

Wilhelm Marr, *The Victory of Jewry over Germandom* (March 1879)

Abstract

Wilhelm Marr (1819–1904) is most famous for coining the term “antisemitism” in the 1870s. He thereby contributed to a new vocabulary—one with which centuries-old hostility towards the Jews could be potently expressed. Marr himself had a checkered past. He espoused communist ideals in his twenties and participated in the revolutionary events of 1848/49. Even before then, when he was living in Hamburg, he had begun to express strongly anti-Jewish views. He served as editor of several newspapers and journals, almost all of which were financial failures. The following excerpt is taken from his 1879 book, which purports to document Jewry’s “victory” over Germandom. This manuscript was drafted in February and March 1878 and then languished with publisher Rudolph Costenoble for a year before finally appearing in late March 1879. But it was an instant hit, running through twelve editions in its first year. This excerpt demonstrates the secular tone of Marr’s antisemitism and cultural pessimism. Contrary to many other antisemitic tracts, Marr’s analysis of the “Jewish Question” posits “the world-historical triumph of Jewry” and announces “the news of a lost battle.” His text concludes with the resounding words, “Finis Germaniae!” (“Germany’s end!”) Marr’s political accomplishments never matched his ambition. By the end of the 1880s, he was regarded as a relic of modern antisemitism’s founding generation. This appraisal found expression in Marr’s private correspondence with a younger, more radical antisemite, Theodor Fritsch, which appears in one of the following entries.

Source

Foreword

With this work I intend less a polemic against Jewry than confirmation of a cultural and historical fact.

The polemical language that conditions sometimes force upon me can and must be understood as no more than a cry of pain from one of the oppressed.

A resigned “pessimism” flows from my pen.

Think, if you will, “he must be a queer bird.” But be assured that no one would be happier than myself if the facts I touch upon could be refuted.

Countless times we non-Jews have attacked Jews and Jewry in literature, but always from the standpoint of our own overweening presumption. Our self-conceit still keeps us from the open and honest admission that Israel has become a world power of the very first rank. We knew the Jews well enough—*but not ourselves*.

Be that as it may, this book should be permitted to lay claim to originality. Written without a trace of religious prejudice, it allows you to peer into the mirror of cultural and historical facts. Do not blame the “pessimist” if the mirror shows you to be slaves.

I have two hopes for this book:

- 1) that it will not be killed by the silence of the Jewish critics;
- 2) that it will not be finished off by your well-known, self-satisfied clichés.

Without a shred of irony, I publicly proclaim *the world-historical triumph of Jewry*, the news of a lost battle, the victory of the enemy without a single excuse for the stricken army.

I should like to believe that such candor deserves something better than the zealous Jewish accents of the newspapers.

[...]

It is no ostentatious prophecy but a deeply felt conviction when I say that *no more than four generations shall pass before the Jews usurp absolutely every office of state, including the very highest*.

Yes, Jewry shall raise Germany to a world power and make it the New Palestine of Europe.

It won't come about by violent revolution but by the voice of the people itself, as soon as German society has reached that highest level of social bankruptcy and perplexity toward which we are rushing headlong.

Don't blame Jewry for this.

[...]

Our Germanic element has *shown* itself culturally and historically powerless, incapable of achievement, before alien domination. This is a *fact*, a *raw, pitiless fact*. *State, church, Catholicism, Protestantism, credo, and dogma* must *bow* before the Jewish Areopagus, the daily press.

[...]

Dear reader, stop gnashing your teeth in rage! [*You have no right to do so.*] Alien domination has been forced upon us. For 1800 years the fight against Jewish domination has lasted. The Semitic race has borne indescribable [*external*] suffering. You have roughly mishandled them, but *rarely* have you combated them *spiritually*. From feeble beginnings Jewry has grown beyond you. It has corrupted all society with its views. It has driven out any kind of *idealism*, possesses the controlling position in commerce, infiltrates increasingly into state offices, rules the theater, constitutes a sociopolitical phalanx, and finally has left you little more than the hard manual labor that it always despised. It has reduced talent to rattling superficial finesse, has made that procuress, *advertising*, into a goddess of public opinion. In short, Jewry *lords it over* you today.

[...]

Are we capable of sacrifice? Have we even succeeded in creating a single, *nonpartisan* anti-Jewish newspaper? Are not even our *housewife clubs* and similar associations under Jewish *patrons* who combine *business* with pleasure for their own profit? Does not Jewry flow into all the pores of our life?

You may *gnash your teeth* about Germanic apathy. *I bow down* in amazed admiration before this Semitic race that has set its foot upon our necks. Having gathered up the last trace of *human energy*, I am resigned to enter into Jewish slavery, not to surrender or ask for quarter but only to *die* as peacefully as possible.

[...]

Source of English translation: Richard S. Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World. An Anthology of*

Texts. Lexington, MA, and Toronto: D. C. Heath, 1991, pp. 76–93, here pp. 76–77, 87–89. Republished with kind permission from Richard S. Levy.

Source of original German text: Wilhelm Marr, *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum. Vom nicht confessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet*, 2nd ed. Bern: Rudolph Costenoble, 1879, foreword and pp. 29–32. Available online at:
<https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb11390068?page=,1>.

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