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Reactive Anti-Semitism in the Medieval Period

It seems to me, Jew, that I . . . dare not declare that you are human lest perchance I lie, because I recognize that reason, that which distinguishes human beings from . . . beasts, is extinct in you or in any case buried. . . . Truly, why are you not called brute animals? Why not beasts? Why not beasts of burden? . . . The ass hears but does not understand; the Jew hears but does not understand. (Peter the Venerable, 12th-century Abbot of Cluny; in Schwietzer 1994, 136)

The anti-Semitic overtones of Western Christianity continued in later centuries. Nevertheless, I am not implying that anti-Semitism continued to be an essential feature of Christianity during later periods. The forces that resulted in the institutionalization of Christianity as an anti-Semitic movement in the 4th and 5th centuries need not have had so prominent a role, or indeed any role at all, in later periods when the power of the Christian Church contracted and expanded.

After a lull following the collapse of the Western Empire, medieval Christian anti-Semitism experienced a major revival in the 12th and especially the 13th centuries (Cohen 1994, 144). Throughout the medieval period, the Church “remained effective guardians of the principle that the Jews must be kept in a position of servitude” (Parkes 1976, 108). The medieval Church often worked vigorously to exclude Jews from economic and political influence and to prevent social intercourse between Christians and Jews. The Church was also instrumental in the expulsions of Jews from England, France, and Spain (see below and *PTSDA*, Ch. 8). In Germany up until the 19th century, Jews were regularly excluded from Church lands but regularly admitted to secular lands, where they were utilized as a source of income for the feudal lord (Harris 1994, 15). The Church often sided with popular sentiment by combating the repeated tendencies of rulers to favor the Jews for their own ends, especially with regard to Jewish moneylending.

The traditional church policy, originated by St. Augustine, was that Jews should be tolerated in a subservient, powerless role because of their usefulness as testimony to the truth of Christianity. However, Cohen (1982) argues that during this period the traditional Christian ideology of Judaism was replaced by an ideology that present-day Jews were not the same as biblical Jews. Particularly in the 13th century, under the influence of the orders of mendicant friars (Dominicans and Franciscans), the view developed that because the Talmud, and not the Bible, had become the basic Jewish religious text, Jews were no longer to be seen as a fossilized testimony to the truth of Christianity but rather as a heretical departure from biblical religion, with no legitimate role to play in Christian society (Cohen 1982, *passim*; Cohen 1994, 144).¹ Just as during Chrysostom's time, when there was a shift from viewing Jews as harmless practitioners of the occult etc., to viewing them as evil incarnate and killers of Christ, there was now a shift to a new ideology in which Jews were portrayed in a more malevolent light.

This ideological shift coincided with an active campaign against Judaism. "The friars encroached upon the actual practice of Jewish life, forcibly entering synagogues and subjecting Jews to offensive harangues, participation in debates whose outcomes were predetermined, and the violence of the mob. The intent of the friars was obvious: to eliminate the Jewish presence in Christendom—both by inducing the Jews to convert and by destroying all remnants of Judaism even after no Jews remained" (Cohen 1982, 97). A contemporary Jewish writer stated that the Franciscans and Dominicans "are everywhere oppressing Israel. . . . [T]hey are more wretched than all mankind" (in Cohen 1982, 13).

It was a period when Christians raised walls of separatism formerly erected only by Jews. Laws mandating the wearing of distinctive Jewish clothing were originally enacted by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Interestingly, the principle and often-reiterated reason given for these regulations was to prevent sexual contact between Christians and Jews [see Grayzel 1933, 62]. "Few initiatives were so avidly welcomed by secular rulers and provincial councils outside of Italy as this canon. The Jewish badge was imitated at 'Populist' provincial councils throughout Europe with unrivaled enthusiasm" (Pakter 1992, 293). Although they were only sporadically enforced, these laws persisted in Italy from the medieval to the early modern period (Davidson (1987). In the late 16th century in Rome, Jews were prohibited from having sex with Christian prostitutes on penalty of ten years in the galleys, and Jews were prohibited from hiring Christian servants. The possibility of intermarriage was apparently not an issue—the Christians were "disturbed by the thought of any sexual union between Christians and Jews" (Davidson 1987, 33). These laws reflect a deep concern with Jewish dominance over Christian females.

There is evidence that resource competition exacerbated the anti-Semitism of the period. Jews were expanding demographically in Western Europe during the 11th–13th centuries, with the rate of increase being particularly high during the 12th century (Baron 1965, 148; Chazan 1987, 201; Cohen 1982, 15). This was

also the period when Jewish economic and cultural prosperity in medieval Europe was at its peak (Cohen 1982, 15).

The rise of the Jews eventually brought them into a clash with Christians, especially in the 13th century (Gilchrist 1969, 71–72). The friars, who spearheaded the 13th-century Christian reform movement as well as the anti-Semitism of the period, came mainly from the newly created urban middle and upper-middle classes (Lawrence 1994). These classes viewed the Jews as a competitive threat: “By the thirteenth century, the Jews of Europe were engaged almost exclusively in commercial activities, especially the lending of money; their success and influence in the marketplace set them among the chief competitors of the new Christian bourgeoisie” (Cohen 1982, 43).

Resource competition appears to have been involved, at least to some extent, in the anti-Semitic pogroms of 1096 in Germany. Chazan (1987, 17) notes that Jewish society in Northern Europe underwent a demographic and economic upsurge during this period, in concert with increasing urbanization and economic growth in the gentile society. The Jewish specialization in trade and commerce resulted in hostility among the Christian burghers; and in the disorder and religious fervor stimulated by the First Crusade, many burghers participated in the destruction of Jewish communities. Some Jewish communities were enclosed in walls to protect them from the urban mob, and contemporary Jewish writers refer to the hostility of many (but not all) burghers.

The Church was at the apogee of its power over secular affairs during the 13th century, and an important aspect of the economic policy of the Church was to remove Jews from the economic life of Christendom. “It was not sheer accident” (Cohen 1982, 41) that both the Dominicans and the Franciscans developed a Christian theology of commerce and trade or that St. Francis was often described as the patron saint of merchants.² Jordan (1989, 27) describes the efforts of the Church to remove Jews from the economic life of France in the 12th through the 14th centuries as an aspect of its program to develop a corporate Christian economic community by pushing Jews out of occupations and professions they formerly engaged in. Similarly, in England the Christianization of national life excluded Jews from public administration, trade, and agriculture (Rabinowitz 1938, 37). Christian merchants also were instrumental in the expulsion of the Jews from France and England as a means of removing a source of competition (Jordan 1989, 182).

King Louis IX of France (Saint Louis), who lived like a monk though one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in Europe, was a particularly zealous warrior in carrying out the Church’s economic and political programs. Louis attempted to develop a corporate, hegemonic Christian entity in which social divisions within the Christian population were minimized in the interests of group harmony. Consistent with this group-oriented perspective, Louis appears to have been genuinely concerned about the effect of Jewish moneylending on society as a whole, rather than its possible benefit to the crown—a major departure from the many ruling elites throughout history who have utilized Jews as a

means of extracting resources from their subjects. An ordinance of 1254 prohibited Jews from engaging in moneylending at interest and encouraged them to live by manual labor or trade. Louis also ordered that interest payments be confiscated, and he took similar action against Christian moneylenders (see Richard 1992, 162). Although there is no question that Louis evaluated the Jews negatively as an outgroup (as indicated, e.g., by his views that the Talmud was blasphemous, and by his “habitual reference to the Jews’ ‘poison’ and ‘filth’” [Schweitzer 1994, 150]), Louis was clearly most concerned about Jewish behavior perceived as exploitative rather than simply excluding Jews altogether because of their outgroup status. A contemporary biographer of Louis, William of Chartres, quotes him as determined “that [the Jews] may not oppress Christians through usury and that they not be permitted, under the shelter of my protection, to engage in such pursuits and to infect my land with their poison” (in Chazan 1973, 103). Louis therefore viewed the prevention of Jewish economic relations with Christians not as a political or economic problem but as a moral and religious obligation. Since the Jews were present in France at his discretion, it was his responsibility to prevent the Jews from exploiting his Christian subjects. Edward I of England, who expelled the Jews in 1290, appears to have held similar views on royal responsibility for the well-being of his subjects (Stow 1992, 228–229).

There was also great resolve during the period that Jews not dominate Christians in any way. Pope Innocent III, who summoned the Fourth Lateran Council and was perhaps the most powerful pope in history, exhibited a strong concern over Jewish economic domination, as indicated by his condemnation of Jewish usury and his exhortations to secular rulers not to allow Jews to economically exploit Christians. Constitution 67 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) expresses the idea of Christian-group economic interests vis-à-vis Jews:

The more Christians are restrained from the practice of usury, the more are they oppressed in this manner by the treachery of the Jews, so that in a short time they exhaust the treasures of the Christians. Wishing, therefore, in this matter to protect the Christians against cruel oppression by the Jews, we ordain in this decree that if in future, under any pretext, Jews extort from Christians oppressive and excessive interest, the society of Christians shall be denied them until they have made suitable satisfaction for their excesses. . . . We command the princes not to be hostile to the Christians on this account, but rather to try to stop the Jews from practising such excesses. Lastly, we decree that the Jews be compelled by the same penalty to compensate churches for the tithes and offerings owing to them, which the Christians were accustomed to supply from their houses and other properties before they fell into the hands of the Jews under some title or other. (In Gilchrist 1969, 182–183)

Innocent was also concerned with Jewish sexual domination over Christian females, as shown by his condemning the practice of Jews employing Christian wet nurses because of “abuses too shameful to specify” (in Synan 1965, 94). Innocent ordered that synagogues not be built higher than churches and that Jewish cantors not sing in such a way that they could be heard in a nearby

church. He condemned one-way sales, in which Jews kept products they valued (e.g., ritually produced wine or ritually slaughtered meat) and sold the residue to Christians while refusing to purchase such items from Christians (Synan 1965, 96). Particularly loathsome to Innocent was the possibility that wine rejected by Jews as not meeting their ritual requirements would be used in Christian religious ceremonies.

Medieval Christian anti-Semitism was a concomitant of the highly collectivist and exclusionary medieval Christian society—another example of Western collectivism with powerful overtones of anti-Semitism. Thirteenth-century Western Christianity was, ideally at least, a *societas christiana*: “All of society came to be viewed as an organic unity, whose *raison d’être* consisted of striving for and ultimately realizing the perfect unity of Christ on earth.” (Cohen 1982, 248). Christianity had become “a single social organism” (Lawrence 1992, 157)—unified under the pope, substantially independent of secular power, and with a high level of religious enthusiasm and commitment at all levels of society. The group, not the individual was paramount, and every aspect of behavior was evaluated according to its effect on the harmonious organic whole. Indeed, Cohen (1982, 264) points out that many of the friars who developed the new, negatively-toned theological conceptualization of Judaism also had well-developed anti-individualist views, in which people were to strive for the benefit of the entire society. Also, as discussed in Chapter 5, this collectivist trend was accompanied by high levels of reproductive altruism by the leaders of the movement, including especially the mendicant friars, who, despite their origins among the affluent classes, adopted a monastic lifestyle of asceticism and celibacy.

The result was that prior to the expulsions, medieval Western societies were characterized by two mirror-image collectivist groups that were often, perhaps inevitably, in conflict. Chazan (1987, 193) notes that the Jewish martyrs of 1096 had a “counter-crusade mentality” that was “a mirror image of many of the themes of crusading martyrdom: the sense of cosmic confrontation, the conviction of the absolute validity of one’s own religious heritage, the emphasis on profound self-sacrifice, the certainty of eternal reward for the commitment of the martyrs, the unshakable belief in the ultimate victory and vindication of one’s own community and its religious vision.”

The extent to which medieval Western collectivism was a consequence of group conflict with Jews remains an open question. There were certainly other factors involved, including political processes internal to the Church. The religious fervor ignited by the Crusades, beginning at the end of the 11th century, was directed at conquering Jerusalem for Christianity; in this case the Muslims provided the role of a hated outgroup that functioned to rally Christian group commitment. Indeed, during the German pogroms of 1096 the hatred toward the infidel Muslims spilled over to hatred for Jews, since a common rationale for the pogrom among the Crusaders was as follows, in the words of a Jewish source:

There arose . . . that awful nation . . . French and Germans, and set their hearts on going to the Holy City. To seek the grave of their disgrace[d one] and to expel the Ishmaelites . . . They put a foul sign on their clothing, a woof and weave . . . until they were like a throng of locusts, men, women, and children. When they passed the cities where Jews dwelled, they said: Behold, we are going far away, to take our vengeance on the Ishmaelites. The Jews live among us, whose fathers unwarrantedly slew and hanged him on the cross. First, we will take our vengeance on them, and blot them out. The memory of Israel will no longer exist. Otherwise, let them be like us and confess the son of treachery. (In Stow 1992, 102–103)

Such passages are an excellent illustration of the powerful anti-Semitic potential of Christian ideology. The point here is not to propose that conflict with Jews caused medieval corporate Catholicism or even to propose that social identity processes combined with Christian ideology are a sufficient explanation of the actions of the Crusaders. Rather, the proposal is only that the development of medieval corporate Catholicism contributed greatly to the anti-Semitism of the period, because the intense level of group commitment and group identification among Christians inevitably resulted in the Jews being perceived as a negatively evaluated outgroup. Social identity processes resulting in negative perceptions of Jews as an outgroup were also undoubtedly heightened by resource competition between Jews and the emerging Christian middle classes combined with an increase in the Jewish population.

Chazan (1987, 213) makes the fascinating point that the intensity of Jewish commitment in the face of the hostility of the Crusaders and burghers in 1096 may have provoked disgust and horror among the Christians as well as contributed to their belief that Jews had a great deal of animosity toward Christianity. Jewish behavior in this instance was truly remarkable. Jews readily accepted death and even slaughtered each other rather than accept conversion to Christianity (see p. 20).³ The Christian commentator Albert of Aix emphasized the barbarity of Jewish behavior undertaken to avoid conversion, and Chazan comments that “Jewish rejection of Christianity [as seen by this behavior] is seen as a sentiment, which, by its intensity, leads to the shattering of normal moral and ethical constraints. One might easily hypothesize a connection between the 1096 reality of Jewish parents willing to take the lives of their own children rather than submit to conversion and the subsequent image of Jews capable of taking the lives of Christian youngsters out of implacable hostility to the Christian faith” (p. 213)—i.e., the blood libel that was such a common accusation during the Middle Ages. Such individuals are obviously completely beyond all possibility of assimilation, whether as a result of rational attempts at persuasion, positive inducements such as financial rewards, or the threat of torture and death.

The intensity of ingroup commitment and perceived hostility toward the outgroup among Jews is matched by a mirror-image level of ingroup commitment and outgroup hostility among the Christians. Jewish religious fanaticism in

medieval Germany can also be seen in the exclusivist, hyper-collectivist, and hyper-observant behavior of the Jewish Pietists (*Hasidim Ashkenaz*) beginning in the late 12th century, and in the eventual incorporation of many of their practices into mainstream Ashkenazic Judaism (see Marcus 1981). Indeed, Chazan (1989, 181) suggests that the obstinacy of the Jews during the 13th century in the face of intensive Christian efforts to convert them—including highly sophisticated intellectual attempts ranging over the entire corpus of Christian and Jewish religious writings, scholastic philosophical treatises, public disputations with learned Jews, and forced sermonizing—all contributed to a deepening of negative perceptions of Jews.

Unlike in late Roman Christianity, the result of this medieval Christian collectivism was often expulsion—perhaps an implicit recognition that St. Augustine's concept of a subservient, powerless Judaism living within the Christian world had been a failure, especially so in an era when Western Europe was beginning to develop an urban-centered mercantile and capitalist economy (see Gilchrist 1969) that was ideally suited to Judaism as a group strategy. Indeed, one might note that a policy of Jewish subservience could not be made to work without continually monitoring Jewish economic and political activity and developing and enforcing laws or other social practices to ensure that Jews remained subservient. Such a policy of Jewish/gentile coexistence in a dominant-subordinate relationship, in which the economic and reproductive status of the subordinate Jewish group is closely regulated, has in fact been pursued successfully over long periods of time in historical societies, particularly in the Moslem world (see Chapter 2). However, this type of policy conflicts radically with the medieval conception of a unified corporate Christian state and is bound to engender chronic ethnic conflict in any society.

REACTIVE RACISM IN THE PERIOD OF THE IBERIAN INQUISITIONS

I here develop the view that the Spanish Inquisition was fundamentally an authoritarian, collectivist, and exclusionary movement that resulted from resource and reproductive competition with Jews, and particularly crypto-Jews posing as Christians. In Spain, after the forced conversions of 1391 and a further spate of conversions early in the 15th century, the converts and their descendants (termed New Christians, Conversos, or Marranos) quickly became a dominant force in the areas of law, finance, diplomacy, all levels of public administration, and a wide range of economic activity (see *PTSDA*, Ch. 5). Wealthy Conversos purchased and endowed ecclesiastical benefices for their children, with the result that many prelates were of Jewish descent. High-level New Christian officeholders (such as Fernán Díaz, secretary to King Juan II) appointed New Christians at lower levels of the government bureaucracy (Netanyahu 1995, 962). The question of the exact group status of these New

Christians continues to be controversial, but my view is that they must be considered a historical Jewish group (see Chapters 6 and 7).

During the 15th century the New Christians were utilized by the ruling gentile elite in a very traditional manner, as a highly competent intermediary group between themselves and the great mass of gentile Christians. Alvaro de Luna, Juan II's chief minister, advanced the fortunes of both Jews and New Christians as a force loyal to the monarchy in its struggles with the nobility and in preference to the gentile urban aristocracy (Netanyahu 1995, 217ff). Little had changed except surface religion: "Many of these New Christians retained the economic roles they had filled as Jews. Petty merchants, artisans, tax farmers, they remained in the same communities, practiced endogamy, and lived in the same houses and settings as had the Jews" (Freund & Ruiz 1994, 177). However, the New Christians were even more valuable than Jews, because they were, at least nominally, Christians, so that their activities, such as tax farming, assumed a sort of theoretical legitimacy that was lacking when Jews performed these functions (Netanyahu 1995, 217ff).

Baroja (1966, 101) notes that "as a counteragent to this penetration, sodalities, schools, convents, etc. began to be founded, from which the descendants of condemned apostates, or even 'new Christians' without further qualification, were excluded." In other words, the response of the Spaniards was to adopt a group strategy or series of group strategies by creating a sort of parallel universe of institutions from which Jews would be excluded. The Old Christians established a wide range of professional societies, guilds, religious and military orders, and cathedrals whose membership qualifications involved proof of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood). A major function of the Inquisition was to enforce the *limpieza* statutes and to scrutinize the genetic ancestry of the individuals brought within its purview.

Concern with *limpieza* developed in mid-15th-century Spain coincident with the development of crypto-Judaism. Following the suppression by the Church of a law directed at preventing the New Christians from holding office, there was a growth of brotherhoods that rigorously excluded the New Christians and engaged in political activity directed against them. Eventually, in the period of the Inquisition, a variety of legal disabilities were directed at the New Christians and their biological descendants.⁴ Gradually, by the mid-16th century "the avenues of distinction, and even of livelihood, in public life and in the Church, were rapidly closing to all who bore the fatal *mancha* or stain" (Lea 1906–1907, II, 290). The need for such restrictions was typically justified on the basis that the New Christians formed factions within institutions with the intention of controlling them and ultimately reintroducing Judaism. There was often the implication that Jews had superior intelligence and ability. The perception that Jews posing as New Christians were continuing to engage in a group strategy was thus met with a mirror-image exclusionary group strategy on the part of the Old Christians.

The ensuing years saw an increase in “overt racialism in Spanish society” (Haliczer 1987) in which *limpieza*, rather than surface religion, became the focus of anti-Semitic actions.⁵ Although there was some variety in the number of generations without Jewish ancestry required to prove *limpieza*, the laws regulating access to the better colleges, the Church, and the military prohibited any Jewish ancestry, however remote (Kamen 1985). Purity of blood was a mark of honor at least until the 19th century, and throughout this period and sometimes longer the churches continually restored or replaced the *sambenitos* (i.e., banners displayed in churches that identified those punished by the Inquisition) and the lists of those punished by the Inquisition (Baroja 1966, 104). The *limpieza* laws were repealed completely only in the 1860s.

It is of some interest that the Inquisition’s concern with *limpieza* was a reaction to prior Jewish concerns with racial purity. Castro (1954, 1971; see also *PTSDA*, Ch. 4) finds that Jewish racialism long preceded the Spanish concern for *limpieza* characteristic of the Inquisition period; a similar concern with purity of blood would not have occurred among the Christians during the 13th or 14th centuries. “The people who really felt the scruple of purity of blood were the Spanish Jews” (Castro 1954, 525). “The historical reality becomes intelligible to us only when seen to be possessed of both extremes: the exclusivism of Catholic Spain was a reply to the hermeticism of the *aljamas* [Jewish communities]. . . . [P]urity of blood was the answer of a society animated by anti-Jewish fury to the racial hermeticism of the Jew” (p. 531).⁶ The concern with lineage on the part of the Inquisition was thus a mirror image of previously existing Jewish concerns.

Marriages of Jews into the Christian nobility via dowry payments had occurred without comment up to the end of the 14th century, and indeed the mother of Ferdinand the Catholic was of Jewish ancestry. However, in the context of intensified group conflict beginning with the forced conversions in the late 14th century and of the persistence in the 15th century of an endogamous group of New Christians, many of whom were crypto-Jews, intermarriage became a highly volatile issue.

Expressions of Jewish racial pride were common during the 15th century. The New Christians openly acknowledged their ancestry and commonly asserted that their ancestry was superior to that of gentiles (Faur 1992, 72). For example, the New Christian Bishop of Burgos wrote a book entitled *The Origin and Nobility of His Lineage*, in which he declared, “Do not think you can insult me by calling my forefathers Jews. They are, to be sure, and I am glad that it is so; for if great age is nobility, who can go back so far?” (in Castro 1971, 73). These expressions of racial pride were greeted with hostility by gentiles: Castro (1971, 71) quotes the 15th-century chronicler Andrés Bernáldez, “a passionate foe of the Jewish people,” as saying that “they had the presumption of arrogance; [they thought] that in all the world there were no people who were better, or more prudent, or shrewder, or more distinguished than they because they were of the lineage and condition of Israel.”

This negative reaction to Jewish racialism eventuated in an intense concern on the part of the Inquisition regarding the group membership and genetic ancestry of individuals within its purview. I suggest that the concern with genealogy exhibited by the Inquisition was motivated by two reasons. First, there is excellent evidence for the existence of a group of New Christians, many of them crypto-Jews, who whatever their subjective religious beliefs continued to exist as a cohesive, endogamous group within Iberian society well over two hundred years after the onset of the Inquisition (see Chapters 6 and 7). Since this group was engaging in crypsis by mimicking the religion of the host society, the most reliable cue that an individual had maintained membership in this strategizing group was Jewish genetic ancestry.

Secondly, given the intensification of group conflict, there was a raising of the walls of separation between the groups. While previously the Jews had erected and rigorously maintained the walls of separation, the intensification of group conflict resulted in these walls being erected by gentiles as well. As happened in the late Roman Empire and again in the National Socialist period in Germany, fear of racial admixture developed on both sides of the ethnic divide. Also, as in the National Socialist period, there developed sanctions not only on the endogamous group of “racially pure” New Christians but also with regard to anyone with Jewish ancestry, however remote. As indicated in the following, this extension to all families with Jewish ancestry favored the lower classes of Iberian society and was actively advocated by these classes, since Jewish-gentile intermarriage occurred exclusively among the nobility.

The *limpieza* laws materially benefited the lower social classes of Spanish society, because these individuals were assumed to be racially pure. Because of the success of the New Christians in marrying into the nobility, “no one of the upper or middle class, except in the remote mountainous districts of the North and East, could feel secure that investigation might not reveal some unfortunate *mesalliance* of a distant ancestor” (Lea 1906–1907, II, 299). In the event, the lower nobility and gentlemen suffered the most from these restrictions, the upper nobility being too powerful and the ancestry of the peasants too obscure to render them subject to these restrictions.

Interestingly, individuals who could prove that they had converted to Christianity before the forced conversions of 1391 were considered Old Christians (Lea 1906–1907, II, 298). This indicates that the *limpieza* laws were the result of the perceived failure of the forced conversions of 1391 to produce genetic assimilation and a decline in group based conflict, as indeed they had failed.

This is an important point about the entire Inquisition. The Inquisition was fundamentally a response to failed attempts to force genetic and group assimilation. The real crime in the eyes of the Iberians was that the Jews who had converted after 1391 were racialists in disguise, and this was the case even if they sincerely believed in Christianity while nevertheless continuing to marry endogamously and to engage in political and economic cooperation within the group. Those who had voluntarily assimilated prior to 1391 were not targets of

the Inquisition, since such individuals were implicitly viewed as being free from the crime of racialism. It was not the extent of Jewish ancestry that was a crime, but the intentional involvement in a group evolutionary strategy. In this sense, the Inquisition was profoundly non-racist. Rather, it was concerned with punishing racialism.

Lea (1906–1907, I, 111, 126) notes that there was a strong religious (not racial) aspect to the original anti-Jewish uprisings of 1391 in Spain in that the Jews were always given the opportunity to convert and there were no social or economic barriers imposed on those who converted, until open conflict between Old and New Christians emerged in 1449 concomitantly with accusations that the latter were insincere in their religious beliefs. Following the forced conversions, intermarriage was viewed by many as the best means of preserving the faith (viz. the decree of Basle; see Lea 1906–1907 I, 120). However, Beinart (1971a) notes that one of the criticisms of the New Christians by the Old Christians was that they continued to intermarry and did so within the degrees of relatedness prohibited by the Church. For example, Lea (1906–1907, III, 309) provides a case from 18th-century Spain in which a New Christian was accused of marriage to a first cousin “according to the Law of Moses,” and cousin marriages continued to occur commonly among the New Christians of 17th-century Iberia (Boyajian 1983). Uncle-niece marriage also occurred among the Conversos (Roth 1995, 131). Reflecting this perception, a 15th-century satirist stated that the king had promised that “as a Marrano . . . the nobleman will ‘adorn the house of the Torah and adore its image,’ marry only his relatives, and ‘not believe, as they do not believe, that which the holy mother Church believes, holds, and preaches’ ” (Roth 1995, 164). Continuation of Jewish marriage practices was an important aspect of how the Old Christians perceived the Conversos—an overt behavioral sign that the Conversos did not accept other aspects of the faith.

The evidence therefore indicates that the New Christians were perceived by the Old Christians as remaining a genetically unassimilated group within Spanish society whatever their religious beliefs and whether or not these beliefs were sincere. The continuation of the Jewish practice of consanguineous marriage may well have constituted a very salient cue that Jewish racial hermeticism was continuing despite the appearance (or, in some cases, the reality) of religious conformity. Indeed, the continuation of endogamous marriages, family and kinship ties, and within-group patronage among the New Christians resulted in a clear and openly expressed sense of common destiny during the early years of the Inquisition (Beinart 1983, 268; Contreras 1991, 127).

A fascinating aspect of the Inquisition was that it was forced to live up to its own ideology that officially at least the misbehavior of the New Christians was to be sought in deviations from religious orthodoxy. In other words, the Inquisition did not officially enforce exogamy by attempting to prevent New Christians from marrying other New Christians (apart from consanguineous marriages that violated ecclesiastical law). Nor did the Inquisition officially prevent economic

and political patronage and cooperation among New Christian families. Rather, it responded to New Christian endogamy and political and economic power—what one might term their continuing “groupness”—by attempting to provide evidence that the New Christians were secretly practicing Judaism. As many apologists of the New Christians have pointed out (see Chapter 7), official Christian ideology was universalist and took no cognizance of racial, ethnic, or national differences. There was no penalty for simply being a New Christian, and in fact many of the courtiers of King Ferdinand (who established the Inquisition) were New Christians. Even in the middle of the 16th century, seventy years after the beginnings of the Inquisition, Conversos, while excluded from high ecclesiastical positions and the top levels of government, still engaged in their traditional occupations (tax farming, commerce, banking, professions of law and medicine, and lower level governmental positions) (Netanyahu 1995, 1066).

The result was that the Inquisition was a rather awkward mechanism of inter-group conflict, since it was forced to confront a group strategy by enforcing laws that were not at all central to the New Christian strategy of remaining an endogamous, economically and politically cooperative group. Charges of religious heterodoxy were often only the surface manifestation of deeper conflicts between groups. Given the rapid upward social mobility of the 16th-century New Christians and their ability to purchase titles of nobility, “only religious reasons were sufficiently convincing to prevent what money made possible and what could not be legally forbidden” (Contreras 1992, 95). The result was that inquisitors, with obviously political, economic, or even sexual motives, attempted to achieve their individual and group goals by coercing confessions and inducing accusations of religious heterodoxy that may well have sometimes been at least partly false.⁷

The extent of intermarriage between the New Christians and Old Christians of Spain and Portugal is a difficult historical question. However, the evidence reviewed in the following indicates minimally that a rather large subset of the New Christians continued to marry exclusively among themselves during the entire period of the Inquisition, at least until the power of the New Christians was finally broken in the 18th century, and that even after this period there were small, endogamous groups of crypto-Jews that persisted into the 20th century.

The New Christian group, whatever its religious beliefs, was fundamentally an ethnic entity and was perceived as such by the Iberians. Thus the Portuguese used the term *homens da nação*—the “Men of the Nation”—to refer to the Jewish nation living in their midst. “No more eloquent testimony is needed to demonstrate for us that the primary category with which we are dealing is an ethnic one. . . . As the medieval Jewish community represented a ‘national’ unit of a nation in exile, so the converted community is not a mere agglomeration of individuals. It continues in the eyes of the Portuguese to possess a national [i.e., a group] characteristic” (Yerushalmi 1971, 20). Similarly Netanyahu (1995, 995ff) shows that the New Christians in 15th-century Spain retained the external

signs of a group apart, and were regarded by themselves and their opponents as a race and as a nation separate from the Old Christians.

The data indicate the existence of at least two groups with Jewish ancestry within Spanish society during the period of the Inquisition: ethnically pure New Christian families who continued to marry endogamously throughout; and Old Christian families with one or very few Jewish ancestors, in which marriage with Jews was facilitated by financial considerations (typically dowry payments). In addition, there may have been a separate endogamous group of families of predominantly Jewish descent who had some ancestry derived from the Old Christian nobility. The evidence described in the following indicates that Jewish concern over purity of blood not only preceded a similar concern among the Iberians but persisted in a large subset of crypto-Jews for centuries despite intense efforts at eradication by the Inquisition. The continued concern of the Inquisition with *limpieza* thus mirrored rather precisely the continued practice of endogamy among at least a large subset of New Christians.

Regarding intermarriage at the highest levels of society, there is wide agreement that the wealthy New Christians of 15th-century Spain rapidly married into the Spanish nobility (e.g., Lea 1906–1907; Netanyahu 1966; Roth 1974; *PTSDA*, Ch. 5). Nevertheless, the degree of intermarriage was probably not high from the standpoint of the gene pool of the nobility. Kamen (1965) estimates a total population of Castile and Aragon of nine million in 1482, 1.65 percent of these being either the higher nobility (0.8 percent) or town aristocracy (0.85 percent). Assuming six individuals per family, this suggests a total of about twenty-five thousand such families.⁸ Writing in the mid-15th century, the New Christian author of the *Instrucción de la Relator*, whose apologetic interest was to emphasize the extent of intermarriage, mentions a total of “over forty” noble families with some New Christian ancestry deriving from eight families with New Christian founders (Round 1969, 295, 314). *El Tizón de Nobleza* (reprinted in Baroja 1961), written about 1560, shows that there were Jewish ancestors of a great many Spanish nobles, but that these had descended from only a handful of New Christians.⁹ Moreover, the number of intermarriages is minute from the perspective of the total number of New Christians, estimates of whose numbers range from tens of thousands to six-hundred thousand (Netanyahu 1995, 1095). Consistent with these findings, modern population genetic studies provide no support for the idea that intermarriage had been common: Mourant et al. (1978, 44; see also *PTSDA*, Ch. 2) conclude that “the blood group data suggest that there was relatively little intermarriage with indigenous Spaniards.” The data therefore do not indicate that intermarriage with Jews accounted for a significant percentage of the total marriages for the nobility, although over time and assuming continued endogamy within this group, a considerable percentage of the nobility may indeed have had a New Christian ancestor.

It appears that the main route to intermarriage was for New Christian women to marry into the Old Christian nobility. When the Portuguese prelates attempted to prevent intermarriage of New Christians with the nobility in 1628,

the method suggested was to restrict dowries in intermarriages to a fixed sum (2,000 cruzados) (Lea 1906–1907, III, 277; Baron 1973, 23, 244), indicating that the great majority of intermarriages involved Jewish women marrying into gentile families as a result of dowry payments. There is no similar concern in this law over Old Christian women marrying New Christian men, although this occurred at least on occasion. This pattern of marrying Jewish women into the gentile nobility in return for dowry payments began in the medieval period long before the intensified group conflict of the late 14th and 15th centuries (Castro 1971, 72). Such a policy would result in New Christian stem families maintaining their ethnic purity while the gene pool of the Christian nobility would develop an admixture of Jewish genes. Quite possibly this is what the Zionist racial scientist Elias Auerbach had in mind when he noted in 1907 that in Spain there had been considerable intermarriage of Jews with Christians and Muslims, but that “Jews showed no inclination to abandon their racial isolation” (in Efron 1994, 131). In Auerbach’s view, the Jews of Spain “had the most highly developed sense of ethnic uniqueness and biological destiny of all pre-modern Jewish communities” (in Efron 1994, 131). Auerbach noted that “in the course of their entire racial history it has been the Jews themselves and not the other peoples who have promoted the strongest resistance to racial mixing” (in Efron 1994, 131).

Indeed, the ethnic purity of stem families could also be maintained if some sons were allowed to marry into the gentile nobility as long as the principal heir remained ethnically Jewish and continued to marry endogamously. As indicated below, Andrés Bernáldez commented on the marriage of both New Christian sons and daughters into the Old Christian nobility (Castro 1971, 71). The children of these marriages would not have been considered Jews according to Jewish religious law and would have been lost to the Converso gene pool. Similarly, Yerushalmi (1971, 20n.29) notes that New Christians remained an endogamous group but often had Christian paramours—a practice which again preserves the genetic purity of Jewish stem families while also resulting in a one-way flow of genes from the Jewish to the gentile community. As indicated in Chapter 2 (p. 46), accusations of sexual exploitation of gentile women were a common component of 15th-century anti-Converso sentiment.

The evidence therefore suggests that New Christian stem families retained their ethnic purity while nevertheless penetrating the gene pool of the gentile nobility to a limited extent. There is also evidence that cohesive groups of New Christian families continued to marry exclusively among themselves. “For the most part, they married exclusively among themselves” (Roth 1937, 26; see also Yerushalmi 1971, 20). Round (1969; see also Contreras 1991, 1992) notes the high degree of endogamy among the New Christian office-holding families and the role of these alliances in facilitating professional solidarity and the pursuit of patronage.

Indeed, there is no evidence that intermarriage occurred at all in the middle and lower levels of Iberian society. Castro (1971, 71) quotes the 15th-century

anti-Converso chronicler Andrés Bernáldez as saying of the Jews and New Christians that “some mixed with the sons and daughters of Christian knights who were exceedingly wealthy”—the implication being that intermarriage did not occur at the lower levels of society.¹⁰

Moreover, descent from the non-nobility was considered proof of purity of blood, strongly suggesting that segregation was far more commonly practiced at the lower levels of society. Thus, when it became known that many noble families had some Jewish ancestry, “only membership of non-noble classes provided any guarantee against Jewish descent” (Kamen 1985, 23; see also Longhurst 1964, 46; Roth 1937, 29). When Archbishop Siliceo, who was of humble origin, argued for the establishment of *limpieza* statutes, “he was obviously claiming for his own class a racial purity which the tainted nobility could not boast” (Kamen 1965, 124). Intermarriage of some New Christians into the nobility did not therefore prevent the existence of an endogamous core of Conversos at the lower levels of society.

Further indication of continued endogamy at the lower levels of society is the existence of charitable societies founded to provide dowries for poor Sephardi women in the early 17th century (Israel 1985, 203; see also Baron 1952, XIII, 100, 124–125, 149–150). These societies made no distinction between those who had lived in Spain or Portugal, where Judaism was forbidden, and those who came from areas where Judaism could be practiced openly. These women had gone abroad to “places of Judaism” in order to contract a Jewish marriage. Shortly after the Expulsion of 1492, Rabbi Simon ben Solomon Duran wrote that “there is an established presumption that *none* of the *anusim* [i.e., converts] marry Gentile women, and this is known to be their practice generation after generation. . . . [E]very *anus* who comes to repent, just as we presume that his father was a Jew so we presume about his mother that she is not a Gentile . . . and even though some of them have been intermingled with Gentiles and take wives of their daughters, only a *very few* do so” (in Roth 1995, 70; italics in text).

Because of the genetic taint of the nobility, being able to prove one came from peasant stock (“de todas partes de linaje de labradores”) was a social asset, while intelligence and education were liabilities (Silverman 1976, 148). The ingroup created by the purity of blood criterion facilitated the upward mobility of the Old Christians by allowing them to obtain a competitive edge against the ingroup ties of economic cooperation and patronage among the Conversos:

Rich laborers often found themselves displaced by the commercially competitive and financially astute New Christians, who were equally wealthy and supported by strong family and clan ties. Wealth alone, therefore, could not be the deciding factor. Lineage . . . was revived along with concurrent legal and religious stipulations, all notoriously segregationist, and soon became the means of dividing New Christians from rich peasants of Old Christian lineage. (Contreras 1992, 96)

The triumph of the Inquisition was thus fundamentally a triumph of the lower orders of Spanish society, and indeed it was the *populo menudo* that was mainly

responsible for the anti-New Christian disturbances in the period leading up to the Inquisition (Netanyahu 1995, 808; Rodríguez-Puértolas 1976, 127).

Finally, there also appears to have been a loosely defined group descended predominantly from New Christians but with some Old Christian ancestry. Boyajian (1983; see also Benardete 1953; *PTSDA*, Ch. 6) describes an elite, highly visible group of wealthy merchants and financiers who practiced endogamy and consanguinity, including first-cousin marriage, which was outlawed by the Church. Some of these families included Old Christian ancestors (e.g., the financier Jorge de Paz, descended from mixed New and Old Christians on both maternal and paternal sides), while others descended from New Christians on both sides. Boyajian considers de Paz “the most Catholic” (p. 119) of the New Christian financiers, but he also notes that his brother was tried for Judaizing by the Spanish Inquisition and that his niece’s family lived in a Jewish community abroad. There is some indication that the Inquisition itself motivated this type of genetic assimilation and was instrumental in achieving some level of racial admixture between the New and Old Christians: in 1548 Cardinal Siliceo complained that intermarriage was motivated by the desire to avoid the Inquisition (Netanyahu 1995, 1070).

It is possible that this elite group of highly endogamous New Christians had self-consciously become a unique gene pool consisting predominantly of genes of Jewish descent but with enough admixture from the Iberian Old Christian nobility to render them less suspect in the eyes of the Inquisition. Consistent with this proposal, Benardete (1953) distinguishes a group of New Christians having a somewhat different physical appearance and “*hidalgoism*” from the other Sephardim who emigrated rather than accept conversion, although they nevertheless viewed themselves as coreligionists with these other Sephardim.

The proposals of the New Christian Duarte Gomez (1622) for ending the racial conflict between the New and Old Christians are also consistent with this hypothesis. Citing the decline of Iberian society, Gomez wrote that “it was necessary to seek solutions through which all Spaniards *might become brothers*” (in Castro 1954, 586; italics in text). These proposals included a ban on further honors for New Christians, because of the resentment they caused, and freedom to intermarry with nobility who had some New Christian ancestry. However, he recommended that “true *hidalgos*” (i.e., those without Jewish blood) not be allowed to intermarry with the New Christians. Children of the New Christians would then be eligible for all offices and occupations.

It should be noted that Gomez’s proposal clearly falls far short of complete genetic assimilation and would be quite consistent with continued resource competition between three groups: racially pure Old Christians, racially pure New Christians, and a group with mixed, predominantly Old Christian, ancestry into which the New Christians would be able to marry their daughters by providing dowries.

The result of the *limpieza* laws may well have been lower fitness for genes of Jewish descent. A writer in 1629 noted that women entered nunneries and men

remained celibate rather than pass on their taint (Roth 1974). Lope de Vega, in a play written prior to 1604, has a character say he would give all his inheritance and “a thousand loads of Doroteas [i.e., pretty, young girls]” in exchange for pure blood (Castro 1971, 352). Converts often changed their names to avoid the implication of Jewish ancestry (Castro 1954, 565). Wealthy individuals with a small amount of Jewish ancestry “could expunge dubious ancestry and create ancient and time-honored lineages. . . . [Y]et one error, one small, barely perceptible but intentional indiscretion was sufficient to destroy the entire achievement. When this occurred, the affected individual suffered immediate exclusion” (Contraras 1991, 130). Similarly in Portugal, Jewish ancestry was a liability on the marriage market (Roth 1974).¹¹ Nevertheless, wealthy individuals with tainted ancestry, including individuals who were clearly crypto-Jews, were able to obtain honors and generally avoid the opprobrium resulting from their genetic ancestry (Baroja 1966, 105–106; Contraras 1992, 98). Baroja (1966, 131n.29) provides the example of Manuel Cortizos and his family. Despite the fact that his family was genetically entirely Jewish, he, his sons, his sons-in-law, and his brothers received titles and became Knights of Calatrava while his wife and aunt were being prosecuted by the Inquisition. Another family member died in London as an openly practising Jew.

Nevertheless, although the *limpieza* laws may have dampened the population growth of the New Christians, they did not prevent a high rate of population growth. Baron (1973, 186, 241) refers to widespread concern about the reproductive success of the New Christians throughout the period of the Inquisition at least into the early 17th century. Andrés Bernáldez, a defender of the Inquisition and self-conscious spokesman for the viewpoint of the masses, noted that the Conversos “had one aim: to increase and multiply” (in Beinart 1981, 21–22; see also Longhurst 1964). The bull of Pope Sixtus IV of 1478 establishing the authority for the Inquisition noted that the number of crypto-Jews “increase not a little” (in Walsh 1940, 149). Even in 1629—nearly 150 years after the beginning of the Inquisition—the descendants of Jews were described by a conference of the theologians as proliferating like “the sands of the sea” (Baron 1973, 186, 241).

NOTES

1. Chazan (1989, 170ff) argues that there is no basic change from the Augustinian doctrine of Christian toleration of Jews in a subservient status. However, Chazan agrees with the idea that the 13th century marked a major shift toward “aggressively negative” (p. 180) polemics aimed at converting the Jews and stigmatizing the Jewish religion, and he agrees that the Church played a prominent role in the deterioration of the status of the Jews during the period. Only these latter points are central to my discussion.

2. This suggests that the rise of gentile middle classes in Western Europe was facilitated by the exclusion of Jews by the medieval Church as an exclusionary, collectivist

entity (see also *PTSDA*, Ch. 8). Houston Stewart Chamberlain apparently held a similar view. When asked to propose a Jewish policy for Romania, Chamberlain noted that the exclusion of Jews from England from 1290 to 1657 had, according to Field's (1981, 222n) paraphrase, "enabled a strong, vigorous British race to grow and sustain itself."

3. In an incident indicating the importance of genetic ancestry among this group of Ashkenazic Jews, one Jacob ben Sullam, the offspring of a Jewish father and a gentile mother, is described as committing suicide along with others during the disturbances. According to a contemporary Jewish chronicler, Jacob's last words were, "All the days my life till now, you have despised me. Now I shall slaughter myself" (in Chazan 1987, 241). The implication is that his low status was the result of his genetic ancestry, another indication of the importance of racial purity among historical Jewish groups.

4. Beinart (1981, 28) reports that Isabella had no interest in accumulating wealth as a result of the Inquisition and even used some of the confiscations to provide dowries for the children whose parents had been victims of the Inquisition. This suggests less concern with biological relatedness as a criterion of persecution early in the Inquisition.

5. This overt racialism of the Inquisition fits well with Netanyahu's (1966) thesis that the purpose of the Inquisition was "*not to eradicate a Jewish heresy from the midst of the Marrano group, but to eradicate the Marrano group from the midst of the Spanish people*" (p. 4; italics in text). Thus, although Netanyahu's interpretation that most New Christians were not really Jews at heart is, in my view, apologetic (see Appendix to Chapter 7), his thesis is certainly consistent with the importance of ethnicity in assessing the aims of the Inquisition.

6. Netanyahu's (1979–1980) arguments against Castro's view are discussed in the Appendix to Chapter 7.

7. Political scheming to control the Inquisition occurred on both sides. Contreras (1992) describes a case where Conversos who had successfully obliterated their background or at least their current sympathies were able to obtain positions as inquisitors and used their office against Old Christians or to ameliorate the fate of New Christians brought before the Tribunal.

8. Hillgarth (1978) gives a population of Castile in 1528–1536 of under five million, and asserts that the figure of 1.5 million hearths in Castile in 1482 is doubtful. Castro (1954) gives a figure of 108,338 hidalgos in 1541 for Castile and Leon. Even a much lower figure would not affect the conclusion that the percentage of admixture was low.

9. The *Libro Verde de Aragón*, written in 1507, also records very little intermarriage—the predominant message being the extent of endogamy among New Christian families.

10. Guilds segregated along racial lines occurred prior to the Inquisition in Spain, indicating that ethnic segregation at this level of society had remained intact long after the forced conversions of 1391 (Kamen (1965, 33). Also consistent with a general lack of intermarriage among the lower classes of Conversos, Roth (1995, 225) notes that at the beginning of the Inquisition in Castile it was the lower class of Conversos that was most suspected of religious heresy.

11. The *limpieza* laws therefore created external pressure reinforcing New Christian endogamy. As Yerushalmi (1971, 41) notes, however, this cannot be the entire explanation for New Christian endogamy. (See the discussion in the Appendix to Chapter 7.)