

# Americans, Confederates, or Shylocks: Nineteenth Century Views of Jews and American Anti-Semitism

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Senior Thesis History  
June 1, 1994



Mister Cohn



HEREDITARY TYPES.  
Mrs. Cohn, née O'Rourke.



Master Cohn.

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## Preface

Images are powerful. Whether we are children or grown adults, all of us come to realize this. People think things about us, our families, our heritages, and our identities are called to question as soon as we venture out into the outside world, playground or the workforce. This has never changed throughout history. Moreover, for minorities the struggle to accept one's uniqueness can be troubling, painful, and sometimes defeating.

Growing up I realized gradually that while on the outside I was the same as many other Americans I also had an identity many others did not share. I was Jewish. I slowly came to realize this when I would have to miss school for the High Holidays or take Matzoh to school for lunch during Passover. Over the years, I have vacillated in terms of hiding and openly presenting my identity — much of that depended on the ease with which I could feel comfortable.

My interest in history led me to investigate the Jewish experience in America, since I never got to sit down and ask all my grandparents what it was like to come to this country. I knew it was difficult for them. They spoke of the Great Depression, World War II, the economy's ups and downs. However, they never openly spoke about how negative stereotypes about Jews made them feel. Discrimination obviously did not make them feel good, but I still wondered how they viewed it in comparison to Europe or if that even mattered.

Such is the case in a post-Holocaust American Jewish family. America is "the promised land". Yet, I have always taken this with a grain of salt since I have always been aware of this country's rising and falling passions of bigotry. That is partially why I came to study American anti-Semitism. My particular focus on nineteenth century America developed out of fascination with one man Judah P. Benjamin, the second in command of the Confederate States of America—who also happened to be a Jew. However, despite his high rank and power, Judah P. Benjamin was never allowed to forget he was a Jew, I use

the word Jew with the attempt to call forth all of the negative imagery this word brought forth to both children and adults in the nineteenth century in America. To call a Jewish person a "Jew" at this time was to call them a thief, a usurer, a Shylock...the enemy and killer of Jesus Christ. Later on in the twentieth century this image would mutate as the Jew became recognized as "revolutionary", "a Communist", a "Democrat" and bleeding heart liberal. Never mind whether a Jew voted for Eisenhower and/or hated the Russians and Communism, the majority of Americans believed Jews might be enemies to the state. One has only to think of the Rosenbergs to recall this imagery.

So where did this all begin in American history, this appearance of anti-Semitism, and how did it linger in the American psyche? It is the argument of this paper that as early as the nineteenth century, (and even before that ) the scourge of anti-Semitism in America had appeared and grown strong. Granted, it had traveled to the New World from its Europeans origins. Yet it did not disappear, as the historians who support the exceptionalist historiographical school maintain. The exceptionalist school argues that America has proven to be the exception to the scourge of anti-Semitism and thereby it downplays and in the past ignored instances of anti-Semitism in American history either accidentally or in order to help foster the idea of an American/ Jewish coalition that helped jointly build America. In short, many writers of Jewish histories in America were in the past reluctant to draw attention to the negative aspects of being Jewish in America in order to accentuate the positive in hopes of fostering future cooperation and harmony.

While reading this paper, I hope readers will look into their past and remember the first time they felt discrimination and then ask the same question I do--how did these stereotypes come to be so strong? This paper argues that the answer lies in the negative images that novels, the press, speeches, cartoons and popular culture present to the impressionable public, which at times is all too susceptible to scapegoatism and prejudicial arguments that attempt to protect the status quo. Today America may be the exception to dangerous anti-Semitism in the minds of some scholars, but there were probably

individuals who felt similarly about Jewish-Christian relations in late nineteenth century Germany, where scholars often point to a German/Jewish love affair. However, there just as here, America's negative images of Jews persisted in the subconscious of Americans. That is where the danger continually lies, in the recesses of the human mind, which unfortunately seem quick to perceive differences as threats instead of benefits. The argument of exceptionalism is based on a lack of the physical brutality that Jews have faced in Europe. However, prejudice does not always have to result in a blow to be wrong and/or dangerous to future generations. This paper does not seek a straw man it merely aims to stress the importance of the new revisionist work being done by scholars like Louise Mayo, Frederic Cople Jaher, and Leonard Dinnerstein. Earlier historians like Oscar Handlin, Carey Mc Williams and even John Higham while all adding to the writing of the history of the American Jews seemed to have overlooked many important questions about the ambivalent reactions Jewish immigrants received upon arrival. Revisionists argue, as this paper will, that while undoubtedly American Jews in many instances did have it easier in America a struggle still existed with prejudice bigotry and anti-Semitism. Surely none of the aforementioned scholars deny the existence of anti-Semitism in America through the exceptionalist argument, they do on the other hand down-play its significance and impact upon the Jewish-American community. One has only to read the words of Issac Mayer Wise, David Eichorn and other Jewish American leaders in the nineteenth century and before to realize that Americans Jews were often just as frustrated to be accepted here in America as they were in Europe. Moreover, here the paradoxical promise of religious freedom often stung worse when Jews encountered Sunday Laws and Christian domination and a general scorn from the public press. In the 1950s and before most historians of American history who wrote on the Jewish experience, both Jewish and non-Jewish, were trying to create an image of a coalition where in the American Jew participated in the building of this nation. Historians emphasized the overall positive experiences of Jews in America and pushed the negative memories of the past further into the shadows of

historiography. Today, with political sentiment trying to uncover the origins of ethnic tensions in order to stop the disease of prejudice scholars are doing the opposite by looking into the victimhood of discriminated groups. Whether or not one agrees with the promotion of victimhood to achieve peaceful understanding however, is not the issue of this paper. The issue is rather the fact that the revisionist movement finally has addressed the negative imagery that has long held a position of power over the American public's perception of the Jews. This paper wants to reinforce how powerful this negative imagery was and how it, contrary to what earlier historians have written of and/or dismissed, determined the future relations of Jews and Christians in the United States and the persistence of anti-Semitism in America.

## Introduction

Understand and explain the problem [of anti-Semitism] as much as you say, there remains a hard insoluble core, incomprehensible and inexplicable. Namier <sup>1</sup>

In 1850 Detroit newspapers referred to Jews as "mysterious," "cursed," and "wanderers," while in that same year the April 6th issue of the *New York Herald* ran a front-page story accusing Jews of bleeding a Christian missionary to death in the Middle East, grinding up his bones, and mixing his blood with unleavened bread for the Passover feast.<sup>2</sup> Later on in September of that same year, on the eve of Yom Kippur, rumors spread in New York City that Jews had murdered a Gentile girl for the holiday for similar purposes. As a result of this concoction, which was never proved, the next morning approximately five hundred men, predominantly of Irish descent and led by the police, invaded and ransacked a synagogue on the holiest day of the Jewish year.<sup>3</sup> Most Americans today will probably find these historical examples of the appearance of the blood libel to be unbelievable and assume that they were the visions of people who did not view the world realistically. These types of anti-Semitic accusations and beliefs fall under the categorization of the fantastic realm of the anti-Semitic tradition. However, dismissing them as ridiculous and leaving them at that does not answer the question of why anti-Semitic outbursts arose in nineteenth century America. It is imperative to realize that instances of intense anti-Semitic behavior often blur clearer understandings of the differences in other discriminatory acts against Jews which are typically not as hostile in the American experience. This introduction will explore the meaning of the term anti-Semitism and the way historians distinguish between different forms of anti-Semitic rhetoric and anti-Semites.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Walter Laqueur, *Commentary*, vol 44, no.1, (July, 1967), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Robert A. Rockaway, "Anti-Semitism in an American City: Detroit, 1850-1914," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* (AJHQ), 64 (September, 1974), 42.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York, 1981), 199.

Historians and other scholars have long struggled to find an answer to the question, "What is anti-Semitism?" In their attempts to explore and thereby improve the numerous definitions and interpretations of anti-Semitism many scholars have ultimately expressed Namier's above frustrations in trying to penetrate through the enormity and seemingly never-ending historiographical debates on the term. "Efforts to define anti-Semitism are so common and generally so unsatisfactory, to say nothing of being so often self-serving and tendentious, that they have become tiresome, often circular. The term 'anti-Semite' is a loose cannon. In the words of the distinguished literary critic Hugh Kenner, 'it has no stable meaning... and a term with no stable meaning is simply not a profitable head for a rational discussion.'"<sup>4</sup> Regardless of the term's undeniable inadequacies, it still best expresses and distinguishes this unique hatred from xenophobia and other forms of discrimination. Moreover, the word anti-Semitism has been so thoroughly integrated into discussions analyzing the age-old conflict between Jews and non-Jews and the peculiar indignation and persecution directed at the Jews that historians have had to make the best of it and continue to use it in their discourse.

Gavin I. Langmuir argues in his Toward a Definition of Antisemitism<sup>\*</sup> that the term anti-Semitism should continue to be used since no better alternative has been established. He also states that "Its continuing use is testimony to the conviction that there has indeed been something either unique or highly unusual about hostility to Jews."<sup>5</sup> This means that since the term has been used to denote such a diverse variety of discriminatory forces throughout history, it is not only ambiguous in meaning but it also has many different

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<sup>4</sup> Albert S. Lindemann, Through Esau's Eyes: Jews and Non Jews, A Reinterpretation of the 'Jewish Question' (University of California at Santa Barbara, History Department, 1993), 41.

<sup>\*</sup> Langmuir refuses to hyphenate anti-Semitism as most historians do. He explains that "the word has many meanings. Since there is in fact no such thing as 'semitism', save when referring to a language, the term is literally meaningless when applied to Jews, which is why I refuse to hyphenate antisemitism." This explanation appears in Toward a Definition of Antisemitism, University of California Press, 1990, p.17.

<sup>5</sup> Gavin I. Langmuir, Toward a Definition of Antisemitism (Berkeley, 1990), 16-17.



forms and connotations that anachronistically attach themselves to different incidents in history.

The various subsets and delineations that have arisen in an attempt to distinguish anti-Jewish sentiment often make the actual intolerance toward Jews only harder to analyze. Scholars have used so many different catch-phrases to try to distinguish hostilities towards Jews in terms of motivations and/or circumstances that a medley of terms are often used where the term anti-Semitism could easily suffice. For instance, economic stereotypes of the nineteenth century, which will be discussed in this paper, are often viewed today as blatant anti-semitism. All of the different categories (economic, religious, fanatical, political) often only tell us about possible motives for anti-Jewish sentiment on the surface, leaving historical analysis of one of the longest hatreds inadequately examined. Moreover, many of these studies of anti-Semitism only surfacely touch upon the role that imagery plays along with psychological satisfaction through general scapegoatism. As definitions of anti-Semitism stand today, several types (economic, political, religious, and fantastic) are acknowledged, while scholars classify anti-Semites by the intensity of their individual hatred and the measures by which they did or did not act upon it. This propensity to classify and separate the different forms of intolerance towards Jews as they have appeared throughout history is largely a phenomenon of twentieth century and post World War II scholarship.

Anti-Semitism, a fairly recently coined term by Wilhelm Marr in 1879, with all of its inadequacies in terms of definition and multiple meanings, does not explain as much as the historian, both American and European, would hope. This is due largely in part to the fact that anti-Semitism, as it was originally intended to be used, was based upon racial distinctions, whereas today it is used to characterize not only that but economic tensions, conflicting political desires, and most importantly in terms of this study, religious discord between Jews and Christians. This is especially problematic since racial and religious tensions are two entirely different matters that often seemingly take different paths in



discourse only to reemerge collectively in the intense ongoing of prejudice. Many scholars had come to believe that religion had been relied upon too much to explain the problems that plagued societies. In fact, the idea of anti-Semitism and the race science it developed out of was a reaction to the "inadequacies" of religiosity based on social determinism in the nineteenth century. Ironically just as was the case during the nineteenth century, today historians often run into problems as they try to distinguish where the origins of intolerant behavior stemmed from. Historians are so beleaguered by the task trying of to figure out whether a focus on religious imagery or race science will yield a better analysis of anti-Semitism that ultimately an accurate assessment of the real issues and factors at hand becomes lost along with the historian's noble intentions of trying to alleviate the tensions through collective understanding.

In his History, Religion, and Antisemitism, Gavin I. Langmuir discusses this and other related problems that religion and religious fanaticism pose for historians by primarily concentrating on the struggle over the definition of anti-Semitism and the way historians have often misrepresented the "religious factor" that still exists even in the modern era. His conclusions present many important insights for this study of nineteenth century American anti-Semitism, since he admonishes the historian about the need for objectivity and restraint from writing purely in terms of one-sided victimization histories. Langmuir discusses the positivist tradition within historiography, going back to Ranke, who argued that objective historians need only report or record, so far as evidence permits, what people in the past did and thought about what they were doing. "When describing past religious activity, historians should repress their own convictions and content themselves with paraphrasing the language concepts of the people they are studying."<sup>6</sup> Understanding the emotional factors involved that often hinder the historian's task of objectively discussing prejudice, Langmuir reminds us how the noble dream of historical objectivity is frequently lost even in the average historical discussions that do not involve these intense diametrical conflicts.

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<sup>6</sup> Gavin I. Langmuir, History, Religion, and Antisemitism (Berkeley, 1990), 3.

Langmuir explains how part of this lack of objectivity in discussions of anti-Semitism stems from the historian's inability and seeming unwillingness to recognize or handle the force that religion plays not only within history but more importantly people both past and present. He states that,

If most historians are now very aware that they are advancing their own interpretations of human conduct in the past, that awareness is often muted when it comes to discussions of religions or religious activities for three main reasons. In the first place, because religions or religious activities express profound values, they are more like poetry or art than science, politics, or other pragmatic activities; and however much historians may have abandoned the positivist dream, most still pursue its ideal of objectivity or value in an effort to represent the drama of past beliefs to people in the present, they feel constrained to avoid making explanatory judgements of their own about religious activity. In the second place, historians do not want to offend their many readers who belong to religions. Lastly, in the third place, historians do not have their own professional conception of religion.<sup>7</sup>

Langmuir feels that until historians more thoroughly analyze religion they will continue to have problems trying to convey to their readers in the present what people in the past said, believed, thought and felt and how that was connected to what they did. This proves to be especially insightful in terms of studying Christian-Jewish relations. Questioning the way historians often use descriptions of belief implicitly or explicitly to explain past actions, Langmuir calls into question how much the historian does and does not rely on primary source evidence while using his or her own present day values to color analysis. "When historians use acceptingly or dismissively, what people often thought as their own and only way of categorizing and explaining why those people acted as they did they infuse present thought with the understanding—or misunderstandings— of the past."<sup>8</sup>

Langmuir contends that there are few better examples of this than the way non-Jewish historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries described and

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

explained past hatred of Jews. This stagnation in terms of failing to move past a pattern of inadequate definitions, prejudicial accusations, and defensive postures is not new in terms of the way anti-Semitism has been dealt with by historians. Moreover, not only is the term anti-Semitism abused in terms of forgetting its racial and social Darwinist origins but it is also regrettably substituted anachronistically where anti-Judaism often belongs to explain intolerance toward Jews prior to the late nineteenth century. Here it is evident that the modern-day historian is especially guilty of failing to distinguish between the religious and racial forms of this hatred. Too many individuals, both Jewish and non-Jewish are too quick to cite instances of anti-Semitism without qualifying which criteria they are using. The criteria that will be used in this paper will be discussed later on in this introduction, but before getting to that, an explanation the difference between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism is necessary.

Langmuir and other historians and scholars oriented towards analyzing religiosity understand how the force of religion importantly pertains to discussions of anti-Semitism and more accurately anti-Judaism. [Anti-Judaism was the term which was formerly commonly used to interpret the prejudices at work in Western societies before World War I.] One of the first scholars to contrast anti-Judaism (religious hatred of Jews) and anti-Semitism (racially based hatred of the Jews) was Bernard Lazare, a Jew and staunch defender of Alfred Dreyfus who nonetheless disliked the characteristic conduct of Jews throughout history. He announced in 1893 that Judaism was the root cause of all hostility against the Jews and prophesied or hoped that it would be the first religion to disappear.<sup>9</sup> Lazare contended that hostility toward Jews up until the nineteenth century had been primarily religiously oriented until anti-Judaism was "subordinated to anti-Semitism, that is, to a reasoned hostility that had primarily economic and social causes."<sup>10</sup> I quote Langmuir's discussion of Lazare in an effort to show how even scholars of the nineteenth

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

century realized the role that religion and in particular its symbolism and imagery plays upon people and how moving away from this to a more "scientific" approach with the term anti-Semitism often only hindered beneficial analysis. It is still important to question this idea of religion being an area of study separate from historical analysis since scholars outside the field of religious studies and anthropology often seem to have adopted this approach. Religious animosity cannot disappear, as is evidenced by the fact that stereotypes laden with religious imagery still appear today. With this thought in mind a student of anti-Semitism's history needs to question the idea that anti-Judaism ever completely disappeared or gave way to anti-Semitism as the only form of acceptable discrimination. It is also imperative to ask oneself why this switch, regardless of whether or not it was complete, between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism ever occurred. More importantly for our purposes of analyzing the intensity of nineteenth century intolerance towards Jews, did it happen in America?

Langmuir and other scholars postulate that this modification in the way one based discrimination occurred because the,

Hatred of Jews was becoming ungodly for some Christians, a remarkable inversion. But Christians who sought to disculpate Christianity had somehow to deal with the inescapable fact that many outstanding and indisputable Christians throughout the centuries had condemned Judaism and enforced harsh measures on its adherents. The solution of the dilemma was a predictable syllogism: intolerance and anti-Semitism are bad; right religious faith is eternally good; therefore, whatever Christians have done that might be classified as anti-Semitism was not done out of genuine faith. This implied two possible strands :that any aversion to "the Jews" was unchristian, or that one tolerant kind of aversion (anti-Judaism) was Christian and another (anti-Semitism) was not.<sup>11</sup>

This concern over whether or not anti-Semitism towards Jews was acceptable behavior or not in terms of intolerance after the philosophical teachings of tolerance and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 25.

freedoms with the Enlightenment becomes a key factor in understanding how America has resisted the scourge of anti-Semitism better than its European counterparts. For many American and European historians America has always been cursorily viewed as a haven, a happy galut, for Jews. As Naomi Cohen maintains,

Neither ghettoized nor recognized officially as a discrete corporate group, Jews in the United States had no reason to fight for emancipation. Unlike the Jewish experience in other Western lands, their absorption as individual citizens into the body politic was a non-issue. But citizenship stopped short of full equality. In a society whose culture was steeped in Christianity, and where the idea and practices of a Christian state still resonated, Jews were the quintessential outsiders. Even the path to legal equality, a less ambitious goal than social integration, was cluttered with obstacles of a religious nature. The guarantees of federal and state constitutions notwithstanding, Jews encountered laws and public usages that effected the domination of Christianity, specifically Protestantism.<sup>12</sup>

More importantly, the lingering and biblically centered stereotypes of anti-Judaism persisted along with the growth of racial intolerance in the rise of anti-Semitism, thereby creating the ambivalent image and reception of the Jew that allowed for the rise of intolerance Jews experienced prior to and during the American Civil War.

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<sup>12</sup> Naomi W. Cohen, Jews in Christian America: The Pursuit of Religious Equality, (New York, 1992), 3.

## Types of Anti-Semitism: Was 19th Century Intolerance a Form of Anti-Semitism ?

We congratulate ourselves because nothing is so indicative of a city's progress as to see an influx of Jews who come with the intention of living with you and especially as they buy property and build among you because they are a thrifty and progressive people. *Atlanta Daily Herald*, May 1865.<sup>13</sup>

It is very difficult to ascertain what these descendants of "Abraham" are worth...He is a Jew and with one exception none of that "Genus Homo" own any real estate here. Mostov, Jerusalem on the Ohio <sup>14</sup>

Nineteenth century American Jews experienced contradictory relationships with their gentile neighbors. On the one hand, Christian Americans welcomed them; in words and actions, America seemed to differ from the other Diaspora homes. As Hasia Diner states,

On this side of the Atlantic, no legacy of state supported exclusion and violence, encrusted aristocracy, no embittered peasantry, or legally established church hierarchy manipulated centuries- old Judeophobia...On the other hand, despite despite tolerance and pluralism, Christians still articulated negative stereotypes about Jews. They wrote and spoke about the Jews' treachery and dishonesty in business at the expense of honest, hardworking Christians, about the Jews' eternal curse for killing Jesus and the damnation that awaited the unbaptized, their uncouth behavior and social abnormality and their retrograde religion. <sup>15</sup>

Christians saw the Jews and their religion as fundamentally different and flawed. Nineteenth century American Christianity was basically evangelical and the mere existence of Jews and Judaism threatened its vision of America as a Christian nation. Tolerated or not, Jews were outsiders. All around them, nineteenth century American Jews heard these contradictory voices and they were unable to decide if America was indeed a promised

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<sup>13</sup> Hasia R. Diner, A Time For Gathering The Second Migration 1820-1880 (Baltimore, 1992) 169.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



land. Historians have also faced this same dilemma. "Scholars have been split between those who emphasize the existence of a vibrant anti-Semitic culture in America and those who argued that anti-Semitism hovered only on the margins of society, limited to the lunatic fringe and to mere footnotes in text."<sup>16</sup>

The historiographical debate over anti-Semitism in America, which will be discussed in its own chapter, largely has rested on questions of emphasis and by looking at symbolic evidence rather than hard-core substance. This is largely in part because "hard-core" substance, in terms of violent, mass murder, pogroms, and ritual murder accusations never occurred in America. The physical violence that typified European outbreaks of anti-Semitism never surfaced here. However, that does not necessarily mean that symbolic evidence is a mere waste of time or not as important. One has only to look back to the *Bildung*\* and successful relations between Jews and Christians in nineteenth century Germany to see the seeds of negative symbolic imagery in German literature that later were seized upon with the rise of political anti-Semitism. Images and stereotypes are powerful devices that leave everlasting imprints upon societies and individuals regardless of whether they are positive or negative in nature. Some historians argue that in the United States Jews met little outward hostility: "the leveling impact of the frontier, the constitutionally guaranteed religious equality, shortages of labor, and an obsession with skin color which empowered whites regardless of ethnicity or creed in many instances."<sup>17</sup>

Other historians such as Michael Dobkowski\*\*, Louise Mayo, and Frederic Cople Jaher, argue, as this paper will, that the "scurrilous rhetoric in fiction and journalism, on

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

\* *Bildung* is the term used to describe the bridge of communication and good relations that typified German-Jewish relations in moments of the nineteenth century. It was this relationship and exchange of culture that led figures like Sigmund Freud and Theodore Herzl to appear at times to be more pro-German than Jewish and self-hating Jews.

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

\*\* I realize the problem's that Michael Dobkowski's work has encountered since its pull from publication for instances of mis-quotaions etc, which I will not get into. However, the merit of many of his own original ideas is the reason why I cite his

the stage and in songs, rhetoric that could be heard from the pulpit and occasionally from the politician's stump" that attacked Jews and Judaism, constituted a substantial and graphic anti-Semitic tradition.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the scholarly historiographical debates skirt the question of whether stereotyping constituted anti-Semitism under a nineteenth century understanding of the term or today's. As Hasia R. Diner points out in A Time For Gathering, no one would deny that American popular and elite literature, theater, cartoons, and advertisements portrayed the Jews in a set of flat images, whether positive or negative, that had little to do with Jews as real people. This stereotyping allowed American gentiles to manifest unrealistic views that were often ethnocentric. Similar patterns of stereotyping also occurred in the way Catholics, blacks, American Indians, Chinese and the Irish were portrayed in public media. On the stage, in literature, and in the discussions held in the American press, Jews were often portrayed as strange, monstrous, and uncivilized. Words like crafty, cunning, and sinful were almost always associated with the Jewish people. The impact these stereotypes had should not be underestimated. As Alan Dundes asserts in his "Study of Ethnic Slurs: the Jew and the Polack in the United States", stereotypes may or may not be accurate or realistic, but they do exist and "countless people" form opinions and judgements on the basis of them. Dundes also maintains that for the majority of people, perception of the Jew come not from extended personal acquaintance or contact with members of these groups but rather from the proverbs, songs, jokes, and other forms of folklore we have heard all our lives. Certainly just as this is true today, nineteenth century Americans also adopted conceptions of the Jew in this manner. Perhaps, they even did this to a greater extent since the population of Jews living in America was considerably lower than it is today. From the research this paper has required it is evident that Americans in most instances saw in their midst people whom they perceived to live and often look different. Therefore it does not require a stretch of the imagination to conclude that many

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interpretations in this paper since he led much of the revisionist work this paper supports as essential to understanding American anti-Semitism.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



adopted the images presented to them, for instance via the popular press, and literature, and manipulated these appointed difference for their own political and social purposes.

This paper seeks to address by the standards of the nineteenth century whether or not the prevalence of negative or "flat" (flat is used here to mean that these were one-dimensional characterizations and therefore not true to the complex nature of human character) images in popular culture meant that anti-Semitism existed in America. Some might at this point stop and say, "Has anyone said that anti-Semitism did not exist?". And while clearly this has not been stated directly in historical literature, except for the occasional ahistorical accounting, the lack of attention to instances of American anti-Semitism has received in American history textbooks clearly indicates that far too many have adopted the "exceptionalist" viewpoint which argues that America was and continues to be the happy galut for the Jews. This accidental or perhaps deliberate omission of American anti-Semitism, particularly prior to the twentieth century, is one of the main reasons that this paper needs to be written. This paper aims to try and obtain a general feeling for how often these words or images in American popular media were referred to and or influential in prejudicial actions or deeds in order to show that anti-Jewish sentiment really was a significant factor in the nineteenth century American experience. While historians have already formulated a fairly good idea of how the structures of American public and private institutions excluded minorities, including Jews, by relegating them to a status of second class citizenship, they have not addressed how the average Americans perceived Jews at this time adequately enough.. It is also important to realize that historians have often overlooked America's prejudicial views toward Jewish newcomers by comparing America's bigotry to Europe's. This has led to ineffectual conclusions, in that while comparative studies often reveal insightful things, often a society can only be genuinely understood by studying it alone. I am not saying that American history should be studied alone in a narrow and provincial vacuum that does not take advantage of comparison, however, solely relying on comparisons of Europe's hostilities and past

violent actions against Jews to America's more tolerant environment leads one to too easily subscribe to the psychologically satisfying notion of American exceptionalism. The question and subject of anti-Semitism in America is not all that simplistically solved. Furthermore, while some historians argue that the "exceptionalist" argument offers a realistic analysis and that historians who press harder are yearning to find blame and victimization to further their own personal agendas, fault can be found in this argument too. The intention of this paper is not to pit Jacob (Jew) against Esau (Christian) and then automatically elevate Jacob's people into lofty visions of innocence and heroism. The intention rather is try to understand how and why the negative image of the Jew persisted in America, thereby proving once again that America's identity and perception of who the American is or can be is a narrow minded and not necessarily an all-inclusive melting pot as ideally promised. While the liberal safeguards present in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights have helped America avoid the outright persecution of Jews, along with other mitigating factors, nevertheless intolerance has persistently managed to thwart total acceptance and equality of many minorities.

Certainly America's diverse population did help Jews assimilate and weaken the forces which could have fostered an environment ripe for an exclusive xenophobia focused on Jews alone. Although the vast majority of Americans belonged to some Christian denomination, other religious, ethnic, and racial groups appearance and rapid emergence in nineteenth century America minimized Jews' otherness. Moreover, the diversity of American culture helped prevent a monolithic tradition from emerging. As Diner states, "No single institution, region, or class spoke for all of America; anti-Jewish sentiments articulated in one place or by one individual, however prominent, did not necessarily reflect majority and or official opinions."<sup>19</sup>

In fact, Diner and scholars like Louise Mayo and Jonathan Sarna argue that American plurality and heterogeneity often produced contradictory ideals in American

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

thought and practice. "Indeed, America's contradictory images of and attitudes toward Jews mirrored contradictions in the American's self-image and national identity. While American Christians used Jews, Native Americans, Irish immigrants and blacks as mirrors by which they defined themselves."<sup>20</sup> No one can deny that America's contradictory images of minorities still exist today and the case was no different during the nineteenth century. While it is clear through the absence of restrictive legislation that all white men had equal opportunities in the United States, one should not ignore the fact that most Protestants who often were in positions of authority, regarded Catholics and Jews as inferior and adherents of inferior faiths. As Leonard Dinnerstein points out in his recent book Anti-Semitism in America, "Some individuals of these faiths always found a place for themselves among the Protestant elite. Many even prospered economically. As numbers of Catholics and Jews increased in this country, however, and there were always at least ten times as many of the former as there were of the latter even in colonial America, until the twentieth century Catholics were more intensely abhorred than Jews were."<sup>21</sup>

For all who live in America, when thinking of "acceptance" in terms of immigrants, one must realize the inherent contradictions in what the Americans proclaim in public and quietly discuss in the privacy of their homes. These ambivalent images appear annually throughout American history, as Americans open their gateways and borders to "the huddled masses yearning to be free." This negative reception is a factor has never failed to reappear throughout American history, especially when a minority group was reluctant to shed its previous culture or background. This paper is not arguing that the fate of the Jews in America was any worse than it was for Native American Indians, African Americans, and Asians, who were perceived as racially different and inferior to Caucasians, rather it is an attempt to illustrate the paradoxical fact that American bigotry went even further than the color line despite past the ideals professed with the notion of religious toleration and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein Anti-Semitism in America (New York, 1994) x.

equality for all. "Even nineteenth century observers of the American people and historians like Frederick Jackson Turner ...emphasized this very jumble of seemingly oppositional beliefs and values held by the Americans. This same conflicting nature that has led Michael Kammen to call Americans a "people of paradox". Like so many other nationalities, Americans have at every point and time been simultaneously idealistic while realistic, secular but religious, passivist and yet jingoistic, racist yet liberal. Even Alexis de Tocqueville commented on America's ideological paradoxical nature in his 1835 classic Democracy in America, when he mentioned that while "Americans cared little for ideas and rarely attended church they still considered themselves a deeply religious people."<sup>22</sup>

More importantly in terms of this paper's focus, one of America's greatest faults has been its contradiction of expounding a policy of openness while simultaneously articulating xenophobic, racist and prejudicial ideas. This tendency helped perpetuate the image of the White Protestant of English origin as the authentically ideal American. Anti-semitism definitely existed in nineteenth century America even though Americans welcomed Jews into their nation with equal citizenship. At the same time however, as Diner argues, there was probably no greater issue than the incompatibility between the notion of America as a religiously tolerant and openly diverse society, and a deep American commitment to evangelical Protestantism. Americans prided themselves on their hospitality to foreigners and believed that all differences would be eroded under the powerful influence of the American environment -- assimilation could blur distinct differences. Yet as one is well aware of when discussing nineteenth century America and much of the early twentieth century, Americans lived in a race-conscious society that extended and held back rights along strict racial lines. Furthermore while Jews were white they were still seen as other and therefore distinctions were made and commented upon.

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Hasia R. Diner A Time For Gathering The Second Migration 1820-1880 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1992) ,172.

### The Different Guises of Anti-Semitism

To reiterate, the word anti-Semitism has been the source of endless confusion. It first appeared in the 1870s under the guise of a "scientifically" based racial hatred of Jews. The term anti-Semitism was coined to distinguish itself from the more traditional and well established religious justifications for promoting disdain. "Whatever the dubious origins [in terms of the inaccuracy of Semite in respect its linguistic meanings rather than racial meaning] and obvious inadequacies of the term anti-Semite," it has stuck and we are stuck with it."<sup>23</sup> To clarify readers' understanding of my usage of anti-Semitism let me state that I use word anti-Semitism in the same way as the foremost historian of American anti-Semitism, Leonard Dinnerstein, "To denote hostile expressions toward, or negative behavior against, individuals because of their Jewish faith or heritage. Prejudice reflects antagonistic thoughts but when those ideas are put into actions that restrict or condemn Jews they become forces of discrimination. Furthermore in terms of American anti-Semitism sometimes it has been blatant and unadulterated; on other occasions it has been part of a broader nativist wave that targets many outgroups."<sup>24</sup> I would also like to emphasize that my references to religious imagery that depicts intolerance between Christians and Jews is not a matter of choice or prejudicial selection but what is necessary to understand how anti-Semitism appeared in nineteenth century America. When intolerant or stubborn stances towards Christian things or actions needs to be mentioned it will be done to explain the existence of these tensions. After all there are two sides to every conflict. However it is important to understand that Christian viewpoints underlie the most of American anti-Semitism during the nineteenth century. "No matter what other factors or forces may have been in play at any given time the basis for prejudice towards Jews in the

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<sup>23</sup>Albert S. Lindemann, Through Esau's Eyes: Jews and Non Jews , A Reinterpretation of the 'Jewish Question' (University of California at Santa Barbara, History Department, 1993),47.

<sup>24</sup>Leonard Dinnerstein Anti-Semitism in America (New York, 1994) ,ix.

United States and in the colonial era before it, must be Christian teachings. No explanations or discussions of American anti-Semitism can disregard this salient fact. Moreover, Christian culture so permeated American society that even the unchurched or those with the most tenuous ties to a religious organization still picked up these popular attitudes."<sup>25</sup>

In their study entitled Anti-Semitism in America, Harold E. Quinley and Charles Y Glock discuss several of the negative images of Jews that have persisted through history and the American society. The Jew is often seen as money-oriented, dishonest, unethical, clannish, prideful, conceited, power hungry, radical, pushy and intrusive. Moreover, these negative stereotypes often fit into categories in scholarship on anti-Semitism. For instance, discussions of economic anti-Semitism usually refer to stereotypes about Shylock, usury, and money hoarding. Political anti-Semitism usually refers to politicians who use a gamut of potent negative stereotypes to place controls on the pushy and power hungry Jews. In the political arena in the twentieth century Jews were often viewed as radical and Communist, while in the nineteenth century they were seen as being powered by the greed of the Rothschilds. While these images are not solely "Christian", in that the Old or New Testament depict Jews in this manner, the fact that Jews were only fit to engage in economic dealings as debasable as usury comes from the Middle Ages where it was a sin for a Christian to do so. Moreover, in nineteenth century discussions of the economic roles Jews played within American society Jews are often depicted in biblical imagery to coincide with the images of Shylock. The notion of being the chosen people entitled to superior positions where they resided also raised a great deal of resentment. Finally as previously discussed, there is religious anti-Semitism which probably was the most powerful force active in nineteenth century American outbursts of intolerance toward Jews. This was based on deicidal imagery, obvious doctrinal differences and the fervency some Christian groups had towards proselytizing while Jews tried to exclude themselves or

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



reform to assimilate as evidenced by the Reform and Orthodox movements within nineteenth century American Jewry .

So now that the ambiguities of the term anti-Semitism have been identified it is important to attempt to distinguish who the anti-Semite is. More importantly we also want to try to figure out if the nineteenth century American was an anti-Semite, and if so to what degree or extent. It is also important to mention here that one also has to be careful not to hold nineteenth century Americans to the moral standard of politically correct behavior that we aspire to adhere to today.

### **The Types of Anti-Semites**

When we label someone an anti-Semite we often misuse the term. Clearly, when making a list of notable anti-Semites, the names of Hitler, Henry Ford, Martin Luther, Manetho, Louis Farrakhan and Henry Adams could be included. However, the levels of hatred differed in sincerity with all of these individuals. The task also becomes a little more difficult when debating whether it is accurate to label men like Ulysses S. Grant, Henry S. Foote, Thomas Jefferson, William Tecumseh Sherman, and John Beauchamp Jones and others in this manner, even though this study will provide examples of opinions which many of us today would classify as anti-Semitic. While many were unaware of the negative influence that their actions had, many of their contemporaries viewed their words and actions as prejudicial and reprehensible. In most instances milder terms like prejudicial, racist or bigoted will be used when discussing nineteenth century intolerance toward Jews. Since it is obvious that these individuals are not on the same fanatical level of Hitler, a man who everyone deems to be anti-Semitic, I would like to reiterate that by anti-Semitism I mean intolerance towards Jews and most often nothing more complex unless specified within this paper. I will also try to point out whether religious imagery or economic imagery proved to be the motivating factors in an individual's anti-Semitism.

Michael R. Marrus distinguishes between differing levels of anti-Jewish intolerance among individuals through the use of a diagram of concentric circles. Marrus suggests that this is a beneficial way to categorize degrees or types of anti-Semitism and the different kinds of haters. He also feels that it presents a way to be sensitive to distinctions and time periods, although it also remains somewhat schematic and still faulty in every instance of the anti-Semitic impulse. Tendencies that are mild and unreflective and not strongly locked into an embrace by the subconscious are placed in the outermost circle anti-Semitic individuals. These outer circle anti-Semites occasionally express distaste for Jews but are not particularly pre-occupied or obsessed by the subject. More importantly, they are open to education and capable of eventually concluding that their negative judgements were unjust or incorrect. "Marrus suggests that the second, concentric circle is occupied by more single-minded, dedicated types who in times of crisis act upon anti-Semitic feelings. These individuals do not promote radical solutions and they are susceptible to coexist peacefully with Jews."<sup>26</sup> The final inner circle is where Marrus places the fanatical anti-Semite. "In the eyes of such people the Jew loses any semblance of common humanity, any right to fair treatment. Inner-circle fanatics make no bones about their desire to chase Jews from their midst, even to destroy them. In this inner circle men like Adolf Hitler, Edouard Drumont, Georg von Schönerer could be placed."<sup>27</sup> In terms of the nineteenth century American who had anti-Semitic tendencies no one sticks out as being eligible for Marrus's inner circle. Most nineteenth century Americans with anti-Jewish sentiments fit into the outer and middle rings of Marrus's scheme.

Clearly, anti-Semitism is a topic that has many subtleties. Nineteenth century America certainly was not a hot-bed of anti-Semitic rhetoric that made Jews fearful for their lives. However like other minorities, Jews were definitely aware that they were not well

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<sup>26</sup>Albert S. Lindemann, Through Esau's Eyes: Jews and Non Jews, A Reinterpretation of the 'Jewish Question' (University of California at Santa Barbara, History Department, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



liked or accepted by all Americans. The negative images and stereotypes that appeared in newspapers, books and plays that the nineteenth century American appreciated were not only offensive to Jews but they also helped reinforce the image of the Jew as other thereby fostering intolerance and the rise of anti-Semitic sentiment that peaked during the American Civil War.

## Chapter 1 — Did Nineteenth Century American Jews Have It Better ?

We hold out to the people of other countries an invitation to come and settle among us as members of our rapidly growing family, and for the blessings which we offer them we require of them to look upon our country as their country and to unite with us in the great task of preserving our institutions and thereby perpetuating our liberties.

President John Tyler ,1841\*

America still keeps me going somewhat. If this thought, too, proves deceptive; if one may or cannot be a human being there, either, then my life would be unbearable.

Charles Mailert, 1845\*

With the increase of Hebrew residents in America, their general prosperity has also augmented in the same ratio... Now, if nothing else would cause increased prejudice, this circumstance will....While we are poor and unsightly, we may be tolerated; but let us look up, and become the social equals of our neighbors, and their ire will be at once roused.

Isaac Lesser, *Occident*, 1865\*

In 1867 Rabbi Max Lillienthal wrote that, "America is our Palestine; here is our Jerusalem."<sup>28</sup> Certainly, in comparison to the anti-Semitic attacks, injustices, and uprisings that appeared in other nations and regions throughout history, America has been far more hospitable and gracious to her Jewish citizens and newcomers. However, there have been less glorious incidents in American history involving instances of anti-Semitism and our nation's ill treatment of Jewish-Americans that historians have either neglected altogether or reflected upon infrequently. Instances of extreme and virulent Judeophobia and anti-Semitism can be found during the American Civil War (1860-1865), a period that witnessed the reemergence of much of the "latent anti-Semitism which had lay dormant since the founding of the United States."<sup>29</sup> Many Jews who had come to these shores seeking religious asylum and liberty felt that the scourge of anti-Semitism would never follow them here. However, this was not to be the case, especially within the antebellum

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\* All of these quotations came from Naomi W. Cohen, editor Essential Papers on Jewish Christian Relations in The United States: Imagery and Reality (New York, 1990).

<sup>28</sup>Albert Lindemann, The Jew Accused (Cambridge, 1991), 194.

<sup>29</sup>Joakim Isaacs "Candidate Grant and the Jews", American Jewish Archives, Vol XVII, April 1965, no.1,3

and Confederate South, where The Civil War and its aftermath provided a rude awakening. With Judeophobic and anti-Semitic incidents like the unprecedented upsurge of vociferous and malicious anti-Semitic rhetoric printed in Southern newspapers, the expulsion of some groups of Jews in the Southern states under federal and Confederate jurisdictions American Jews learned that America had its own anti-Semitic sentiments.

Instances of public outcries both violent and non-violent occurred during the antebellum and Civil War periods, only to increase later on in terms of persistence and intensity during the Progressive Era. Jews, both those who were in the public eye and those who were among the ordinary citizenry, faced intensified scrutiny similar to that of other ethnic and religious groups who poured into nineteenth-century America. In some instances Jews were better off than the Catholics, both newly arrived and older immigrants, who faced the virulence of nativism and other bigoted political philosophies. However, the anti-Semitic hidden biases that lay beneath the public opinion polls of America arose with the tensions of war by 1860, exposing the latent discriminatory thoughts that even liberal minded men like Thomas Jefferson harbored as early as the nation's birth. Jefferson wrote the following about the Jewish people:

Jews 1. Their system was deism; that is the belief of only one God. But their ideas of him and of his attributes were degrading and injurious. 2. Their ethics were not only imperfect, but often irreconcilable with the sound dictates reason and morality, as they respect intercourse with those around us; and repulsive anti-Social, as respecting other nations. They needed reformation, therefore in an eminent degree.<sup>30</sup>

However, Jefferson was not an anti-Semitic<sup>31</sup> individual. Whatever negative ideas or preconceived notions he surprisingly held against Jews privately he "thus displayed

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<sup>30</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna "The 'Mythical Jew and the Jew Next Door" in David Gerber's *Anti-Semitism in American History*, (Chicago, 1986), 9.

<sup>31</sup> In terms of my usage of the term anti-Semitism, which is a term that in recent years has been perhaps more controversial than the definition I shall use the form and spelling "anti-Semitism". "The alternatives that have been suggested have either failed to become established in conventional American usage or do not pose a meaningful or distinctive substitute. As Jonathan Sarna points out "Anti-Jewish and/or Judeophobia may

remarkable liberality when dealing both with Jews and with matters directly effecting their welfare. By contrast, his private attitude toward what he believed Jews stood for, their theology, morality and doctrine, was negative and scornful."<sup>32</sup> In fact, these inconsistencies, in terms of not recognizing conceptions of Jews that often differed greatly from perceptions and reality (or everyday commonplace relationships) characterized many Americans besides Jefferson. As mentioned in the introduction this was part of America's ambivalent and often paradoxical nature. Historians like Jonathan D. Sarna point out that by the nineteenth-century increasing numbers of Americans made the "vexing discovery that Jews formed too variegated a congregation to accord with them any single stereotype."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, with the rapid and steady growth in Jewish immigration it became clearer that the "mythical Jew", as Sarna calls him, differed from the Jew who just moved in next door.

This startling and often curiously new addition to the small and larger cities of America caused a great stir and variance of emotions ranging from warm welcome to unfavorable receptions. Jews typically were not agrarian. Moreover, in a society like nineteenth century America that based its values up on the tilling of the land, the Jews therefore faced intensified scrutiny in their tendency to obtain jobs as merchants, peddlers, and businessmen. In many instances this "Yankee" or businesslike attitude was acceptable in the Northern states. However, Bertram Wallace Korn points out how this commerciality caused alarm in the Southern states, where such a monopolization of business and commerce as the Jews slowly amassed became threatening to the average Southerner. Korn thereby provides an instance of where exceptionalism broke down in

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appear at times more precise, particularly in fixing the target of the abuse. The latter, however, carries rather more restrictive meanings, through the root "phobia" than does the customary usage." The controversy surrounding dropping the hyphen and the capital "S", thus making the term "antisemitism" has not been accepted as readily or adopted into usage in the English language. So, I will employ the usage as I have been doing) of the term as "anti-Semitism" for these reasons and the fact that this is the form still very widely used in American dictionaries and familiar to American readers. (Sarna)

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

America, versus the more numerous accounts before revisionism where historians often cite the usefulness of Jews as businessmen. Usually Jews were seen as an economic benefit as long as they did not over-achieve in industries. For example, like many other immigrants, Jews were a welcomed source of labor in industries where blacks and other minorities were not wanted. When America needed cheap labor, then minorities of all kinds were welcomed.

Perhaps these misconceptions of imagery and reality, business orientation versus agrarian lifestyles, and the obvious cultural barriers between German Jewish immigrants and gentile Americans were the impetus of much of the tumultuous incidents of anti-Semitism in nineteenth century America. Until the perceptions that the majority of Americans drew their imagery of Jews from are better understood, incidents like the Grant affair \* seem shocking and out of place in American history.

### **Historiographical Debates Over Exceptionalism**

Within historical discussions centered on American anti-Semitism a widely accepted assertion about the situation and collective experience of Jews in the United States is that it has been "exceptional" due to its less oppressive nature when placed in comparison to other countries in modern times. However, some dissenting opinions within historiographical debates over the nature of American anti-Semitism have recently emerged to question the nature and validity of the "exceptionalism" of the Jewish experience in the United States. The majority of these revisionist objections to the "exceptionalist" perspective emerged in the 1970s and 1980s by attacking the scholarship of the preceding twenty years. The revisionists targeted the lack of attention that the negative imagery of Jews had been given, which had persistently appeared throughout American history, as an obvious flaw to the "exceptionalist" argument. According to one historian's argument, "Historians have

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\* The Grant Affair, which will be discussed in detail further on, refers to General Ulysses S. Grant's expulsion of Jews, as a class, from Tenn. during the American Civil War.

traditionally de-emphasized the significance of anti-Semitism in American history. Some see anti-Semitism as very limited in time and place; others ascribe it to political rhetoric, or the rapid upward mobility of the Jews, rather than to deep-seated ideological causes."<sup>34</sup>

The historian Leonard Dinnerstein, one of the first scholars to study the nature of American and Southern anti-Semitism in particular, has commented that since anti-Semitism has never reached the virulent level encountered in Europe, most American historians have neglected the subject completely. According to Dinnerstein, American historians usually tend to follow the historian John Higham's philosophy that "such active bigotry happened only in times of crisis, when war or economic depression sharpened resentment at the trader or profiteer."<sup>35</sup> However, revisionists like Louise Mayo and Michael Dobkowski argue that if during times of "tension" or wartime anti-Semitism arises with strong and powerful anti-Semitic imagery, it is important to recognize that these feelings did not automatically or magically manifest overnight. They suggest that analyzing popular period literature helps the historian assess the mood of the times and analyze symbols and prevalent stereotypes. Mayo contends that anti-Semitic imagery emerged from previously accepted European beliefs that were loaded with bigoted sentiment and anti-Semitic rhetoric. Moreover, these stereotypes and accusations seemed perfectly valid to those who were making the accusations. According to Dobkowski and Louis Harap, American historians should not merely dismiss the significance of any rise of anti-Semitism as a mere product of exacerbated social tensions during a stressful period like wartime. The anti-Semitic sentiment and the popularization of the Shylock image that arose and was largely accepted during the American Civil War in many instances reveals a hidden ideological undertone of underlying prejudices and hatred that needs to be examined.

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<sup>34</sup> Michael N. Dobkowski, The Tarnished Dream: The Basis of American Anti-Semitism (Connecticut, 1979), ix.

<sup>35</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Note on Southern Attitudes Towards the Jews" Jewish Social Studies Journal, Volume 32, 1970, 44.



Dobkowski refutes those scholars who attempt to explain periods of anti-Semitism as inconsequential or "flukes" in light of an otherwise peaceful Jewish American existence.

Most of the scholars who have examined the nature of the Jewish American experience in the United States historically have determined that a peaceful coexistence prevailed between the Jew and gentile throughout much of Colonial American society. In fact, in much of the history that was written before the recent revisionist waves of the past twenty years an effort was made to smooth over the occasional appearance of anti-Semitism, Nativism, or ethnocentrism in terms of Jewish and gentile relations in America.. This was done in effect to try to foster the idea that Jews were welcome newcomers to America from the beginning. Earlier historians also often wanted to write a gentler or romanticized history that portrayed the Jew as a co-founder or participant in the building of this nation, thereby minimizing the Jew as an outsider theme.

Many American historians ignored the anti-Semitic issue in their historical analyses during the period following World War II. Perhaps the Holocaust obscured their focus thereby redirecting their historical objectives. According to David Gerber, many historians felt that they "Could not ask such questions about the development of American anti-Semitism as "Why now and not then?...They were so preoccupied with other issues such as examining the American-Jewish experience to the extent that over the course of thirty years of the postwar period only three historians Bertram Wallace Korn (1951), Leonard Dinnerstein (1971), and Howard Rabinowitz (1980) offered complaints about the lack of attention to anti-Semitism in American Jewish historiography."<sup>36</sup> Recently many more revisionists, those historians who do not completely accept the "exceptionalist" view of the Jewish-American experience, have begun to emerge to dispel "exceptionalism" and these earlier romantic notions by pointing to the religious intolerance of early America. According to David Gerber, "During the colonial period, Jews suffered civil, political, and religious penalties as did such non-Jews as deists, atheists, and members of dissenting

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<sup>36</sup> David Gerber, Anti-Semitism in American History, (Chicago, 1986), .9

churches."<sup>37</sup> However, the dominant trend in American historiographical discussions of the Jewish American experience has continued to suggest that Colonial America proved to be a safe haven for immigrant Jews. In his book The Jews in America, Arthur Hertzberg explains that a great deal of tension never really arose between Jews and Christians because of the fact that so few Jews were in America. "The population of avowed Jews was some 250 in the year 1700 and perhaps 2,000 at the time of the revolution."<sup>38</sup> Hertzberg also points to the lack of rabbis and theologically educated Jewish men living in America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in an effort to show how one of the largest threats posed to Judaism was the lack of a booming population and a strong religious community.

In his "Note on Southern Attitudes Toward Jews" Dinnerstein agrees that, "Contemporary American historiography has largely neglected the story of the Jews in the South, and insofar as the subject has been treated, anti-Semitism is generally dismissed as a non-event. Much of the evidence available, however, gives one cause to wonder and raises suspicions to the contrary."<sup>39</sup> Dinnerstein then goes on to summarize how American historiography has failed to adequately examine both American and in particular Southern anti-Semitism. He tells us that during the 1950s historians like, Oscar Handlin, Richard Hofstadter, and John Higham, three of America's leading historians, discussed the origins and causes of anti-Semitism in the United States. In their discussions, these three historians built up much of the basis of the scholarship on American anti-Semitism that led to the acceptance or emergence of the "exceptionalist" position. All of them linked anti-Semitism's emergence and development to the late nineteenth century (post 1870), thereby disregarding earlier indications of its appearance in the colonial period or antebellum American South. They agreed that it was important to focus attention on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries since this was the time when Jews really emerged as

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>38</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter, (New York, 1989), 54.

<sup>39</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Note on Southern Attitudes Toward the Jews" in the Jewish Social Studies Journal, Volume 32, 1970, 45.



scapegoats in light of the increased urbanization, emerging social stratification and the growing industry of America.

Michael N. Dobkowski and Louis Harap have emphasized the need to even look to earlier indications of the emergence of anti-Semitism by studying the intellectual and symbolic origins through areas like popular literature. For instance, Oscar Handlin wrote that philo-Semitism was far more characteristic of the national attitude before 1900 than anti-Semitism. Richard Hofstadter presented the thesis that the "Greenback populist tradition activated most of what we have of popular anti-Semitism in the United States".<sup>40</sup> The historian John Higham, author of Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism and the foremost researcher of anti-Semitism in America of the three historians, finally argued that "three groups of Americans -- the agrarian patricians of the populist movement, certain eastern patricians, and many of the poorest classes in urban centers harbored very strong anti-Jewish feelings."<sup>41</sup>

While Handlin, Hofstadter, and Higham all utilize Southern sources containing evidence of Southern hostility and anti-Semitism towards Jews, Dinnerstein points out that they have not chosen to make their remarks with significant data from the South. Therefore in Dinnerstein's view they have overlooked a valuable chapter of anti-Semitism in American history. While discussing anti-Semitism's peculiar "mediocrity" in America Handlin uses five sources which include and simultaneously de-emphasize discussions of the Ku Klux Klan, the Leo Frank Case and more instances of Southern discomfort with its Jewish populations. Richard Hofstadter uses only two references while reflecting on Southern attitudes toward Jews in his book The Age of Reform. One reference even includes a statement made by the Governor of Mississippi, Alexander G. Mc Nutt in 1837, defending attacks on Baron Rothschild by saying, "The blood of Judas and Shylock flows

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> As quoted in Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Note on Southern Attitudes Toward the Jews" in the Jewish Social Studies Journal, Volume 32, 1970, 43.

in his veins and he united the qualities of both in his countrymen".<sup>42</sup> This example and others like it, to be further explored in the body of the paper prove to be problematic and since they contradict the notion of philo-Semitism or "exceptionalism" in regard to anti-Semitism in America.

Dinnerstein maintains that John Higham realizes that "The case of the Jew is especially diverse, and conflicting attitudes have always existed side by side in American minds. The Jewish stereotype took two entirely different forms, one religious and the other economic, and in either case attractive elements mingled with unlovely ones."<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, Dinnerstein complains that out of the seventeen sources referring to Southern perceptions of Jews in Higham's works, thirteen display adamant examples of anti-Semitic hostility. Dinnerstein clearly believes that American historians have shown little interest in the subject of anti-Semitism in American history. Moreover, they have thoroughly neglected the importance and variety of Southern attitudes toward Jews. Anti-Semitism has reappeared periodically in America, and the South provides lucid examples of this phenomenon. In fact, Southern aversion to Jews has even been affirmed by one of the most respected and perceptive regional commentators of the South, Wilbur J. Cash, the author of the Mind of the South who wrote, "The Jew is everywhere the eternal alien; and in the South, where any difference has always stood out with great vividness he was especially so."<sup>44</sup>

The historian Bertram Wallace Korn, the author of one of the most accurate monographs dedicated solely to the subject of American Jewry during the American Civil War, believes that "Anti-Jewish prejudice was a characteristic expression of the age, part and parcel of the economic and social upheaval effectuated by the war."<sup>45</sup> Other historians point out that ideological anti-Semitism should be distinguished from the more traditional

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 46

<sup>45</sup>Leonard Dinnerstein, Jews in the South, (Baton Rouge, 1973), 135.

waves of xenophobia that flourished in the earlier half of the nineteenth century. Much of what Bertram Wallace Korn has written about anti-Semitism during the American Civil War has been challenged by the historian Oscar Handlin despite the ample amount of documentation that Korn has provided with examples of anti-Semitic rhetoric printed in Southern newspapers. Handlin calls special attention to certain articles in *Harpers Weekly* by the commentator who signed himself as "The Lounger." Handlin suggests that the Lounger's following words are really just a long argument against anti-Semitism. To counter this contention by Handlin, Korn presented an excerpt of the August 1, 1863 *Harpers Weekly* edition by the Lounger thereby allowing the reader to judge whether its author was encouraging anti-Semitism or arguing against it. Here is what the letter said:

An Open Letter - My dear Friend, You are a German and a Jew, and you have come to make your living in a foreign land, of which Christianity is the professed religion. You have no native, no political, no religious sympathy with this country. You are here solely to make money and your only wish is to make money as fast as possible. You neither know our history nor understand our Government... You are inevitably a Secessionist, a Copperhead and a Rebel..Your opinion is of no value. The country you left did not regret you departure your coming away; the country on which you trade will not mourn your departure. ....Yours with the respect possible the Lounger.<sup>46</sup>

Korn also points out that Handlin incidentally forgot to mention that the Lounger remained silent at the time of the Grant order in 1862, when he really had an opportunity to declare himself in favor of equal rights for all, thereby including Jews as the Constitution did in with its promise of freedom of religion.

So historiographically the debate continues over whether or not "exceptionalism" is the true nature of the Jewish American experience. Whether historians argue that instances of the emergence of American forms of anti-Semitism are limited by time and place, a product of radicalized political rhetoric or better understood in light of the rapid social movement of Jews, the revisionist issue of where and how these stereotypes of "Shylock"

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<sup>46</sup> Bertram Wallace Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, (New York, 1951), xxi.

and other anti-Semitic imagery emerged in terms of ideological foundations remains unanswered and at the heart of the "exceptionalist" debate.

## Religious Imagery and The Explosive Chaplaincy Controversy

Historically, the religious reaction to the Jew has been the most deeply ingrained on the Christian mind. In the United States there was a profound ambivalence toward's, 'God's chosen people who one and the same time, gave us the messiah and rejected him.' This basic Christian attitude goes back to the early Christian writers who taught that the dispersion and exile of the Jews (the Galut) was divine retribution for the crucifixion.<sup>47</sup>

In nineteenth-century America Jews were still in a state of dispersion and exile. This state of *galut*, as it is referred to by many theologians and scholars, certainly placed many Christians on both defensive and offensive sides in terms of dealing with their Jewish neighbors. America was undoubtedly from its conception primarily a Christian nation and therefore Americans held many religious preconceptions that often played a fundamental role in the way they perceived Jews. As Louise Mayo points out, "An ambivalence that had been brought over by the Calvinists, was widespread: "'The Jews were forever guilty of deicide...but as foreordained witnesses to the divine plan of salvation in Christianity, must be tolerated and protected....The view that the Jew was the Christ-killer, rejected by God and justly punished for his transgressions, was widely accepted.'"<sup>48</sup> Many nineteenth century Americans believed that the Jewish religion was basically a precursor to Christianity and therefore no longer an impressionable force in the world. "Judaism in Christ's time, it was assumed, had become a religion without soul, dessicated by its legalism, formalism, and ritual."<sup>49</sup> However, this irrelevancy never really became or grew into the Jewish Question that would ultimately plague European Jewry culminating with its near destruction with the 'final solution'. Clearly, America and its leaders were more ambivalent on the Jewish issue and resigned to coexist with a Jewish minority. The image of the Jew as a Christ-killer or evil proselytizer was usually balanced

<sup>47</sup> Louise Mayo, The Ambivalent Image: Nineteenth Century America's Perception of the Jew, (New Jersey: Associated Press, 1988) 20.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

by some outspoken attitudes of gratitude to the Jews for their role in the Judeo-Christian tradition and admiration for enduring subsequent years of discrimination and persecution.

Still, in terms of dislodging or breaking down the accepted "exceptionalist" image of America and American history historiography it is important to realize that the Jews were almost always viewed as foreigners and detestable outsiders in a Christian land. Religious toleration and/or acceptance had not always been the rule in early America. Despite our tendency to expound on our nation's history of tolerance and protection of constitutional liberties and protective rights, early America, especially Colonial America, was a seething caldron of religious particularism and prejudice, and only in the final decades of the eighteenth century was some kind of peace established between the various religious groups.<sup>50</sup>

As Michael Dobkowski reminds us, "the situation of New Amsterdam's Jews is a good illustration of how religious animosity could lead to prejudice and economic restrictions. The twenty-three Jews who landed in the colony faced a series of restrictions that stemmed from the colony's general disapproval of other religious practices and the specific anti-Semitism harbored by Governor Peter Stuyvesant and the colony's church officials."<sup>51</sup> Jews were denied many economic and religious privileges. In fact, it was not until the 1690s that they could legally hold public worship ceremonies or conduct retail businesses. Not until 1826 did Maryland pass an act to "extend to the sect of people professing the Jewish religion the same rights and privileges that were enjoyed by Christians."<sup>52</sup> The Jews who settled in Louisiana in the middle of the eighteenth century did so despite the open hostility of the French government. In fact, the Code Noir of 1724 ordered the expulsion of Jews from the colony within three months and forbade the exercise of any religion other than Catholicism. This code remained in effect even after the

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<sup>50</sup> Michael Dobkowski, The Tarnished Dream: The Basis of American Anti-Semitism, (Westport, 1979), 12

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

widely acclaimed Swedish government precedent of solving the Jewish issue by barring all Jewish settlement. This restriction never left the legal records of the state until the amending Reconstruction Constitution was drafted in 1868. In New Hampshire Jews did not receive full political enfranchisement until after 1876 (meaning they not could vote and run for office like their fellow citizens). Jews were also restricted from holding office in New Jersey where only Protestants were legally eligible to hold official roles in both the local and state governments. As in New Jersey, so in North Carolina: The first constitution, framed by a special congress in 1776, held that only Protestants were eligible for political office.<sup>53</sup> This loyalty to Protestantism still expressed itself in legal and documented discrimination against Jews and other 'infidels' until 1868. "Three attempts were made between 1858 and 1865 to give Jews full rights; each failed. In 1858, a committee reported that the clause in the state constitution disabling Jews was a relic of bigotry and intolerance", and then offered the opinion that "it is highly inexpedient to alter or amend the constitution by legislative enactment in any particular whatsoever."<sup>54</sup> Thus this legal discrimination continued despite the fact that hundreds of North Carolinian Jews fought in battles of the Civil War, many were wounded or killed. By 1868 in a post war constitutional convention the issue and motion to emancipate Jews fully was brought up and passed with an overwhelming vote. In this state where a white man could not testify against by a black, a Jew had always been the exception to the color rule. Clearly, prejudices ran high after the war was over. During Reconstruction all rights that had formerly been prohibited to blacks were now given to them and the legislators knew they could no longer deny equal rights to the Jews. As Jacob Rader Marcus points out,

There were fears, fears of the federal government and of the Civil Rights and Reconstruction Acts. The Fourteenth amendment was eloquent in its mute implications; the Northern troops stationed in the state were equally convincing. Thirteen freedmen sat in that state constitutional convention. As in Jamaica, the blacks of North Carolina were emancipated before the Jews.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jacob R. Marcus, *United States Jewry 1776-1985* (Detroit:,1991),506.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



Clearly, religious ideas led many Christian Americans to believe that the Jews still represented a threat to the moral fiber of America. In a discussion of the reasons for anti-Jewish prejudice, Harpers Magazine of July of 1858 recognized the centrality of this religious motivation. The magazine questioned whether it was "Surprising that a civilization called from the name of Christ should hold under perpetual ban of dislike ... the whole race which descended from those who rejected the leader of Christendom...and who refuse him to this day."<sup>56</sup> As Louise Mayo comments, the editors at Harpers Magazine clearly felt that this was a natural and obvious prejudice and thereby admonished Jews not to expect its rapid disappearance.

Many scholars have contended that the reasons Jews were "tolerated" was the notion that Christian America could absorb them and enlighten them. However, in the nineteenth century this notion of absorption did not include today's notions of multiculturalism or the Christian aspects of diverging ethnic identities and enclaves. America has all along had a history of attempting to convert traditional and non-traditional non-believers, and the Jews were certainly members of these categories in the minds of the American majority.

The most active and significant conversionist organization was the Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews. It was established in 1820 and included among its members such well known figures as De Witt Clinton and John Quincy Adams (who was even a vice president of the organization). Mayo tells us that the Society's reports illustrated both a conversionist mentality and position. The society described Jews as "that interesting and deeply injured people who had shed the blood of the Messiah and had its consequences visited upon themselves and their children."<sup>57</sup> However, despite this scorn the organization nevertheless professed that it wished to extend "the kindest sympathy and affection towards the outcasts of Israel. According the the handbook of the society, "Even

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<sup>56</sup> Louise Mayo, The Ambivalent Image: Nineteenth Century America's Perception of the Jew (New Jersey, 1988) 21.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 24.

though the Jews themselves tried to prevent the dissemination of Christian knowledge and abuse and vilify conversionist efforts, it was still a matter of duty to feel and exhibit the spirit of benevolence to the person of every Jew."<sup>58</sup> The nineteenth century American Christian fundamentalist believed that only the ultimate conversion of all the Jews would bring about the 'millennial glory'. As the Reports for the Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews noted in 1823 to its members, "As the Bible says and teaches 'our salvation was of the Jews.'"<sup>59</sup>

Isaac Mayer Wise, the most illustrious and beloved rabbinical figure in nineteenth century America recalled in his Reminiscences this proselytizing activity as particularly pervasive in the first half of the century. He wrote that, "It was more acute here at that time than even in England or Prussia". It was humiliating for the Jews since the pietists' campaign plans usually consisted of arousing a storm of "pity for the poor and blinded Jews."<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to note however that Wise was level headed enough to realize that this proselytizing society had to employ such tactics since the European methods of physical brutality and persecution could not be employed here in America. Wise felt assured that the freedom and tolerant spirit which was prevalent and the backdrop for the liberties offered by the government would prevent physical brutality to enforce discriminatory measures. In his Reminiscences, Wise also recounts once meeting a simple backwoods missionary who yearned to see an actual "Jewess". Seemingly the simple trusting piety of the man and his wife, who were not at all hostile as they prayed for their conversion of Wise and his wife gave him "insight into American conceptions of the Jew."<sup>61</sup>

The evangelical admonition to "weep over the unbelieving Jew and pity them to strive and reclaim them" was terribly condescending and naturally resented by Jews.

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Louise Mayo, The Ambivalent Image: Nineteenth Century America's Perception of the Jew, (New Jersey, 1988) 25.

However, it was widely agreed upon amongst Jews that, unlike Europe, in the United States even the most ardent conversionist tended to favor equal rights. Yet equal rights and religious toleration were often overshadowed by religious fervor. This ever-present current of emotional religiosity in the nineteenth century found its way into popular songs, poems and novels.

Mayo's The Ambivalent Image gives examples of these themes and characters in the religious novel that enjoyed great popularity throughout the nineteenth century, particularly at mid-century, which was the height of religious revivalism. The themes of these novels not only instilled the imagery of deicide and Jewish accountability for the Crucifixion but also themes of ambivalence so that in effect the Jew was easily defined and then modified to fit another scapegoat or thematic desire. One example of a historical novel with a proselytizing theme was Zenobia (1837) by William Ware. In this novel one character is a religious Jew named Isaac who is paradoxically presented as admirable while Judaism itself was condemned for its aridity and lack of universal love. Therefore, once again the Jew came off as being a member of a clannish race that was selfish and thereby dangerous and unlikely to assimilate. Ironically though, Ware also has Isaac eloquently defend his fellow Jews against the popular charges of avarice and usury. Mayo argues that this mixture of both positive and negative portrayals is typical of the basic ambiguity characteristic of this genre.

Biblical novels were also widely read in nineteenth century America. These novels often contained stereotypical portrayals of Jews. The most prolific and popular author of these biblical novels was the Episcopal priest Joseph Holt Ingraham. His books about the "grandeur of Hebrew history" were so popular that publishers continually outbid each other to pay him the previously unheard of sum of \$10,000 plus royalties for the second book of his series. The Prince of the House of David (1855) went through 23 editions and is said to have sold between four or five million copies. His next novel, The Pillar of Fire (1857) was released five times. The popularity of these books helped to strip sentimental

sympathy for the overlying sentimental antagonisms of the Jews. Ingraham himself was careful to dedicate each book to American Jews, descendants of the biblical of which figures he wrote, in the hope they would finally see the light and convert.

Religious images regarding Jews played a powerful role in determining how openly Jews were allowed to be Jewish in America. No other case exemplifies the concerns of Christian nineteenth century America more emphatically than the chaplaincy controversy unleashed during the American Civil War. In Christian America preachers and the New Testament were standard issue to soldiers during crisis. Yet the Civil War ultimately caused many an American/Confederate American to recognize their Jewish co-patriots' religious differences. The best example of this can be seen with the crisis that historians have dubbed as the chaplaincy controversy.

### The Chaplaincy Controversy

Since its establishment as a nation the United States has maintained the tradition of military chaplaincy. Clergymen and spiritual advisors served with the armed men of the colonies during the American revolution. "The first regular army chaplain was commissioned in 1781, immediately following authorization by Congress...from then on post and brigade chaplains were an accepted feature of the army table of organization."<sup>62</sup> For our purposes however the position and acceptance of the army chaplain is not as significant as his denomination and faith. Until the Mexican War and because of the continual pressures put on President Polk, all chaplains were Protestants not Catholics or Jews. During the 1850s Catholic priests served within a few military posts yet their official status was vague and yet undetermined. "It was actually not until the Civil War that the Catholic priests were explicitly granted the right to serve as army chaplains."<sup>63</sup>

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56. <sup>62</sup> Bertram Wallace Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War (Philadelphia, 1951)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Rabbi Bertram Wallace Korn has conducted almost all of the research on the question of Jewish chaplaincy in terms of its existence and the debate over the prospect of officially sanctioned Jewish chaplains that stirred within nineteenth century America. As far as historical record show, the legal status of Jewish chaplains was never discussed prior to the Civil War. Yet as Korn maintains, "Once that fratricidal conflict had begun, with thousands of Jews enlisted in the armies of both the Union and the Confederacy, it was inevitable that these members of a minority faith would press for their right to be served by clergymen of their faith who could truly minister to their spiritual needs."<sup>64</sup> Ideally the personal rights and civil liberties of all religious minorities had been safeguarded by the Constitution, which the founders framed with a separation of church and state. However, as we have seen throughout many states like North Carolina and Delaware, many had fallen behind the Constitutional ideals of religious toleration and freedom.

Korn points out that the Chaplaincy controversy marked the first and one of the most significant tests of insuring religious freedom to all. "It was another realistic test of the equality which the Federal government theoretically accorded to all American citizens."<sup>65</sup> Surprisingly, in the Confederacy this equality or need for it was recognized when the first shots of the Civil War rang out at Fort Sumter. The acts providing for the appointment of chaplains within the Confederate military establishment merely stipulated that they should be clergymen with no denominational specifications given. Interestingly enough, there probably was not a burgeoning number of Jews in any one Confederate regiment to warrant the nomination of a Jewish chaplain, but at least there was no legal barrier to prevent making such an appointment. In the Confederate Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker's Recommendation to Jefferson Davis on April 27 1860 for "the passage of a law empowering this Department to appoint chaplains for the service the words "with no denomination restrictions mentions was added afterwards."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

The real intent of the indication for equality was given later on when the exemption of the clergy from the draft became an issue before the Confederate Congress. "On September 4, 1862 the Exemption Bill was introduced in the Confederate Senate, including the exemption from the draft for "every minister of the Gospel, licensed to preach according to the rules of his sect, and in the regular discharge of ministerial duties."<sup>67</sup> On September 16th members of the pacifist Quakers and Dunkard groups were also added to the exemption list. It was only through the Editorial section of the Richmond Dispatch on "September 18th that attention to the omission of rabbis from the beneficiaries of the bill was drawn: The principles of religious liberty are opposed to any such discrimination as is implied... the Jewish ministers are entitled to an exemption on the principles of the Constitution as much as any others...."<sup>68</sup>

Korn points out that this editorial rebuke proved fully effective for when the bill was passed on September 20 1862 the phrase had been amended without explanation to read "every minister of the Gospel." Despite all of the facts pointing towards the conclusion that the South had no objection to an officially sanctioned Jewish chaplain there is no record of one's service for the historian to document. Korn tells us that there are however four possible candidates Julius Lewin, B. Nordlinger, Uriah Feibelman and Abraham Lesser. For instance, as Korn points out though the Department of Archives and History of Georgia offers information about Nordlinger we only know that he served from October 24 1861 thru April 22 1862 and he was bugler and musician while also a rabbi and merchant. Korn explains this ambiguity and confusion by explaining that Nordlinger was undoubtedly one of the many part time rabbis who served small congregations in both the North and the South. Nordlinger served with the Macon German Artillery with thirteen other Jews. Korn speculates that Nordlinger's previous experience and training with the bugle would have ostensibly been provided through his use of the Shofar. Historical fact

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid. 63.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.



must be based upon primary sources, and unfortunately there is no documentation as of yet that any of the four aforementioned possibilities were active official chaplains in the military service.

Jewish chaplains undeniably did exist in the Northern ranks. We know this largely from the Congressional debates that led to the decision to allow Jewish chaplains to minister to soldiers of their faith. In the North during the Civil War a heated debate raged over the right of Jewish soldiers to preach to soldiers of their own faith. The original volunteer bill, as reported on the floor of the House required that regimental chaplains, who were to be "appointed by the regimental commander on the role of the field officers and company commanders present be regularly ordained minister [s] of some Christian denomination." <sup>69</sup> Those words and restrictive qualifiers led to a debate over this provision when an Ohioan congressman moved for an amendment which would substitute the phrase religious society for the objectionable words of some Christian denomination.

Bertram Wallace Korn goes into great detail to describe this man Congressman Clement L. Vallandigham and his possible motivations. "Apparently on his own initiative and without any Jewish prompting, he spoke out clearly in defense of Jewish rights. Vallandigham said the following,

I move to strike out the words "Christian denontination" in the seventh line, and in thereof, to insert "religious society"... "I do it Mr. Chairman, because there is a large body of men in this country, and one growing continually in the Hebrew faith, whose rabbis and priests are men of great learning and unquestioned piety, and whose adherents are as good citizens as true patriots as in any country, but who are excluded in this section; and because also under the Constitution of the United States Congress is forbidden to make any law respecting the establishment of a state religion. While we are in one sense a Christian people, and yet in another sense not the most Christian people in the world this is not a "Christian government" nor a government which has any connection with any one form of religion in preference to any other form. I speak of course in a political sense alone. For these reasons I move the amendment. While confining it to religious societies it will leave the

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<sup>69</sup> Korn cited (War of rebellion...official records of the Union and Confederate Armies Washington D.C. 1860-1901).



appointment open to those at least who are of the Hebrew faith, and who by terms of the bill are unjustly and without constitutional warrant excluded from it.<sup>70</sup>

Vallindigham's appeal failed to move his fellow members of the House. They rejected his amendment and passed the bill with its discriminatory act. Isaac Mayer Wise was incensed by this, but he urged his constituents and followers to wait and remember this "deliberate act of injustice and to hold their indignation in check until the end of the war, when surely they would be free to square accounts."<sup>71</sup> However the question of Jewish chaplaincy was not put to rest. In September of 1861 a YMCA worker happened to visit the military camp in Virginia where the 65th Regiment of the 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry (known as Cameron's Dragoons) was stationed. This worker was horrified to discover that a Jew named Michael Allen, of Philadelphia, was serving as the regimental chaplain. The informer started such an uproar in the public press that Assistant Adjutant General of the Army, George D Ruggles, was forced to act warning that "any person mustered into service as a chaplain, who is not not a regularly ordained clergyman of a Christian denomination, will be a once discharged without pay or allowance."<sup>72</sup> Allen resigned before accepting discharge under such humiliating circumstances. Korn agrees that, Allen had been elected without any deliberate intent in to disobey the law. The law was passed only a few days before Allen enlisted July 18, 1861. The officers who appointed him Chaplain could hardly have known of the prohibitory clause. The commanding officer of the regiment was Jewish, Colonel Max Friedman, and many of his men were also Jewish. Sadly, Allen was a good chaplain, as his men attested to, but that was not enough.

Good chaplains were hard to find. The paymaster General of the Army, for instance, wrote to Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts on December 5, 1861 that: "I regret to say that very many holding this position of chaplain are utterly unworthy... think

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<sup>70</sup> Bertram Wallace Korn, "Congressman Clement L. Vallindigham's Championship of Jewish Chaplaincy During the Civil War" (Philadelphia, 1962) in Wyles Collection UCSB Library.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

none should be appointed who did not come recommended by the highest ecclesiastical authority."<sup>73</sup> Korn further tells us that Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise took great delight in quoting the assertion of a Presbyterian Journal that "two thirds of the Chaplains in the Army are unfit for their place." One of Lincoln's aides, W. O. Stoddard, charged that military chaplains were for the most part, "broken down reverends long since out of the ministry for incompetency or other causes, men who could not induce any respectable church to place itself under their charge." Lincoln's angry comment was that "I do believe that our army chaplains, take them as a class, are the worst men we have in the service."<sup>74</sup> After Allen, Jewish leaders pushed for the elected assignment of Reverend Arnold Fischel to take over. Fischel's appointment to election to seek the commission was an effort to test the law and to thereby eventually secure a public statement about Jewish rights in the matter. His application was denied.

Finally in July of 1862, Congress modified the Chaplaincy requirements so that any regularly ordained minister of some religious denomination might, with the proper recommendations and qualifications, seek appointment as a chaplain. Later upon several requests, President Lincoln allowed appointment of a Jewish chaplain to a Philadelphia hospital. The chaplaincy controversy had magnified the smaller instances of recurrent anti-semitic undertones that had remained within the public and legal opinion of United States government officials.<sup>75</sup> Clearly, while in theory the United States supported religious toleration, suspicions and prejudices still abounded, especially during the Civil War. While the Chaplaincy controversy on the surface may seem to convey very little about national attitudes and particularly about the role of religious symbolism, which are some of the main areas of concern of this paper, it is important for the reader to understand that the chaplaincy controversy shows how deeply negative imagery had convinced America of the

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73 Bertram Wallace Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War (Philadelphia, 1951) 61.

74 Ibid.

75 Bertram Wallace Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1951).

"otherness" of Judaism. Exceptionalism was not always the case scenario in America. The government at times even had a hard time swallowing its preconceptions to condone equality. Religious imagery of the Jew as clannish, proselytizing and untrustworthy were at work to convince many that Jews were not fit to hold counseling positions in the Army

## The Negative Imagery of Jews in Mid 19th Century Literature and Press

In the July 1858 edition of Harpers New Monthly Magazine a friendly and sensible correspondent wrote from Chatham street New York... "My Dear Easy Chair, let us converse about that which you style very Jewish."<sup>76</sup> The reader then continued on in a calm and intelligent fashion to call to account the awful and more importantly all too common habit of using the word Jew as a stigma synonymous with selfishness and meanness. He also quotes many curious facts from the statistics of the race in this country and others, and with many kindly and cogent arguments invited the Easy Chair to be more thoughtful and just to Jews thereafter.

The Easy Chair (or Lounger in some later editions of Harpers) felt that all his column's references to Jews were truthful to the race and to be expected. Citing the crucifixion of Christ by the Jews, the Easy Chair responded to the letter writer who complained about his anti-Semitic words with the following remarks. The columnist wrote that, "That feeling (about and against Jews) accounts for the general odium which hangs over the Jews in Christian countries. It has passed now, of course, into a traditional prejudice. Very few people who call a man who is a hard trader a Jew really understand why they do it."<sup>77</sup> The Easy Chair then proceeded to explain the numerous reasons why Jews deserved all of the criticisms and stereotypes Christians so often directed at their communities. The Easy Chair could justify in his own logic the legitimacy for the negative attitudes and actions Jews often encountered throughout history. According to the Easy Chair,

The prejudice against them (the Jews) begot in their minds a retaliatory hatred of the Christians they came to deal with naturally in coin which was of absolute value everywhere...they extorted all they could...became sour and sordid, lived to accumulate money and became naturally a byword. The Jew passed into literature. The legend of the Wandering Jew was treated in a hundred different ways. He was the type of sin and suffering that typified the race. Shakespeare

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<sup>76</sup> Harpers New Monthly Magazine, July 1858 ed. The Lounger editorial.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

created Shylock; Sir Walter Scott, Isaac of York; Dickens and Thackeray, Fagin and Moses; besides all the other money lenders and usurers in every literature.<sup>78</sup>

The Easy Chair also expressed his opinion that "Our Hebrew friends still could not demand a more heavy statement on or of their side... they also cannot expect a worldwide prejudice ingrained by religious fanaticism to perish rapidly especially with (Jews) men like Rothschild holding in his pocket the peace of the world."<sup>79</sup>

Just who was the Easy Chair? He was, from 1853-1892, George William Curtis. He came from a New England family that believed profoundly in the Protestant work ethic and the religion of hard work. He lived at Brook Farm, the famous nineteenth century utopian commune for intellectuals like Nathaniel Hawthorne, during his twenties. Besides his work as the Easy Chair/Lounger he also wrote verse novels, essays and served as a political editor of Harpers Weekly from its founding in 1857. An influential member of the Republican party, he used the weekly publication as a chief weapon in his crusades against slavery, municipal corruption and other pet peeves.<sup>80</sup> So was he an anti-Semite? Certainly not in the "sincere" or "inner-circle" range of a von Schönerer, Drumont, Streicher, or Hitler. However, his often matter of fact and blasé attitudes and reflections on the "true" nature of Jews undeniably were bigoted, prejudicial and anti-Semitic under the later twentieth century standards which historians hold him to today.

Just as historians for years have claimed America to be the exceptionalist haven for Jews, many teachers of American literature have previously published a number of articles on the Jew in literature and stated that, "literary anti-Semitism does not rear its ugly head until later in the nineteenth century....Indeed, it is one of the most enduring glories of American literature that it was left for the most part untouched by this contagion."<sup>81</sup> Louis

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> John Fischer, Six in the Easy Chair (Chicago:University of Illinois Press,1973)

<sup>81</sup> Louis Harap, The Image of the Jew in American Literature, (Philadelphia,1974),4.

Harap argues that the portrayal of the Jewish character in American literature shows that the contagion was no less prevalent in our literature than in English literature. Arguing that American literature simply takes off where the stereotypical image of the Jew was personified in British literature, Harap criticizes American historians who continually down-play the literary stereotyping of the Jews.

Harap complains that Oscar Handlin, who has also written on the history of the Jew in the United States, writes as if the literary stereotype of the Jew took on negative definition only in the 1890's. The stereotype, he explains, became delineated in the course of the nineteenth century as the number of Jews in the country increased; the stereotype became 'distinct' by the 1890s.

Harap strips the historiographical argument that Oscar Handlin "adduces to prove the allegedly still-indeterminate conception of the Jew and the indistinctiveness of the stereotype."<sup>82</sup> Handlin used many examples of ambiguous images of Jews like the Leedle Yawcob Strauss poems of the New Englander Charles Follen Adams which appeared in periodicals at the end of the Civil War and up until the 1870s. Harap argues that the "untenability" of Handlin's thesis can be demonstrated by this very example and others written even prior to the Civil War.

Harap tells us that Handlin incorrectly maintained that Adams merely "implies that Yawcob is Jewish, but not "recognizably different from any other German," and that he "was pictured in a wholly kindly light."<sup>83</sup> Harap disagrees with Handlin, insisting that Handlin and other scholars have only looked on the surface of the period's literature. Harap then goes on to say that, "It is clear that Adams did have a conception of the Jew, since many appear in a poem entitled "A Tale of the Nose", in the very same volume as the "Leedle Yawcob Strauss" poem."<sup>84</sup> Harap also argues that the Jew, contrary to Handlin's

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

far-reaching generalization about Adams', poetry is explicitly discriminatory and negatively differentiated from the German:

'Twas a hard case, that which happened in Lynn  
Haven't heard of it, eh? Well then to begin,  
There's a Jew down there they call "Old Mose,"  
Who travels about, and buys old clothes.

Now Mose—which is same in short for Moses—  
Had one of the biggest kind of noses  
It had a sort of instep in it,  
And he fed it with snuff 'about once a minute.

One day he got in a bit of a row  
With a German chap who had kissed his frau,  
And, trying to punch him à la Mace,  
Had his nose cut off up close to his face.

He picked it up from the ground,  
And quickly back in its place 'twas bound,  
Keeping the bandage upon his face  
Until it had fairly healed in place.

Alas for Mose! 'Twas a sad mistake  
Which he in his haste that day did make.  
For, to add still more to his bitter cup,  
He found he had placed it *wrong side up*.

"There's no great loss without some gain;"  
And Moses says in a jocular vein.  
He arranged it so for taking snuff,  
As he never before could get enough.

One thing, by the way, he forget to add,  
Which makes the arrangement rather bad:  
Although he can take his snuff with ease,  
He has to stand on his head to sneeze!<sup>85</sup>

Handlin, Harap argues, wants us to believe that it was only "by then, the 1890s, that the Jew was, through literature, negatively identified "as a peddler, as an old clothes dealer, and as a pawnbroker."<sup>86</sup> Handlin also asserts that "the American stereotype involved no hostility and or negative judgement. Harap's The Image of the Jew in American Literature disproves Handlin's assertions. Harap wisely points out that Handlin was overly

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.



impressed by the new quality of anti-Semitism in the United States, which was similar to that in Europe, and that he underestimated the quality and quantity of prejudice present before this.

Handlin asserts that the rendering of the Jew on the stage and in Vaudeville and comic magazine caricatures were not meant as anti-Semitic insults and were not taken as such at the time. Yet Harap once again disagrees citing comments in the English Jewish press of the time. This study also provides similar examples that show that many Jews did find the negative portrayal of the Jew to be insulting. For instance, in the 1850s, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise stated that one reason for publishing his Jewish magazine, The Israelite, was to counteract the current stream of abusive Jewish stereotyping. "A rascally Jew," he explains, "figured in every cheap novel, every newspaper printed some stale jokes about Jews to fill up space, every back woodsman had a few such jokes on hand for use in public addresses; and all this called forth not one word of protest from any source."<sup>87</sup>

As the Easy Chair had astutely noted in his bigoted remarks, the Jew, and all the negative connotations and images that had been pinned to him appeared in every literature. Harap is not the first to study the image of the Jew, nor was Handlin. However, very little work has been done on analyzing American literature. English literature was thoroughly studied for anti-Semitic imagery by Monatgue, Frank Modder, and Edgar Rosenberg. Modder asserted that history "shows that invariably the poet, the novelist, and the dramatist reflect the attributes of contemporary society in their collective presentation of the Jewish character, and that portrayal changes with the economic and social dangers of each decade."<sup>88</sup> Modder also added that "one must note the relation which it (the history of the Jewish character in literature) establishes between social prejudice and social change, the growth of humanitarianism and the growth human freedom."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Louis Harap, The Image of the Jew in American Literature (Philadelphia, 1974) 8.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

Edward Rosenberg's From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction, in Harap's view, brings up an important issue to consider while analyzing the "exceptionalist" question and the image of the Jew in American thought. Rosenberg said, "A study of the Jew in English fiction is fundamentally a study in the stasis of thought."<sup>90</sup> Harap suggests that his work and evidence shows, just as Rosenberg's in English fiction did, that American stereotypes of Jews survive with a desperate kind of stubbornness. However, Harap also points out that Rosenberg lacked a social approach to studying anti-Semitism, in particularly with a psychological approach in mind." During the 1950s when he was writing about Jewish stereotyping in English literature Rosenberg said that, "The whole question of private race prejudice came to be recognized less and less as a social economic problem and was increasingly left for the charge of the psychiatrists."<sup>91</sup> Rosenberg was adverse to psychoanalyzing anti-Semitism as is Louis Harap. In fact only recently has a scholar attempted to try to analyze the origins and rise in anti-Semitism in America in this fashion. Frederic Cople Jaher's A Scapegoat in the Wilderness: The Origins and Rise in Anti-Semitism in America argues that, "any comprehensive analysis of anti-Semitism in America or elsewhere must consider the interplay of religious, social and psychological factors. Of these factors, I believe religious prejudice, specifically Christian hostility towards Jews is paramount."<sup>92</sup> Clearly in terms of this paper's focus, Jaher is correct, since most of anti-Semitic imagery and material originated from religious themes in the historical novels of the nineteenth century. These images are bound in religious imagery laden with biblical symbols and later taints of condemnations directed by the Church at the Jewish community. While Shylock and Fagin, two fictional characters, granted are not directly taken out of the Bible, they were created out of the Medieval Jewish-Christian tensions that later produced Christian morality plays in which the Jew always figured

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Edgar Rosenberg, Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction (Palo Alto, 1960) 188.

<sup>92</sup> Frederic Cople Jaher A Scapegoat in the Wilderness: The Origins and Rise in Anti-Semitism in America (Harvard University Press, 1994) 16.

badly. As Louise Mayo fervently contends, literary images of Jews built off the negative symbols of religious imagery as the Jew as a Christ killer and usurer. "In many ways American literature followed English literary conventions and thereby disregarded American realities. Generally, there was little relationship between the picture of Jews in American fiction and the Jews actually living in nineteenth century America. The image of the Jew in American literature through the century showed as little tendency to change as the British one Rosenberg discusses. Imaginative writing was far less reflective of the upheavals in the American Jewish community than the press."<sup>93</sup>

Mayo, Dobkowski, Harap and Sarna all show how the images of deicide, Shylock, the Wandering Jew, parvenu Jews, nationalistic Jews etc. all follow the Jew to America in its literature, both popular fiction and non-fiction. However, as Louise Mayo correctly contends,

Although the British stereotypes of the Jew were part of American literature, it is important to note that American writers were simply not as obsessed by Jews as the British counterparts. In Britain, major writers focused upon Jewish villains and heroines. Dickens and Trollope created memorable Jewish arch villains, Fagin comes to mind in this regard. Sir Walter Scott and his *Ivanhoe* romanticized the quintessential beautiful Jewess.<sup>94</sup>

The word ambivalence probably best sums up the characterization of Jews as they appear in the pages of American literature. While Jewish American writers of consequence rarely focused on Jews, strangely enough many non-Jewish writers did. However, when Jewish characters appear, usually they are clad in stereotypical imagery that is laden with images of deicide, usury, war profiteering and parvenu social climbing.

The image of the Jew underwent a variety of individualizations in accordance with the Jews' economic and social position in society. During the emergence of the United States as a nation, Jews fulfilled very small roles in American literature. However, despite their small numbers, negative connotations still appeared from both realistic and fantastic points of view.

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<sup>93</sup> Louise Mayo, The Ambivalent Image (New Jersey, 1988), 41.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

As Harap tells us, " During the years when the United States was emerging as a nation, bankruptcy was a prominent national issue. The fact that Jewish bankers of North Africa served as negotiators between the Barbary rulers and Americans explains the inclusion of Jewish characters in that capacity in drama corresponding to that period."<sup>95</sup> Harap accounts for the paucity of contemporary Jewish characters in the first half century of the Republic by the fact that few Jews actually lived in the United States. Jews constituted about one tenth of one percent of the total population. When a contemporary Jew did appear in fiction he was usually met in a foreign country, where many Americans in the early on years met their first Jew. More importantly, despite the lack of Jewish characters, stereotypical characterizations did not reflect a low number in proportion to more realistic representations.

Harap summarizes the stereotypical characterizations of the Jew in American literature. When the Jew became a commercial competitor on the frontier he was mercilessly caricatured, as in grotesque anti-Semitic depictions of Jews in the frontier novels of John Beauchamp Jones which will be discussed in the following section. Jones' novel The Western Merchant, was intended to instruct the aspiring merchant in the expanding nation. In the mid nineteenth century the Jew who appeared in fiction was also often portrayed as the local pawnbroker or second-hand clothes dealer on Chatham street in New York, where he was often found in reality, although most of the fiction rested on the premise that this was the Jew's only occupation. Harap understands that judgement of writers for their attitudes toward Jews must be made in terms of the historical context. This is not to condone prejudice or to absolve writers of their responsibility. A nineteenth century writer held certain prejudices, which obviously surfaced in his or her writings just as those of present-day authors works do. However, until the images and the writers of stereotyping characterizations are further examined they will continue to appear without critical comment thereby leading the readers subconscious free to adopt the author's

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<sup>95</sup>Louis Harap The Image of the Jew in American Lit (Philadelphia,1974),11.

bigotry. As Harap argues, the recurrence of the stereotypical Jewish figure in literature without critical comment is in itself one index of the continued presence of anti-Semitism in its audience both at the time of authorship and reading.

Beginning in the 1830s a visible change occurred within the Jewish population because of the immigration from Germany that reached its heights by 1860. "In 1830 there were about 300 Jews in the United States. By 1850 there were 50,000 Jews, 3/5 of whom were from Germany. Of the total of three million immigrants in America between 1850-1860 about 100,000 were Jews. By 1860 about fifty cities had organized Jewish communities. New York had about 40,000 Jews, Cincinnati had 6,000, while New Orleans had several thousand Jewish newcomers. In 1861 about 15% of all United States Jews resided in the South.<sup>96</sup>

As Harap tells us, the newcomer found in America a social condition freer than what he/she previously knew. "There was no pattern of discrimination backed by ideology, if we exclude negative theological dogmas about Jews like the shylock imagery that often was referred to reflect the economic nature of the Jew. This does not mean that anti-Semitism did not exist, it is just a different form from that same hatred which has arisen at earlier and later periods in history."<sup>97</sup> Harap uses John Higham's own words against him too when he quotes his statement that, "A distinction should be drawn between actual social relations and stereotypes and ideas; the prevalence of good relations does mean that American attitudes toward Jews were ever wholly favorable. Behavior and belief do not necessarily coincide in any area of life... American conceptions of Jews in the abstract at no time lacked the unfavorable elements imbedded in European tradition."<sup>98</sup>

The theological condemnation of the Jews for their collective refusal to accept Christ as the messiah still continued, while the economic stereotype of the money-obsessed

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 47

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

Jewish usurer continued to grow and assume a dominant place in American popular culture and mythology especially through literature.

### **John Beauchamp Jones As An Author of Stereotypical Imagery**

Many scholars who have studied the writing of John Beauchamp Jones, a man who spent much of his life striving for literary fame, correctly point out that he gained it only after his death despite the popularity of his works. However, in almost all accounts the anti-Semitic imagery that appears in almost all of Jones' writing is ignored and seemingly unimportant for literary criticism. However the historian's purpose, the appearances of anti-Semitic stereotyping in Jones' novels and diary can no longer be ignored. Jones' was an influential man, both as a civilian and as a high-ranking war clerk with cabinet connections in the Confederacy. The anti-Semitism and stereotypical prejudices that he harbored within the seemingly "harmless" pages of his fictional novels not only fostered the growth of more negative imagery but its further acceptance. Furthermore, later on, when Jones had more power in state matters, his bigotry became more dangerous for foreigners and problematic for Judah P. Benjamin, a high ranking Jewish official in the Confederacy.

John Beauchamp Jones was born on March 6, 1810 in Baltimore, Maryland. He spent a great portion of his boyhood years living in the border states of Kentucky and Missouri, where he obtained an abiding love for the Southern traditions. In 1840, Jones married Frances Custis of Virginia's Eastern Shore. The following year he became the editor of a Baltimore newspaper, The Saturday Visitor. Edgar Allen Poe commenting on his editorial work at that paper once praised his "judgement and ability." By in 1841, Jones had also produced his first novel, Wild Western Scenes. He had to publish it at his own expense, but this series of fictional escapades ultimately sold thousands of copies. Nevertheless Jones, in his later published diary always complained about his shortage of funds. Much of his misfortune he was quick to blame Jew speculators for.



An economically based anti-Semitism is visible in a series of novels by John Beauchamp Jones in which merchants are the villains of society and more importantly they are always the Jewish merchants. Jones previewed his later war-time anti-Semitism in stories about merchants in Missouri (not the ever popular Chatham Street, New York) where he had grown up and embarked upon a brief and unsuccessful commercial career himself. Jones's use of the negative stereotypings of Jews is most evident with the menacing outsider in The Western Merchant (1849), Moses Tubal, a Jewish pedlar from Indiana "with a prominent nose," "small sparkling eyes" and a Yiddish accent. Jones portrays Tubal and all members of his race as merchants who steal stolen and defective goods, fake bankruptcy and intentionally ruin honest Christian merchants who are also their neighbors.

The way Jones describes Moses Tubal is disturbingly vivid and full of bigotry and stereotyped prejudices. The main character, Luke Shortfield, who is obviously really a autobiographical replacement for Jones, immediately senses that Tubal is a "cunning Jew", in quest of a location to cheat his neighbors and spoil the regular honest traders business. Shortfield suspects Moses of scouting his goods in order to try and undersell him and ultimately steal his customers. He has Shortfield say, "He staid about the store and observed with glistening eyes every dollar I received."<sup>100</sup> Shortfield later receives a letter about the "dangerous Jew pedlar from Indiana," which reads, "Beware of him. He will sell his goods low enough no doubt... but it is strongly suspected they are stolen goods which his robber friends have employed him to sell."<sup>101</sup>

Luke's "good Christianly neighbor" Mr. Grund, insists that Moses must have written the letter himself. "The Jew wrote it, I know something of their tricks. They are good judges of human nature. If the impression should get abroad that the goods are

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<sup>100</sup>John Beauchamp Jones, The Western Merchant (Philadelphia, 1849) 128.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.



stolen, a majority of the people would prefer to buy them, for that very reason. They will think they can be had for less money than goods got for an honest way."<sup>102</sup>

In the mind of Shortfield and therefore the author everything about Moses was characteristic of the peddling Jews. Jones wrote a telling passage that conveys a great deal about his anti-Semitic perceptions when he has Shortfield say, "Success is their motto and they pursue it with indomitable perseverance, and with a total indifference to reputation. They have no credit themselves and they credit nobody. They trade upon the productions of others, they never create or produce anything, and cheat the Christians with their own wares. Such was the opinion I conceived of the peculiar class to which my rival belonged. It may not have been altogether unmixed with unfounded prejudice; nevertheless, it has not been quite removed by the experience of subsequent years."<sup>103</sup>

It is obvious to the scholar of anti-Semitic imagery that Jones recreated and transported Shylock imagery across the Atlantic to the Western frontier with Moses Tubal and The Western Merchant. Here the Jew is represented as alien, intruder, parasite, predator, sinister, a manipulator and subverter of American pioneer ideals. Frederic Cople Jaher points out that furthermore, "in his wartime diary Jones would reinvoke this image of the Jew as the treacherous despoiler. After the war, in America and abroad, Shylock was transformed into a more reprehensible villain. He became Rothschild, the Svengali of an international Jewish financial conspiracy that cheated innocent industrious farmers, workers and tradesmen while plundering Christian nations."<sup>104</sup>

In the mind of Jones and his readers the Jew and foreigner appeared as an illegitimate competitor and threat to their success. As Luke Shortfield explains it in The Western Merchant, which was written as a kind of guidebook for the man who wanted to open up a business out west, "Every Western merchant who has to compete with a Jew

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 131

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>104</sup> Frederic Cople Jaher, A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness (Harvard University Press, 1994), 237

rival will beat no loss to appreciate my feelings of joy and triumph to beat the Jew at his own game."<sup>105</sup> In fact Jones has Shortfield engage Tubal in a pricing war that almost ruins him financially in order to beat this "Judas." After the pricing wars had concluded Shortfield remarks that Moses felt at last that he had been outdone by a Christian competitor. In the eyes of all of Jones's characters in The Western Merchant Jews are exceedingly vindictive, and most pertinacious in their efforts to cripple their Christian competitors. The message is clear for the reader who is repeatedly retold the advice of a more experienced Market Street man from St. Louis who said that, "He made it a rule never to trust a Jew."

Jones also later derogated and further stereotyped Jews in another one of his novels The Winkles (1855), in which the story does not center around business, but rather focuses on a Jesuit Papal plot versus democratic Protestant America. However, a secondary character in this nativistic Know-Nothing themed novel is Abraham Laban, a wealthy and greedy Jewish pawnbroker called "Great Nose." Laban, a gross materialist, refuses to buy a poem from the protagonist Pollen Winkle stating that, "I pursue my business to amass riches, not to support men of genius."

Later on when the character Pollen returns to the den of Abraham Laban, the Jew, to borrow money, Jones has Laban defend himself against the traditional Shylock imagery and slander. "It is astounding," Laban says, "that so many hundreds rely upon me for my fortunes, and at the same time condemn me for my gains. Yet how could I furnish so many with money, if I did not derive it from others? If I did not keep my profits my purse would soon be exhausted and then the Jew could assist no one. Blind, ungrateful fools!" To which the protagonist Winkle replies, "And that's as true as any speech Shylock ever made." Nevertheless, Jones does not stop with that because he has the "cormorant Jew" then offer a pitiful sum for the portfolio and copyrights of the poet he once refused as a mere "man of genius." Later on, Jones tells us when they are reclaimed, "that the interest

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<sup>105</sup> John Beauchamp Jones, The Western Merchant (Philadelphia, 1849), 148.

had accumulated to such a geometrical absurdity that it required the poet all of his funds to satisfy the smiling rascal Jew."<sup>106</sup>

In Jones's The Border War (1859) he once again unrelentingly attacks the Jews. The novel was an anticipated precursor to the Civil War. Early on in The Border War, Jones writes about an auction of stocks and real estate which he focuses on the stereotypical Shylock Jewish figures who he claims were "mostly the majority of the purchasers." In his analysis of Jones's The Border War, Harap tells us that the author characterizes the Jews as greedy vultures who are constantly snatching and scrambling for the scattered remains of ruined fortunes. They were incessantly bargaining, chaffering and quarreling. Clearly, the image of Shakespeare's Shylock of The Merchant of Venice was well apparent in the dime novel of the nineteenth century.

As a clerk and official in the Confederate War Department, Jones would later keep a diary, which was published in 1866, that bristled with anti-Semitic invectives. A September 1861 entry claimed of Jews, "Having no nationality, all wars are harvest for them." In 1862 and 1863 Jones repeatedly described Jews as "profiteering extortioners engaging in illicit trade." As Frederic Cople Jaher states about Jones, "This noncombatant, who secured safe government positions for his nephews, also accused Jews in January of 1864 of dodging military service by fleeing Richmond with the money they had made. Despairing the noble cause in his February 1864 entry, Jones combined themes of flight, cowardice and betrayal, claiming that "five Jews absconded to avoid military service in the Confederate states, no doubt planning to relay all the information they could to the enemy."<sup>107</sup> Jones also maintained throughout his diary that the Jewish Secretary of State for the Confederacy, Judah P. Benjamin, was a "Jewish Judas" who continually wronged

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<sup>106</sup> John Beauchamp Jones, The Winkles (New York, 1855), 33, 169.

<sup>107</sup> Frederic Cople Jaher, A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness (Harvard, 1994), 222. And Jones, A Confederate War Clerk's Diary (1866) volumes 1 and 2.

the South by providing illegal passports out of the "Jew produced-inflationary Confederate economy" to foreigners.

It seems that the portrayals of Jews through images like those of Jones's characters were fairly commonplace in nineteenth century literature. it is also probably not to unimaginable that other individuals also held the same contempt toward Jews that Jones did, especially when one reads the words of Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman.. Moreover, in caricatures Jews were also only presented stereotypically with largely grotesquely hooked noses, mangled speech patterns and usurish motives propelling them through daily life in captions. Clearly, the nineteenth century American most often therefore saw the Jew in this way since many did not have the chance, or desire in some cases, to become acquainted with Jews. Therefore the Jew was seen as an exploiter who cared only for money rather than than grander ideals most Americans supposedly were contemplating. When the Civil War would break out in 1860 and war profiteering became a virtual necessity for a businessman's survival, the Jew was singled out for this unchristianly behavior. The image of the Jew as Shylock and an untrustworthy merchant, that had been popularized by countless works of fiction and caricatures had become fully ingrained in the nineteenth century American's psyche. This proved to be especially true in the South, where the words Jew and Yankee both held the same negative connotations.

**Economic Realities Versus The Reemergence of Shylock:  
Jews as Peddlers, Usurers, and The Explosive Grant Affair**

"If the present state of things were to continue at the end of the war we would probably find nearly all the property of the Confederacy in the hands of the Jewish shylocks."<sup>111</sup>  
Congressman Henry S. Foote of Tennessee, Jan 14th 1863

"It is a mournful fact that in these troubled times when intolerance and prejudice cast their baneful seed throughout the land ...that we have nothing..no defending voice has been heard..why we have no Jewish newspaper to justify us before the world and explain to us our position,to remind Israel that it is not a race of shopkeepers."<sup>112</sup>

"Success is their motto and they (the Jews) pursue it with indomitable perseverance, and with a total indifference to reputation. They have no credit themselves and they credit nobody. They trade on the productions of others."<sup>113</sup> John Beauchamp Jones

These above cited quotations give the reader a better idea of the negative perceptions that Americans held about Jews during the mid-nineteenth century in America in regard to their role in commerce, businesses, and the overall American economy. The stereotypes of the Jew as Shylock and an untrustworthy money lender and/or merchant that were commonplace in European literature during the Middle Ages obviously had traveled across the Atlantic to linger and further imbedded themselves into the psyche of America. As historians have noted through researching the popular press, novels, and plays, Jews were still negatively perceived as a people who would do anything to get ahead and become successful while living in the diaspora. More importantly, in terms of this paper's objective of dispelling the absolutism of the exceptionalist notion, these stereotypical images that were widely presented to the American public clouded perceptions of reality in that while the Jew was living next door to and with the Yankee, who displayed similar economic shrewdness; the Jew was insulted while Yankee ingenuity and craftiness were applauded. Clearly, while America may have been a safe haven in terms of political

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<sup>111</sup> Bertram Wallace Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War (Philadelphia, 1951).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> John Beauchamp Jones, The Western Merchant (Philadelphia, 1849),123.

privileges and freedoms the negative imagery of the Jews still persisted and reappeared throughout colonial times to the present thereby presenting American Jewry with a great deal of discrimination. From rejection on job, credit, and loan applications to a more shocking climax with Jewish expulsions from Tennessee and Georgia during the Civil War, America's inability to fairly judge the Jew instead of accepting the traditional and flat stereotypical impressions provided for instances of anti-Semitism, inequality, and pain for the incoming Jewish immigrant.

Throughout the nineteenth century Jews were frequently condemned for their avid materialism and avarice as though Americans had no interest in similar objectives. As Hasia Diner points out, there is no reason to presume that Jews had any greater interest in upward economic mobility than did all other Americans. "But Gentile writers, ministers, and lecturers played upon the image of the Jew as money maker to exculpate the masses of Americans who themselves seemed to be putting economic advancement over community, God, and family by abandoning farms and small towns for big cities where money could be made. By portraying the Jewish peddler as luring farm women into buying unneeded cheap trinkets, writers and orators posited the Jew as the agent of rural discontent, an alien disrupting the heretofore idyllic tranquility of American life."<sup>114</sup> The Jewish peddler also was also seen as a threat to city dwellers. This can be seen in the pervasive negative imagery of the Chatham Street Jew who was depicted as selling flashy and poorly made clothes at the expense of gullible customers. This kind of rhetoric had implicit implications since it led many to accept the idea that, "Without the Jews, Americans would have been content with what they had. But the Jews, outsiders with no stake in rural American, Protestant culture, came with their wares and their profit motive, bred unhappiness, and undermined the values of traditional American life. The blame for the breakdown of these values, accordingly, lay with the Jews and their alien, commercial ways. Throughout this, Jews served as symbols of other Americans' confusion about their own value system.

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<sup>114</sup> Hasia R. Diner, A Time For Gathering (John Hopkins Press, 1992), 66.



Except for the Civil War incidents, however, the use of Jews in solving the American dilemma did not move beyond words to deeds."<sup>115</sup>

In fact, no set of images demonstrated the contradictory nature of American views of Jews more graphically than those connecting Jews and money. Discussions of Jews reflected nineteenth century American ambivalences about money-making, profit, and class consciousness. As discussed before, America's paradoxical nature runs very deep. On the one hand, Americans considered themselves idealistic and willing to forgo materialism for the pursuit of democracy and freedom. In fact their public discourse "sneered at the evils of commercialization, praising the simple yeoman farmer ideal America was founded upon. However, as any student of nineteenth century American history can tell you, on the other hand more realistic Americans readily strived toward material gain as they set about creating social institutions and public policies aimed at economic expansion. Scholars like Diner, Gerber, and Jaher argue that Jews provided a medium by which these conflicting values about the future of commercial life were played out. Jews, who were associated with business and almost totally absent from the agrarian lifestyle therefore became symbols of material acquisition through stereotyping in the press, theater, literature and politics. As mentioned before, connecting Jews to money-making grew out of a millenium-old tradition. European Christians had depicted Jewish commercialism negatively, despite their dependence upon it. Americans would quickly learn to do the same, despite the fact that Yankee capitalism and shrewd business sense was supposedly a virtue instead of a sin.

The majority of Jews in America during the nineteenth century did in fact engage in peddling. The average Jewish immigrant arrived in the United States with a small amount of capital and therefore only the lower levels of the economic world were open to him. Many became peddlers because it offered a sense of entrepreneurship and a temporary occupation until something better came along. Most Jews hoped that successful peddling

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

would allow for the future accumulation of capital with the goal of one day owning a permanent store. For both Jews and non-Jews peddling continued to offer a viable method of economic advancement. "It too had its own hierarchy of basket peddler, trunk carrier, wagon baron, and jewelry count. At the top of the ladder was the store prince, the man who had graduated to a permanent establishment."<sup>116</sup>

Peddling attracted ambitious men of varying backgrounds and educational levels. According to Naomi Cohen's Encounter with Emancipation, "There were even religious functionaries whose jobs in Europe had evaporated with the depletion of village populations in the ranks of the peddlers."<sup>117</sup> The appeal of peddling was ubiquitous in the cities as well as in the countryside. Outside the larger and established cities the peddler was especially visible. For example, in Easton, Pennsylvania, a town located in the heart of an agricultural district, 46 percent of the Jews were engaged in peddling in 1840, 70 percent in 1845, 55 percent in 1850, 59 percent in 1855, 39 percent in 1860 and 12 percent in 1870. While in New York in 1855, less than 10 percent of the Jews, but hundreds more in actual numbers, engaged in peddling. The number of peddlers in the United States has been estimated at 10,669 in 1850 and 16,594 in 1860."<sup>118</sup>

As Cohen tells us, "by the eve of the Civil War most of the more than 16,000 peddlers in the United States were Jews. They walked in the footsteps of the Yankees, who by then had moved up the economic ladder."<sup>119</sup> In both the North and the South the Jew in the nineteenth century became a fixture as the peddler who dealt in clothing and small goods. Cohen remarks further that of all the regions of the country, "The South with its closed slave economy and rigidly stratified society appeared to be the least inviting on the surface. Nevertheless, that region, too offered a compensatory feature. The slaves and the Jew traded with the blacks as he did with the plantation owners and the poor whites

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Naomi Cohen, Encounter With Emancipation (Philadelphia, 1985), 19.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

constituted a buffer for the peddler."<sup>120</sup> As Steven Hertzberg notes in his Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta 1845-1915, "For country peddlers, who carried their assortment of goods in a sack generally spent a week at a stretch in the rural townships of Georgia and Alabama. For many immigrants like Charles Greenberg, this experience provided their initial contact with blacks and a introduction into Southern racial mores. Greenberg recalled that he, "Walked over and greeted them...So they all stopped working and looked at me, not because I was carrying a pack, but as I later found out, because I was a white person and had greeted them. It was my good luck that no white person had seen me, because no white person in the South greets a black one."<sup>121</sup> Clearly, in the South the Jew was far better off than the black, and this important to remember when trying to distinguish between differing racial antipathies in nineteenth century America. In most cases the Jew would end up prospering before the black and this undoubtedly kindled later resentments between the two groups. Ironically, for the Jewish peddler the blacks were his best customers. Later on resentments would escalate between the two groups along with the rise of black anti-Semitism which today is growing. In fact when thinking about the origins of black-American anti-Semitism most historians start by discussing this nineteenth century relationship between the black and the Jew.

Since the peddler had very little overhead and the mark-up on his goods usually ranged from between fifty to one hundred percent, his occupation often provided enough money for him to eventually venture to open a retail grocery or clothing/dry goods store. However, here the Jew encountered more opposition since he was entering the economic realm of the Yankee.

This opposition usually manifested itself in the form of discrimination and rejection in obtaining insurance and business loans. As Jews began to try and establish their own stores they had to obtain capital through loan accessors like other businessmen. Often, Jews

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Steven Hertzberg, Strangers Within The Gate, (Philadelphia, 1978) 183-4

encountered hostility and resistance that was based upon religious intolerance and the adoptions of the economic stereotypes of the Jew (discussed earlier) as a usurer, unreliable and greedy. As David Gerber discusses in his article "Cutting Out Shylock: Elite Anti-Semitism and the Quest for Moral Order in the Mid-Nineteenth Century American Market Place", long established European and American stereotypes made it difficult for Jewish businessmen from the Jacksonian era through much of the Gilded Age to obtain credit from non-Jews. Investigators from credit rating bureaus in cities like Buffalo, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Cincinnati, New York, New Orleans, and San Francisco often solely identified applicants by their faith or heritage and used almost identical language when evaluating their credit worthiness. "These men following age old traditions that obviously continued into the nineteenth century, did not pause to think or examine the justification for their views they simply assumed Jewish dishonesty."<sup>122</sup> Excerpts from individual credit reports in Buffalo indicated: "We should deem him safe but he is not a *white* man. He is a Jew, and that you can take into account." "Responsible now," reads another, "but he is a Jew; there is no telling how long he will remain so." Others noted simply, "Jew....be careful," "is considered a sharp and shrewd Jew," "Jew, not to be trusted," "are Jews, and therefore cannot be well estimated." In describing one Jewish Cincinnati business, the credit investigator reported, "They are Jews and little reliance can be placed upon their representations...Creditors had better send their claims at once as delay as is always dangerous with Jews."<sup>123</sup>

David Gerber states that it is difficult to sort out where objective differences left off and prejudicial stereotyping began in these credit reports since both influences clearly were simultaneously at work. Gerber also reminds us that some of these stereotypes were initially grounded on fragments of reality only to later expand into irrational and fantastic contentions. He also adds that this discrimination was the case not only for Jewish

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<sup>122</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, Anti-Semitism in America (New York, 1994) 20.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 20.

merchants but for samples of Buffalo's German, Irish merchants conducting business between 1845 and 1865. However, Jews were clearly judged differently and even more stringently than those two groups. Gerber tells us that while the, "Germans were considered safe due to stolid, conservative, and thrifty habits. Irish were thought risky because of inadequate funds, impulsiveness, ineptitude, and inebriation. When Jews displayed similar traits identical to other minorities however, they were not given the same meaning. Thrift, a virtue in Germans, in Jews denoted miserliness."<sup>124</sup> Finally, as Gerber reasons, Jewish failure, as well as success, was considered, unlike reverses suffered by Germans and Irish, the result of immorality rather than incompetence. Gerber also points out that Jewish business had two distinctive characteristics that aroused suspicion because they were in sharp contrast to those encouraged by the Buffalo Board of Trade and the Christian community. One, Jewish business was typically secretive, conducted in a communal world closed off to Gentiles. Secondly it was deceptive and possessed by its own morality, which was not Christian and thereby risked arousing the perception of intentionally cheating gentiles.

Obviously, as is typically the case with stereotypes and perceptions that are not based upon any realistic knowledge, negative views about Jews were often applied to Jews about whom nothing was really known. Gerber tells us that, "Wrestling unsuccessfully with his conscience, one investigator became mired in contradiction as he tried to balance individual reality and cultural expectation," "The more we know of this man, the less we think of him. But we don't know anything of him that will do us any good or him any harm." While others reluctantly had to side with the individual stating he "Is a son of a --- -- Jew, but is deserving". However, more typically it was stated "May be safe, but undesirable."<sup>125</sup> Ironically, Gerber concludes that for all of the credit investigators' culturally predetermined fears the large majority of Jews turned out to be responsible for

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

their loans. Of the thirty three businesses in the sample studied twenty were said to pay promptly. "Reports on Jewish merchants in Buffalo during the 1850s routinely referred to Judaic unreliability and other vices, yet David Gerber discovered that of Jewish businessmen who failed in there in that decade, 61 percent paid debts promptly, 27 percent slowly, while only 10 percent defaulted."<sup>126</sup>

Frederic Cople Jaher states that other types of discriminatory behavior, "still rare enough to be peripheral and incidental heralded future problems for Jews particularly in the insurance sectors of American business."<sup>127</sup> Some Jews got economic doors closed in their faces with signs that read "No Jews wanted here," as an ad for painters warned in a New York newspaper in 1849. However, it was more typical for a Jew to encounter a more institutionalized form of discrimination and anti-Semitic racism. For instance, although the Atlanta agent of the Southern Mutual Insurance Co. was Jewish, his bosses at his Georgian firm in 1857 instructed employees, like himself, not to issue policies to potential clients of questionable financial standing and specifically mentioned "Wanted Jews without real estate property." Proscriptive want ads and insurance company bias, by the mid and later nineteenth century, were highly damaging weapons of economic prejudice.<sup>128</sup>

A similar hardship to the small scale Jewish merchant and shopkeeper appeared with the refusal of insurance companies to take on "Jew risks". Naomi Cohen tells us that "as early as 1852 the instructions of various companies to their agents contained caveats against insuring itinerant peddlers, small merchants, strangers and Jews. While "Jew" seemed at first to be a generic term interchangeable with any of the other categories that signified instability, an insurance executive later charged "Jews as a class" constituted the worst of swindlers. The more specific accusation that had grown up since the 1850s was

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<sup>126</sup> Frederic Cople Jaher, Scapegoat in the New Wilderness (Harvard University, 1994), 204

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 203

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.



that Jews committed arson and defrauded the companies for the losses that they purposely incurred."<sup>129</sup> These suspicions proved to be especially harmful financially for the Jewish community. For instance, "After a series of fires occurred in New York City's clothing district in 1866, as well as in several Jewish owned properties in the South and the West, insurance companies assumed that the perpetrators were Jews destroying their own businesses to collect insurance money. Within seven months seven major fire insurance companies, Aetna, Manhattan, Niagara, Germania, Hanover, Phoenix and the Republic, agreed not to insure Jewish businessmen in the future. The ban was not the first time that insurance companies had discriminated against Jews; a Georgia company had already classified them in 1852 as "people of a doubtful reputation."<sup>130</sup>

Leonard Dinnerstein informs readers that the 1866 pact among insurance companies to stop dealing with Jews was supposedly a secret but that word later leaked out and thereby unleashed Jewish fury. The cancelling of existing policies and denial of applications led Jewish businessmen to hold protest meetings in Nashville, St. Louis, Richmond, Cleveland, and New York City. Ironically according to Dinnerstein, "So many of them cancelled existing policies that the seven companies lost business and shortly thereafter began wooing Jews again. Yet not a single case of arson was ever proven against any Jewish merchant. Even "the Adjuster", a correspondent of the *Banking and Insurance Chronicle*, stated that "not one in twenty of these [fire] claims is honestly made up."<sup>132</sup> The editors of the journal responded with skepticism:

If "Adjuster" will furnish us the figures showing the over proportion of loses on this property of Jews, of any class, we will not only publish them, but will call to them to the special attention of every insurance paper.<sup>133</sup>

Neither "the adjuster" nor anyone else accepted the challenge but clearly specific facts were less important than general impressions. No matter how Jews conducted their businesses,

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<sup>129</sup> Naomi Cohen , Encounter With Emancipation, (Philadelphia, 1985) 25

<sup>130</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, Anti-Semitism in America (New York, 1994) ,36.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

they more than frequently met with suspicion and distrust from Gentiles." According to New York's leading Anglo-Jewish newspaper, the *Jewish Messenger*, this continual discrimination was explained as the desperate scapegoatism of insurance companies that had suffered financial losses and thereby were attempting to justify themselves to shareholders by providing a probable scapegoat. "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites, the first and newly formed Jewish defense agency, added that 'religious fanaticism', 'ignorance', and 'envy' were also motives at work."<sup>134</sup> Naomi Cohen in Encounter With Emancipation also states that two particular elements in this insurance situation stunned the Jewish community. "First, denial of insurance lowered the standing of local merchants. Like the practices of credit-rating agencies, the hardships foisted upon the small retailer could also injure the business of the larger eastern suppliers. More serious, and again parallel to the credit-rating policies, the stigma of dishonesty was put upon the entire group," and this stigmatization only worsened with the Civil War.<sup>135</sup>

### **The Rise of Anti-Semitism During the American Civil War**

In both the North and the South before and during the American Civil War suspicions abounded about the activities and loyalism of the Jews. Both Southerners and Northerners were likely to maintain the same prejudices and stereotypes they accused them of being "merciless speculators, army slackers, and blockade runners across the land frontiers." However, the Confederacy was probably slightly more anti-Semitic than the more heterogeneous North. The Civil War exacerbated tensions between many polemically factioned groups and minorities and Christians and Jews did not prove to be an exception to this tendency. The denunciation of Jewish merchants was an especially common practice in many of the Southern Confederate States. Take Georgia for instance, where the *Southern Illustrated News* stated that "all that the Jews possess is a plentiful lot of money

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Naomi Cohen, Encounter With Emancipation (Philadelphia JPS, 1985), 26.

together with the scorn of the world. South Carolina's Governor James Orr believed that the Jews in the Confederacy were loyal to the Union and generally adverse to rendering military service... or upholding the rebel cause.<sup>136</sup>

All of these prejudices and anti-Semitic tendencies were not in truth responding to a realistic concern. As Dinnerstein points out, "Despite their residence of at least two and a half centuries, from colonial times to the present, Jews have comprised less than one percent of the whole Southern population."<sup>137</sup> In fact, fewer than 15,000 Jews actually lived in the South by 1860. Therefore, the rise in anti-Semitic feelings did not emerge from the same Jewish population explosion that propelled the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe during the nineteenth century. More likely this hatred and distrust emerged out of what Korn explains as a general dislike of all aliens and foreigners which during the War even created the legend that the Union army was a land of German and Irish mercenaries.<sup>138</sup>

There was a pervasive suspicion of the merchant and storekeeper in nineteenth century America that especially typified the Southern society, which was dominated by the presence of the plantation owner and farmer. Korn points out that here the relationship and suspicion of the merchant was a deeper commitment than existed in the Northern fundamentalist Bible. Moreover, Christianity and the enhanced emotional depression of the Confederacy as the war lingered on, intensified the conflicts between Jews and Christians. Surely the original suspicions or dislikes of the Jews existed before the Civil War, but the four year saga and drawn out demise and defeat of the South only served to exacerbate tensions and foster the creation of more scapegoats. An example of the further anti-Jewish feelings that were expressed through the Southern press can be seen in the *Richmond Enquirer* dated July 15, 1863. Here in the following statement, one can see the stereotypical demonizing of the Jew and the continuation of the belief that all the South's traitors were foreigners. "Foreigners of every age and sex crowded to the office of the

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<sup>136</sup> Dinnerstein Leonard, Jews in the South, (Baton Rouge, 1973) 137

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 128.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 135.

provost marshal in Richmond anxious to get passports to the North by way of the blockade. The Jew, whose ample pockets were stuffed with Confederate money...It is not fair that those who have drained the very life blood out of our people should be let off this quietly and not made to shed the first, at least not the last drop of blood for the government which protected them."<sup>139</sup>

Anti-Jewish mythology has long portrayed and described the Jew as grasping, thievish, and unscrupulous in business practices. Therefore, it should not be too surprising that even in America during a period of severe economic crisis the old stereotype reappeared with new vitality. During the mid-nineteenth century it was a widespread belief that the South's economic problems were due to the Jews. "Extortion" was the word most frequently used by Southerners to describe the high prices charged by merchants and shopkeepers. Although he did not speak for all Southerners, one has only to read John Beauchamp Jones's A Confederate War Clerk's Diary to come to this conclusion. Moreover, since the majority of shopkeepers were Jews a larger number of merchants were seen as extortionists and usurers. During a heated debate in the Confederate House of Representatives on January 14, 1863 concerning the issue of drafting foreigners into the ranks of military service, Congressman Henry S. Foote of Tennessee remarked that he was "not yet prepared to make any specific charges, but he would continue gathering evidence to thereby expose the powerful influence the Jews had over Southern commerce."<sup>140</sup> Foote remarked that, "If the present state of things were to continue at the end of the war we would probably find nearly all the property of the Confederacy in the hands of the Jewish shylocks."<sup>141</sup> Foote thought that foreign Jews were all over this country and furthermore they were under federal protection engaged in trade to the exclusion and disadvantage of Southern citizens. Jews, according to Foote and other Southern officials like John

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid. 136.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

Beauchamp Jones, were undermining the Southern currency. Foote predicted that by the close of the war, "they (the Jews) would have the control of all of the country's cotton and tobacco."<sup>142</sup>

Many Southerners believed this pervasive anti-Semitic imagery and they saw the Jews as the economic villains and war profiteers who were intent on turning their back on the Southern cause. In fact, according to a letter which is now preserved in the Duke University library, the wives of Confederate soldiers who were away fighting the Yankees with the Rebel Army became so desperate that they raided Jewish stores and took whatever they desired at gun point. These "genteel" Southern women fervently justified their illegal and violent actions by accusing the Jewish merchants of speculating on the shortages of goods and thereby making fortunes while their valiant husbands and sons were off fighting for the Southern cause and the life of the Confederate nation. Incidents like these provide us with an example of how powerful and real the stereotypical roles of Jews were perceived as reality in the Southerner's mind.

As Steven Hertzberg points out in his Strangers Within the Gate City - The Jews of Atlanta 1845-1915, "Far less typical than the imagery or portrayal of the Jewish enlistee or the civilian slacker, the press more frequently discussed the Jewish speculator and the land blockade runner."<sup>143</sup> While only small percentages of Jews were speculators the perception was perceived differently. The war unleashed "heretofore dormant prejudices and the Jew provided a convenient and popular scapegoat for much of the South's virulent anger and frustrations."<sup>144</sup> Hertzberg tells the reader that Jews were frequently denounced as disloyal extortionists in Talbotton, Milledgeville, Thomasville, and other Georgian towns. In fact, several Confederate Congressmen, not just Tennessee's Henry S. Foote, held the Jewish people responsible for the shortages of goods and the exponential and

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Hertzberg, Steven, Strangers Within The Gateway The Jews Of Atlanta 1845-1915, (Philadelphia, 1978), 25.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

disturbing rise in prices. Hertzberg explains that in reality speculation was a result of, rather than an apparent cause of, the South's economic failures and problems. Among the actual causes for shortages and high prices were the, "Federal blockade which cut off and starved the South from its traditional sources of supplies and markets, the divergence of industrial potential into the production of ordnance, the banking system's inability to control the currency, the breakdown of the railroad system, the impressment of rolling stock and the Confederate governments interference with commerce and trade."<sup>145</sup> Everyone who produced, sold or purchased goods was involved and thereby partially responsible for the inflationary period and the South's economic problems. Hertzberg also points out that in Atlanta, the extreme shortages were further magnified and aggravated by the implementation of martial law by the Governor and Jefferson Davis and the confiscation of foodstuffs and supplies by soldiers.<sup>146</sup> One Atlantonian remarked that, "Sodom and Gomorrah [sic] of extortion, engrossing and speculation whose maw nve're knew satiety, nor conscience or law, where high prices begin and radiate to all parts of the country where merchants and traders rushed frenzied through the streets in their eagerness to by for a dollar and sell for two, who when a customer takes an article of [sic] theirs at their quoted prices are and at themselves because they could have asked for more."<sup>147</sup> Surely one can see how widespread and well ingrained perceptions of profiteering and impropriety led to the charges against Jews as thieves. Despite the knowledge of other notorious sugar speculators during the Civil War, Heyman Hertzberg and Lazarus Bendego, two Jewish merchants who like other businessmen speculated and attempted to earn whatever profits they could off the South's economic predicaments, were tried in a grand jury investigation for their activities. Other speculating and profiteering merchants some of who were Christian were not harassed in this manner by local authorities.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.,26

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.



Anti-Semitic accusations and frustrations reached a zenith in Thomasville, Georgia on August 30th 1862. On this date a public meeting was called for the discussion of the "unpatriotic conduct of Jewish merchants." Resolutions were passed in which "German Jews (were) denounced in unmeasured terms....and prohibited from visiting the village and banishing all those now resident in that place."<sup>148</sup> Unable to realize that rapidly rising prices and an increasing scarcity of commodities were the result of both the Federal naval blockade and an inadequate industrial base, the citizens of Thomas County easily succumbed to the explanation that there were traitorous and avaricious individuals whose thirst for profit threatened the well-being of the community.<sup>149</sup> The prominent Thomasville citizens decided that three resident Jewish families and all of the numerous Jewish peddlers were responsible for their economic woes and the appearance of counterfeit money. According to the historian Louis Schmier, the Jews were used as scapegoats because they had no influence in the community. Secondly the stereotype of the unscrupulous Jewish merchant was deeply rooted in the Southern cultural psyche. While thirdly, in the minds of Southerners the Jews as aliens seemingly had no feeling in common with the Confederacy. The Southerners questioned the loyalty and patriotism of the Jews. This was not a difficult thing to question since according to many in Thomasville, "none had volunteered for regular military service or had joined a local militia defense unit."<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, the passing of counterfeit money was believed to be carried out by "itinerant traders" and as Schmier points out, the Jewish peddlers were the only such individuals who the Thomasville natives could link to this illegal activity.

The citizens of Thomasville passed a series of resolutions in which the resident Jews were given ten days notice of expulsion, Jewish peddlers were prohibited from

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Schmier, Louis, "Notes on the 1862 Expulsion of Jews from Thomasville Georgia" in, American Jewish Archives, Vol 31-32 1979 .19.

entering Thomas County, and a Committee of Public Safety was appointed with the responsibility of enforcing these resolutions. After all of these proceedings gained attention in the Southern presses, many other Southern cities and communities applauded the anti-Semitic actions of Thomasville. The fact that this Southern town passed a resolution that said, "We allow no German Jews to settle among us" provides historians with evidence that contradicts the idea of America as the "exception" to anti-Semitic attacks.

A small number of Jews throughout the South responded to these accusations and the actions of the citizenry of Thomasville. An example of this can be seen from the editor of the *Savannah Republican* on September 17, 1862. He wrote that he usually would not state his opinion on matters such as these, "But in the manner under consideration, and an urgent and imperative sense of duty to ourselves, and our own character as a constituent portion of a much injured and unjustly proscribed class constrains us to enter...and protest against this unfounded and unwarrantable attack upon the resident German Jews of the Confederacy."<sup>151</sup> Another outraged Jew wrote that "Such a precedent as these Thomasville resolutions would introduce and establish the principle that an entire class in the community, however free the great majority of them may be from all complicity with the guilty few, must nevertheless by an arbitrary edict be compelled to share their ignominy...you inaugurate a system of ostracism....that undermines and overthrows all the foundations of society."<sup>152</sup> Other Jews pointed out how strange it was that the patriotism of the German Jew was being questioned in Thomasville and throughout the South during this great warfare when all over the South young German-Jewish men were fighting to defend the Confederacy's honor. Many German-Jewish soldiers fought for the Confederacy.

According to Mel Young's book Where They Lie, hundreds of Jewish soldiers fought courageously for both the North and South. In fact, there were even a handful of

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

Jews who won the Congressional Medal of Honor during the Civil War. According to a list made by Simon Wolf in 1895, approximately twelve hundred Jews served in the Confederacy including twenty-four army officers and eleven navy officers. Other accounts claim that Wolf's calculations are incomplete and they place the number of Jewish Confederate soldiers as high as ten thousand. There apparently were so many Jews fighting under General Robert E. Lee that he could not afford to make an exception and allow high holiday furloughs to the soldiers of the "Jewish persuasion" in the Confederate States army. Lee wrote in 1861 to Rabbi M.J. Michelbacher in Richmond Virginia that he felt "Assured that neither you or any other member of the Jewish Congregation would wish to jeopardize a cause you have so much at heart by the withdrawal even for a season of a portion of its defenders."<sup>153</sup> Clearly Jewish soldiers did provide the South with an important supply of manpower.

Even Mark Twain in his tractate entitled "Concerning The Jews(1898) wrote a postscript on the Jew as a soldier. He wrote,

When I published the above article in Harper's Monthly I was ignorant, like the rest of the Christian world--of the fact that the Jew had a record as a soldier. I have since seen the official statistics, and I find that he furnished soldiers and high officers to the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War. In the Civil War, he was represented in the armies and navies of both the north and the South by 10% of his numerical strength--the same percentage that was furnished by the Christian population of the two sections. This large fact means more than it seems to mean, for it means that Jewish patriotism was not merely level with Christian's, but overpassed it. When the Christian volunteer arrived in camp, he got a welcome and applause, but as a rule, the Jew got the snub. His company was not desired, and he was made to feel it. That he nevertheless conquered his wounded pride and sacrificed both that and his blood for the flag raises the average and the quality of his patriotism above the Christian's. His record for capability, for fidelity and for the gallant soldiership in the field is as good as anyones. In the above article I was not able to endorse the common reproach that the Jew is willing to feed upon a country but not to fight for it, because I did not whether it was true or false. I supposed it to be true, but it is not allowable to endorse wandering maxims upon suppositions--except when one is trying to make out a case. This slur upon the Jew cannot hold its head in the presence of the War Department figures. It has done its work, and done it long and faithfully, and with high approval:it ought to be pensioned off now, and retired from active service.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Evans, Eli,N. The Provincials. A Personal History of Jews in the South,(New York, 1973)66-67.

<sup>154</sup> Mark Twain, Concerning the Jews (New York, 1984) 29-30

However, the patriotic "Jews" of both the North and South were never openly commended for their services and sacrifices by the American public. It has been said in every American war that, "The Jews didn't fight, they just made money off the war,"<sup>155</sup> and in this instance, the Civil War proved to be no exception. When Jews in the South were acknowledged they were still only identified as the merchant-cheats who had profiteered off Southern tragedy. The way to accumulating a fortune or even getting by during the American Civil War seemed to lie in buying cotton in the South and selling it for return for Northern gold. The South was short of money and the North was short of cotton, and the adept trader profited greatly by making a connection between the two enemies. However, the historian Joakim Isaacs points out in his article entitled "Candidate Grant and the Jews" that such trade was frowned upon by the Federal government because one of their main war objectives was trying to starve the South through blockades physically and financially. Often many of these infamous traders also bribed Union officials in order to carry out their illegal business transactions. Isaacs writes that it seemed like in almost "every combat area, both civilians and military personnel were involved in the trade. A Union army gun boat crew was alleged to have netted \$100,000,000 during the war, and President Abraham Lincoln expressed concern that the army was so busy with cotton speculating that as a consequence the war effort was suffering". In these large scale operations Jews usually only played a small role, yet the Jewish trader became a convenient and powerful scapegoat for commanding officers on both Northern and Southern sides.

### The Grant Affair

As James McPherson points out in his book Battle Cry Freedom believing that they could not carry on war and trade with a people at the same time, Generals Sherman and Grant did their best to cease the cotton trade that was running through Memphis and western Tennessee in 1862. The two generals both issued orders and regulation in their

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<sup>155</sup> Evans, Eli, N., The Provincials, A Personal History of Jews in the South, (New York, 1973) 61.

attempt to restrict and diminish the granting of permits for legal trading. They also "banished Southerners who refused to take an oath and imprisoned some who violated it, and required that all payments for cotton be made in U.S. greenbacks instead of the easily convertible gold."<sup>156</sup> However much to General Grant's dismay none of these plans successfully halted the trade with Southerners. Several of the highly visible and popular traders who defied General Grants orders were Jews. Grant and other officials frequently complained about "Jewish speculators whose love of gain is greater than their love of country."<sup>157</sup> According to McPherson, when Grant's own father brought three Jewish merchants to Memphis seeking special permits Grant was enraged and issued the infamous Order Number 11 on December 17, 1862. The order stated that, "The Jews as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department, and also Department orders, are hereby expelled from the [military] Department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order."<sup>158</sup> According to Isaacs this order follows the earlier General Order No. 2 made by Colonel John V. Dubois which stated that, "On account of the scarcity of provisions, all cotton speculators, Jews, and other vagrants having no honest means of support except trading upon the miseries of their country...will leave...or will be sent to duty in the trenches."<sup>159</sup> McPherson also points out that although most of these traders were not in fact Jewish, harassed Union officials had come to use the word "Jew" in the same way many Southerners used "Yankee". Both the words Jew and Yankee were shorthand ways of describing anyone considered shrewd, acquisitive, and possibly dishonest.

Jewish leaders denounced this outrage that punished all the Jews for the "alleged" sins of a few individuals who maybe were not even Jewish. However, sensing a huge

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<sup>156</sup> James McPherson, Battle Cry Freedom: The Civil War Era, (New York, 1988) 620-623

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Joakim Isaacs "Candidate Grant and the Jews" in American Jewish Archives, Vol XVII April 1965, no.1, pp.4-5.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

public outcry and possibly negative reaction House Democrats introduced a resolution, but the Republicans labeled it as such. Eventually President Lincoln rescinded Grant's order, explaining that while he had no objection to expelling dishonest traders, the order "proscribed a whole class, some of whom are fighting in our ranks."<sup>160</sup> In reaction to Lincoln's rescindence of the order Grant wrote Lincoln a letter which said, "Mr. President, As you have directed me I will rescind the order; but I wish you to understand that these people are the descendants of those who crucified the Saviour and from the specimens I have here, the race has not improved."<sup>161</sup> Historian Albert Lindemann feels that in balance, "Grant's order appears to be more a contretemps than an appropriate symbol of a deeper problem. In his view, "With some important but not long lasting exceptions, Jews were not made into scapegoats or blamed for the tragedies of the war, even in the South."<sup>162</sup> However, this approach seems all too based on looking at America's anti-Semitism during the 1860s through an European historian's eyes and comparative perspective. Perhaps, General Grant's order was motivated by realistic concerns; however his order punished all Jews for the alleged acts of a handful of individuals. Clearly, deeper prejudices were at work in this and other instances already mentioned in this paper.

While General Grant was not an anti-Semite in the inner-circle sense that Marrus describes, he clearly seems to waiver between the far outer and mid realms. Grant had even told a brigadier in July of 1862 that "Jews should receive special attention in contraband searches of speculators."<sup>163</sup> A few months later, he telegraphed a general that "Israelites especially should be kept out of Tennessee and ordered a colonel to remove Jews from trains because they are "such an intolerable nuisance . That the Department [of

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Albert Lindemann, *The Jew Accused*, (Cambridge, 1991), 211-213.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Frederic Cople Jaher *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness*, (Harvard Univ Press, 1994), 198.



Tennessee — Grant's command] must be purged for [sic] them."<sup>164</sup> Jaher tells us that a few days before issuing his infamous order excluding Jews from his command, Grant wrote General Sherman that in consequence of the total disregard and evasion of orders by the Jews my policy is to exclude them so far as practical from the Department."<sup>165</sup> He explained to the assistant Secretary of War that his proscription was necessitated "by the Jews and other unprincipled traders violating Specie regulations of the Treasury department. "Jews must be expelled because they come in with their carpet sacks in spite of all that can be done to prevent it."<sup>166</sup>

Grant was not the only Northern military officer with anti-Semitic views. General Sherman grumbled that Tennessee "Swarms with dishonest Jews who will smuggle (to the enemy) powder, pistols, percussion caps, etc."<sup>167</sup> General Benjamin Butler in 1862 also accused New Orleans "Army contractors, principally Jews of making fortunes by war and he supposed that another Jew, one Judas, thought his investment in thirty pieces of silver was a profitable one, until the penalty of treachery reached him."<sup>168</sup> Jaher also reports that although President Lincoln immediately countermanded Grant's injunction against the Jews, in November of 1863 Major General Stephen A. Hulbert issued an order forbidding fourteen Jewish clothing houses in the Memphis area from selling military clothing and requiring them to send goods back across the front line. However, two non-Jewish firms were exempted from this order."<sup>169</sup> Other lesser incidents of anti-Semitism also appeared on both Northern and Southern sides during the Civil War. Clearly, deeper prejudices motivated by more than war time inflation were at work in the perceptions of Jewish activities and loyalties.

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<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

One has only to look at the life and career of the Southern politician Judah P. Benjamin to understand how powerful the negative images of Jews were in the South and America. Judah P. Benjamin, the Secretary of State of the Confederacy, was known as "the brains of the Confederacy" to some, while others were happier to make him the popular target of slurs all throughout the war in both the North and the South. Those who disliked all Jews took special interest in being able to place the blame for all of the Confederacy's problems on Benjamin. A citizen of North Carolina swore that "All the distresses of the people were owing to a Negro-like despotism, originating in the brain of Benjamin the Jew."<sup>170</sup> Another writer to the *Richmond Enquirer* believed it blasphemous for a Jew to hold such a high office. A Tennessean denounced Benjamin as the "Judas Iscariot Benjamin of the Confederacy."<sup>171</sup> If a man as prominent as Benjamin, who was admired for his intellect and grace could simultaneously be attacked by anti-Semitic slurs it becomes clearer how large and negative a factor being Jewish was during the American Civil War.

Judah P. Benjamin presents an interesting example of how a Jew became legendary in nineteenth century America for all the wrong reasons. In Joseph Holt Ingraham's novel The Sunny South (1860) Judah P. Benjamin appears along with numerous negative references to Jews. The novel, "Which purports to be a series of letters, the last written in 1856, from a young northern governess in the South, is an apology for slavery."<sup>172</sup> Several encounters with Jews on the way to and from the South allow Ingraham to expound on ruminations that are stereotypical and yet inconsistent to other portrayals of the author which were more bigoted. However, what is significant is that Ingraham works Judah P. Benjamin into the novel. On board a ship to New Orleans the protagonist meets

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<sup>170</sup> Dinnerstein Leonard, Jews in the South, (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge), 1973) 137-8

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Louis Harap, The Image of the Jew in American Literature, (Philadelphia, 1974), 58 .

the future secretary of state and in a long comment on his elevation to high office and Jews she says,

Mr. Benjamin is an Israelite...Has the Jew a nation?...How extraordinary that one can always tell a Jew! or rather, let me call them "Israelites," which is the honorable name conferred on them by Jehovah, and by which they like to be distinguished--the term "Jew" being quite as repulsive to them as "Yankee" to the New Englander.<sup>173</sup>

Judah P. Benjamin never could shake off his heritage. It led him to be the scapegoat of the dying South. As Mary Chesnut wrote in her famous diary, "As the war took a toll he was bitterly attacked, "'The mob calls him Mr. Davis' pet Jew.'" <sup>174</sup> Benjamin fled America after the war, and unfortunately he destroyed all of his personal papers that might have left more insight on how he felt as a Jew amidst the anti-Semitism of the nineteenth century South.

Many less famous Jews who fought bravely on both the Northern and Southern sides were shocked by the seemingly unrelenting attacks that were made against them. Furthermore, since there were very few Jewish presses or publications it was harder for the Jewish population to respond in defense of itself. Bertram Wallace Korn demonstrates how great a shock the attacks against Jews were as he presents a letter that a young Southern Jew wrote to his father. Gratz Cohen, a student at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville wrote the following on January 9, 1864:

It is a mournful fact that in these troubled times when intolerance and prejudice cast their baneful seed throughout the land ...that we have nothing..no defending voice has been heard..why we have no Jewish newspaper to justify us before the world and explain to us our position,to remind Israel that it is not a race of shopkeepers.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Eli V. Evans, Judah P. Benjamin The Jewish Confederate, (New York, The Free Press, 1988), 235.

<sup>175</sup> Korn, Bertram Wallace, American Jewry And The Civil War, (The Jewish Publication Society of America, New York, 1951) .xxi.

Korn goes on to tell us that Gratz Cohen was eventually drafted from college and killed in battle. Furthermore, Korn writes that, "Despite his resentment at the anti-Semitic propaganda so characteristic of the time, Gratz Cohen did not withhold from the Confederacy the greatest service in his power to offer his life."<sup>176</sup> Many Jews faced interesting problems and experiences during the Civil War. In a country where they were perceived as "different" the Jews encountered considerable hostilities despite their large and significant wartime contributions of service and patriotism. Many historians in retrospect may decide to defend the actions of General Grant as a mere "product of his times". However, it seems apparent that historians need to look at the broader and more significant implications in this period of American history in which it was too comfortable and commonplace for many Americans to view the Jew as a Christ-killer, immoral businessman, and overall economic usurer. The Jewish community which when the war began numbered about 150,000 people faced a considerable amount of racial hatred in relation to its small population. While, it is true that some Americans held no antipathy toward the Jews for the majority of Southerners the hostility towards Jews was immense.

Abraham Lincoln was a great friend and supporter of the Jewish people. He came to their defense repeatedly throughout the war during the Grant controversy and the debates over having Jewish chaplains or rabbis in the army camps. As Philip S. Foner points out in his Jews in American History on several occasions the Great Emancipator fought for the equality of the Jews. Clearly, by examining the entire United States it is evident that feelings over and surrounding the Jews ranged from ambivalence to hatred to rarer instances of praise. However, in the South historians can find a larger instance of pure racist hatred and anti-Jewish prejudices. Rabbi M. Michelbacher of Richmond, Virginia understood the power of Southern anti-Semitism and how it had played a decisive role in the court martial of a young Private Isaac Arnold of Company D of the Eighth Alabama Regiment. Arnold was sentenced to execution by a firing squad for cowardice and absence

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

without leave in the presence of the enemy. Rabbi M. Michelbacher wrote a letter of desperate appeal along with a petition to General Robert E. Lee asking for mercy to be administered. Michelbacher claimed that the young and naive immigrant was unaware of the seriousness of his actions and he also argued that Lee must also have seen how prominently anti-Jewish sentiments were playing a critical role in this incident and travesty. Rabbi M. Michelbacher wrote that, "From what we have heard, we fear that the fact of being an Israelite and of foreign birth, has had an injurious tendency towards the decision of his deplorable fate."<sup>177</sup> Surely, Rabbi M. Michelbacher was correct in his assumptions. He and other Southern Jewish leaders understood the virulence and scorn that was held against them. In the South the Jew had become the scapegoat for the Confederacy's economic and military devastations. From the civilian merchant to the soldier to the Secretary of State in Judah P. Benjamin, a Jew could and was easily targeted for blame and demonification. However, today records show the truth of the matter in how many Jews served valiantly for both Generals Lee and Grant.

In 1862, a commanding Virginian officer wrote in adulation of Joseph A. Joel's service. He stated in his diary that, "I got a letter from Joel tonight. He is the Jew who got eight bullet holes in his person and lives. He says that he thinks he can stand service in a couple of months. He don't want to be discharged."<sup>178</sup> Jews like many other immigrants and Americans felt that they had earned their respective stake in America. Whether Northern or Southern, America was now their beloved home and they were actively involved in the war between the states. Unfortunately, their wartime experience proved to be distinctive for all the wrong reasons, since in many instance cited above Jews were treated as second class citizens. Surely in light of the anti-Semitic press, the Thomasville expulsion, and the Grant order historians must begin to reassess their apparent contention and perspective of America's unwavering "exceptionalism". Granted America

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<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

had no pogroms, but anti-Semitism was not nonexistent. And while no respected historian has ever claimed this, the lack of attention that American anti-semitism has received historically has helped to misrepresent the reality of prejudice that existed in the past and still lingers today. America's treatment of Jews has been different but America has not been a complete exception to the appearance of anti-Semitism. As one can see during the Civil War in the American North and South, in terms of civil liberties and rights Jews were not treated with equality or fairness.

Bertram Wallace Korn poignantly remarked that whether consciously or unconsciously, citizens of both the North and the South absolved themselves of guilt and fear by blaming their scapegoats for all the dangers and pains of war. The average Southerner according to Korn, would have "lost faith in himself, his fellows, and his cause, were he to admit to himself that the economic and social evils unleashed by the war were, in the final analysis, his own responsibility; foisting the blame upon the traitorous Jews and Yankees saved him from the emotional agony of such realism."<sup>179</sup> Ironically, the figures of the Jew and the Yankee had similarly saved both sides from facing the stark realities that lay in their troubled and discriminatory societies.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.



### Conclusion: Jew, a noun, a verb, or an American ?

"In addition to firmly held religious and economic stereotypes of Jews, a third and extremely important aspect of American attitudes toward them can be seen in how the term "Jew" evolved in American language. "Jew" always had a negative connotation and was often used as a reproach."<sup>180</sup> Even the average nineteenth century American realized the negative implications of the word and therefore "Israelite" was the favorable or respectful terminology used to address Jews. By the 1840s the term "jew" also substituted for a verb as in "to jew down," "jewed," or "jewing," which meant to haggle, to bargain or employ questionable ethics in business dealings. The words "Jew" and "Jewish", at this time, were also used commonly as synonyms for "rogue", "swindler," "selfish,". Ironically, the word Jew and Yankee followed similar paths yet with different implications and meanings.

In his writing on the relationship between the derogatory usages of the words Jew and Yankee, Rudolf Glanz found that there was a historic relationship between the two in American culture. Citing several different references, Glanz discovered that while the Yankee wandered in terms of positive and negative retribution the Jew almost always remained negative in perception. Nevertheless, countless Americans and Europeans were quick to compare the two groups in a similar vain by mid-century. An eloquent example of this is provided by Oliver P. Baldwin in his *Southern and South Western Sketches* (1852) in a sketch of a steamboat trip. Apparently as the captain "Passed the money over...the lower jaws of the disappointed sharpers fell about a foot, and almost simultaneously (they) exclaimed: 'Jewed!', Yankee'd!'"<sup>181</sup> In another piece of literature one writer stated in his observations of nineteenth century America, "The inhabitants are called *Yankees* in all

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<sup>180</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York, 1994) 22. Oxford English Dictionary 1991 :etymology.

<sup>181</sup> Oliver P. Baldwin, *Southern and South Western Sketches* (Richmond, 1852) p.186.

other parts of the Union...they fraternize closely and are the Jews of the New World, they stand together like one man...They are dominated by insatiable greediness."<sup>182</sup>

Clearly, the Jew in nineteenth century America had developed quite a reputation--and it was not all that good. Assimilation made it easier for some yet anti-Semitism lingered on in America and only grew worse by the turn of the century when the image of the Jew as revolutionary, radical, communist, joined with the negative imagery discussed in this paper. From religious differences to racial antipathy and economic competition the Jew was viewed as a threat to some nineteenth century Americans. As Johnathan D. Sarna points out in "The Pork on the Fork: A Nineteenth Century Anti-Jewish Ditty", even school children learned at an early age this ancient tradition of hatred and scorn. The popular ditty went as follows...

I had a piece of pork, I put it on a fork,  
And gave it to the curly-headed Jew.  
Pork, Pork, Pork, Jew, Jew, Jew. (1864)<sup>183</sup>

As Sarna points out, the ditty initially does not appear to employ any real snide comments about Jews. There are no comments on crude anatomical feature (noses) or instances of mangling Jewish accents. However, the ditty held tremendous power. "Non-Jewish children loved to sing it. Jews hated to hear it. Angry playground confrontations took place all over the country."<sup>184</sup> Sarna then goes on to give ten other near identical versions of the rhyme that stretch over a thirty year period in the nineteenth century and were found in Baltimore, Cincinnati, Easton, London and as far as Australia. Obviously this poem held deep appeal. Sarna explains that this has to do with the negative meaning that the word Jew had at this time, while pork was the antithesis of the Jew. Pork is the symbolic essence of "un-Jewishness" and it marked the basic Jewish identity symbol. The fork, according to Sarna represented, a symbol of culture and refinement much like a

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<sup>182</sup> Rudolf Glanz, "Jew and Yankee: A Historic Comparison", (AJA Archives XX, 1961) 345.

<sup>183</sup> Johnathan D. Sarna, "The Pork on the Fork: A Nineteenth Century Anti-Jewish Ditty", (Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, 1985) 169

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

handkerchief. therefore, "As such the fork represents that society that the Jews so desperately wanted to enter."<sup>185</sup> Therefore, the ditty was meant to torment the Jewish child who realized that he or she still stood out, and if they wanted to fit in they had to go against obstacles like dietary laws that were in fact their identity thereby threatening to lose their heritage. Interestingly enough, the Jewish child did not always just hear this ditty and crumble. Sarna has found a counter-ditty that was popular at the time which went...

I had a piece of beef, I put it on a leaf,  
And gave it to the Christian thief,  
Beef, Beef, Beef, Thief, Thief, Thief.<sup>186</sup>

Clearly, racial antagonisms were running high in nineteenth century America. The Jews definitely had to struggle to fight into society just like every other group who was a newcomer to America. Anti-semitism was a factor for both children and adults regardless of their economic background...there were no exceptions in America hatred were as safe here as anywhere. What can then be said for the perplexing problem of American anti-Semitism --since it obviously has a history and existence in American culture. I have tried to show that negative imagery and stereotyping played a powerful factor in the development of American anti-Semitism before the turn of the twentieth century. In the words of Michael Dobkowski,

Negative imagery, rather than serving as a rationalization for prejudice after the fact, can thus be seen as a catalyst for the proliferation of anti-Jewish manifestations in America...it can be argues with some degree of confidence that stereotyping, developed in all its elaborate detail and color in literature, and often times presented in the spirit of logic and impartiality by influential individuals and by respectable periodicals, created a climate of opinion that facilitated the growth of anti-Semitism within the confines of an open and free society. Ideology thus drove a wedge between Jews and gentiles by sharpening negative stereotypes. This is especially germane because there were few countervailing images to balance the barrage of ideological anti-Semitism that permeated American culture."<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Michael Dobkowski, The Tarnished Dream (New York, 1979), 237.

To call upon the imagery of Thomas Keneally the author of the celebrated novel Schindler's List, "Prejudice is the hairy backside of what we all need-- a sense of identity," but this is a shame for humanity. Instead of pitting stereotypes against realistic portrayals it is a shame that we don't realize as human beings how we end up propagandizing ourselves against each other as one human race. "Traditional prejudice is implanted in language as an index of popular values and attitudes. Persistence of a stereotype over time is reflective of a significant societal appeal, to say nothing of what it reveal about the author's bigotry. The data (about the permanence of anti-Semitism in nineteenth century America) tell us enough to conclude that a reinterpretation is warranted. Historians have left this aspect of American anti-Semitism relatively untouched; it is a serious omission."<sup>188</sup> For until we stop and begin to analyze the dangerous cycle of stereotyping and discrimination we will never completely realize how humanity harms itself and thereby take the first step towards breaking the chain of prejudice and hatred.

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

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