought to unify Germans.⁸³

Religious antisemitism

In Volkov’s study on the lineage of antisemitism, she is keen to separate this new racial antisemitism from the more religious anti-Jewish hatred of Germany’s past, emphasizing the secular nature of this new racial variant of antisemitism.⁸⁴ This makes sense considering the work of Marr; yet, despite the existence of this new racial antisemitism, there still existed an anti-Jewish nationalist movement that was more religious in nature.⁸⁵

Therefore, the debate within the historiography surrounds whether or not this religious anti-Jewish hatred was a distinct entity or if it was also influenced by these racial ideas. Indeed, Peter Pulzer, according to Jeremy Telman, either “categorise[s] antisemites as either Christian-Conservative or racist.”⁸⁶ Uriel Tal, in agreement with Puzler, argues that the Christian anti-Jewish movement “pervaded German intellectual circles until the late 1880s and helped prepare the way for the more virulent racial

⁷⁷ David J. Wertheim, “German Jewry and the Development of the Jewish Question in the Nineteenth Century,” 696.

⁷⁸ Steven E. Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe: German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and Other Crises* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 66.

⁷⁹ Lange, *Antisemitic Elements*, 139.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁸¹ Otto Böckel, *Die Juden - die Könige unserer Zeit*. 7th ed. (Berlin: Böckel, 1887), 7, quoted in Donald L. Niewyk, “Solving the “Jewish Problem”: Continuity and Change in German Antisemitism, 1871–1945,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 35, no.1 (January 1990): 354, <https://doi.org/10.1093/leobaeck/35.1.335>.

⁸² Niewyk, “Solving the “Jewish Problem,” 354.

⁸³ Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code,” 39.

⁸⁴ Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code.”

⁸⁵ Todd H. Weir, “The Specter of “Godless Jewry”: Secularism and the “Jewish Question” in Late Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *Central European History*, 46, no. 4 (December 2013), 823.

⁸⁶ Jeremy Telman, “Adolf Stoecker: Anti-Semite with a Christian Mission,” *Jewish History* 9, no.2 (September 1995): 94.

strains which appeared in the next decade.”⁸⁷ Whilst these positions emphasize the continuing existence of a religious anti-Jewish hatred, they fail to connect the racial aspect to these movements. Indeed, as Telman argues, these positions are “misleading” as they create a “false teleology” of the creation of this new form of antisemitism.⁸⁸ This “racial variant of antisemitism” also found its way into the religious side of the antisemitic movement.⁸⁹ In short, each antisemitic movement of this period, even the religious, was racial in its nature. The religious and anti-religious antisemitic movements were distinct. However, they both helped to unite disparate groups of Germans with a common negative view of the German Jew.

These concurrently religious and racial ideas can be found in the work of Treitschke, who wrote, “[Christianity was] tightly interwoven... with all fibers of the German people.”⁹⁰ He goes on to say in the same publication that the “Jewish question [would not subside] until our Israelite citizens learn through our stance that we are and want to remain a Christian people.”⁹¹ Jews were viewed as secular and atheist, thus ruining the Protestant nature of Germany. This religious anti-Jewish movement placed more emphasis on the Christian nature of Germany, as opposed to the religious differences found in Judaism.⁹² This inadvertently stresses the racial nature of the religious movement. In answer to those who questioned the role of Catholics within this idealized (Protestant) German state, Treitschke determined that there was far more difference between a Jew and a Christian than there was between a Catholic and a Protestant.⁹³ This just highlights how there were a plethora of excuses for German Nationalists like Treitschke as to why German Jews were outsiders.

The most important figure to study, however, in order to analyze the religious movement and its relationship to the new racial antisemitism and nationalism is Adolf Stoecker.⁹⁴ The founder of the Christian-Social Party in 1878 and the court chaplain to Kaiser Wilhelm I, Stoecker is a key figure in the German antisemitic movement, considering that the “Jewish question” was a large factor in his political thoughts and speeches.⁹⁵ For Stoecker, Protestantism formed part of the foundation of the German state and supposedly was “the basis of its greatness.”⁹⁶ Thus, Stoecker believed that Germany could only truly unify once it had accepted its Christian nature.⁹⁷ There is still

⁸⁷ Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics, and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870-1914*. Translated by Noah J. Jacobs (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), 280, 300, quoted in Michael R. Marrus. “European Jewry and the Politics of Assimilation: Assessment and Reassessment.” *The Journal of Modern History* 49, no.1 (March 1977): 104, <https://doi.org/10.1086/241541>.

⁸⁸ Telman, “Adolf Stoecker,” 94

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Heinrich von Treitschke, “Noch einige Bemerkungen zur Judenfrage,” in *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*. Trans and ed. Walter Boehlich (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1965), 88, quoted in Todd H. Weir, “The Specter of “Godless Jewry”: Secularism and the “Jewish Question” in Late Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *Central European History* 46, no.4 (December 2013): 827, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938913001295>.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Weir, “The Specter of “Godless Jewry,” 825-826.

⁹³ Meyer, “Great Debate on Antisemitism,” 148.

⁹⁴ Lodewijk Kater, “Either Mammon or the Messiah? The Christian-Social tradition in the Netherlands and Germany on the Jewish Question, 1875-1914,” *Trajecta* 28, no.1 (May 2019): 33.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹⁶ John C. Fout, “Adolf Stoecker’s Rationale for Anti-Semitism,” *Journal of Church and State* 17, no.1 (January 1975): 51.

⁹⁷ Kater, “Either Mammon or the Messiah?” 33.

discourse within historiography pertaining to Stoecker's racial nature, and Fout's work on Stoecker even seeks to remove him from the racial antisemitic discourse, by claiming that Stoecker's "position was somewhat set apart from the majority of his contemporaries who were far more violent in their attacks and their solutions."⁹⁸ Nevertheless, through an analysis of Stoecker's writing, we can clearly see how this religious movement also racialized (and in turn was racist against) Jewish difference.⁹⁹

A consistent idea that reappears throughout Stoecker's work and speeches is the idea of "reform" and "orthodox" Judaism, whereby he affirms that he has no issue with Orthodox Jews, just the new modern Jews that have no religious basis.¹⁰⁰ In his infamous speech "Our Demands on Modern Jewry" from 1879, he declares,

In fact, I see modern Jewry as a great danger to German national life. [By "modern Jewry"] I do not mean the religion of the Orthodox or the enlightenment of the Reformers... they hold no attraction for the children of the nineteenth century and pose no dangers. In its deepest core it is a dead religious form, a lower stage of revelation, a spirit that has outlived itself and, although still worthy of honour, has been invalidated by Christianity. It has no more truth for the present. Reform Judaism has even less religious significance. It is neither Judaism nor Christianity but a shabby little survival of the Age of Enlightenment.¹⁰¹

This distinction adds a subtle racialized element to his words, emphasizing the non-religious aspect of the reformed modern Jewry. It is also interesting to note that in the same speech, Stoecker calls on the Jews to be "more modest," calling on them to "live on the same economic level as their countrymen."¹⁰² This not only highlights the fact that antisemitism and anti-capitalism are "inextricably intertwined" but that all these anti-Jewish nationalist movements, the socio-economic, racist, and religious, are intertwined.¹⁰³

One does not have to look too far to find more of Stoecker's outwardly racialized speeches, where it is clear that his religious ideas have been influenced by the new racist antisemitic movement. In one speech, Stoecker declared,

Race is... an important element in the Jewish question. The Semitic-Punic type is, in all areas... so different from Germanic morals and philosophy of life, that reconciliation or amalgamation is impossible, unless it take the form of a sincere rebirth from the depths of the consciences of upright Israelites.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Fout, "Adolf Stoecker's Rationale," 60-61.

⁹⁹ Telman, "Adolf Stoecker," 94.

¹⁰⁰ Fout, "Adolf Stoecker's Rationale," 52.

¹⁰¹ Adolf Stoecker, "Unsere Forderungen an das modern Judentum," in *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Richard S. Levy (Lexington, Mass. and Toronto: D.C. Heath Canada, 1991), 60.

¹⁰² Telman, "Adolf Stoecker," 102.

¹⁰³ Stern, *Gold and Iron*, 523.

¹⁰⁴ Adolf Stoecker, *Reden und Aufsätze*, ed. Reinhold Seeberg (Leipzig: A.Deichertsche Verlag, 1913), 143-144, quoted in Jeremy Telman, "Adolf Stoecker: Anti-Semite with a Christian Mission," *Jewish History* 9, no. 2 (September 1995): 96, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01668991>.

It is clear that whilst Stoecker was determined to unite Germans through the Christian faith, this could only be done through the exclusion of the “other”: the German Jews. Within this speech, Stoecker says that “the Jewish question is not solely a racial question” according to Telman.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Stoecker’s work is vital to emphasize the linkage between the racial antisemitic movement and the religious movement, and how even this religious movement was racialized in its nature.

Conclusion

One cannot analyze the antisemitism of this period without, as Telman puts it, having “an eye to its similarities to and differences from the antisemitism of the Third Reich.”¹⁰⁶ The Nazi ideas of race and biology clearly have their similarities to the ideas founded in the late 19th century Germany.¹⁰⁷ Some historians see a direct linkage, such as Pulzer, Paul Massing, and Lars Fischer who claimed that the Holocaust was only possible because these antisemitic ideas had already “saturated” Wilhelmine society.¹⁰⁸ Despite being successful within society during this period in time, antisemitism did not truly enter the political sphere, as after 1890, many of the antisemitic parties that had seen success in the Reichstag dwindled in power, and even prior to this, their success was “limited.”¹⁰⁹ Yet, many parties, such as the Conservative Party, began to adopt an antisemitic rhetoric.¹¹⁰ Therefore, antisemitism had been made, by the likes of Marr, Stoecker, and Treitschke, “respectable” and even “fashionable,” even if it never truly entered mass party politics within this period.¹¹¹ It is clear that there are linkages between the antisemitism of Imperial Germany and the Third Reich, but it is also important to treat this movement as “an autonomous topic” that is “present in the context of its time.”¹¹²

According to German Nationalists, antisemitism was the answer to the disunity following German unification. Looking at the context that was a distressed and flailing Germanic society that had never truly felt unified, in combination with economic hardships that had brought out an older, more well-known hatred for Jews, we can see how antisemitism thrived in this period. As James writes, “The 1870s were the first instance in which this matrix of forces and calculations operated.”¹¹³ These factors, in combination with prominent, intellectual figures who were willing to put a name and answer to German’s misery and disappointment, meant it came to be that if one believed

¹⁰⁵ Telman, “Adolf Stoecker,” 109.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁰⁷ Varshizky, “The Metaphysics of Race,” 255.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Massing, *Rehearsal for Destruction: A Study of Political Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany* (New York: Harpers & Brothers, 1949), <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.177835/page/n5/mode/2up>.

Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism*.

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¹⁰⁹ Oded Heilbronner, “From Antisemitic Peripheries to Antisemitic Centres: The Place of Antisemitism in Modern German History,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 4 (October 2000): 569.

¹¹⁰ Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism*, 126.

Michael R. Marrus, “European Jewry and the Politics of Assimilation: Assessment and Reassessment,” *The Journal of Modern History* 49, no.1 (March 1977): 103.

¹¹¹ Niewyk, “Solving the “Jewish Problem,” 369.

¹¹² Pulzer, “Third Thoughts,” 167.

¹¹³ James, *A German Identity*, 103.

in German nationalism, they also believed in antisemitism.¹¹⁴ A hatred for the Jews was finally the powerful force that could unite Germany. Thus, whilst it is still debatable how much we can link this movement to Nazi Germany, the movement was a powerful force in and of itself. Part of Germany's nationalist identity was built on a foundation of racialized hatred.

¹¹⁴ Volkov, "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code," 45.

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