

The Protocols of Zion

A fabrication that was unmasked

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How difficult it is to kill a lie! Fifty years ago a lie was fabricated in Russia against the Jews. Its circulation then played a dreadful part in the creation of animosity which resulted in the deaths of thousands in the cruel pogroms. Its circulation later had a prominent place in the Nazi propaganda which brought about the massacre of well nigh 6,000,000 men, women and children for the sole crime that they were of Jewish blood. A reviewer in the *Jewish Observer* of 14th May last, said, "Only the infantile or the psychopathic would nowadays accept the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion as anything but a clumsy forgery". Even so, surprisingly enough, extracts from them have recently appeared in a British religious magazine. These extracts were introduced as being "deserving of attention, whether they are genuine or forgeries" and described as "unconscious prophecy" and "an apt description of future conditions". The effect of this can only be harmful and is much to be regretted. A slander remains a slander however guardedly it may be introduced. The readers of the magazine in question are far more likely to keep in mind the sinister accusations against the Jews than they are to remember that the author of the article is not quite sure that, after all, they are not forgeries. Later, the magazine sought to make amends by publishing the story of the actual origin of the Protocols and by disclaiming Anti-Semitism. Who can tell, however, the extent of the damage that has already been done? A lie

travels more quickly than a correction. It can never be wholly effaced. It is inexplicable that such a lie should still live on, but there is no excuse for it to live in our minds.

The Clumsy Forgery

Sergei Nilus was an official of a clerical supervision department attached to the Russian secret police. His book, *Multum in Parvo, the Antichrist as a proximate political possibility*, contained in its second edition the notorious Protocols. These purported to be a report of secret conversations between the elders of the Jews and the great masters of Freemasonry disclosing a subtle plan dating from the days of Solomon for the enslavement of the world. Working with a hidden hand behind the scenes, these mysterious "elders of Zion" are said to be employing the power of gold, the corruption of youth, the perversion of the press and the promotion of revolutionary socialism to weaken and finally overthrow all government and open up the way for Jewish world domination. The Protocols represent the elders of Zion as claiming that the French Revolution, the beliefs of Protestants, the teaching of Darwin, world wars and industrial unrest have all been brought about by them. Such statements are intrinsically absurd. No intelligent person with even a slight knowledge of history and of Jewish life and literature could possibly give credence to such a grotesque and grandiose plan of world conquest. Jewish Messianic conception and Zionist ideals have never had the slightest thing in common with such a fantastic objective. Nilus makes the elders say, "We

have already destroyed all ruling powers except our own; we are, as it were, the commander-in-chief of all armies, riding at their head." Let the terrible suffering of the Jews all through this half-century witness what such a claim is worth. The words are ludicrous, the actual fact of Jewish helplessness and sorrow has been unspeakably tragic.

Doubtful Ground

What authority does Nilus advance for his statements and from where did he obtain the Protocols? At once we find ourselves on dubious ground. He gives no less than three contradictory accounts of how they reached him. First, he said that they came from "a deceased friend, unnamed, who received them from a woman, also unnamed, who stole them from a leading Freemason at the close of a secret meeting in France". Secondly, he states that the deceased friend himself stole them from the safe of "the Society of Zion", in France.

Two such contradictions are suspicious enough, but the third account, given in the 1911 edition of his book, makes their origin even more inexplicable, for this time he claims that the documents came to him from Switzerland after a Zionist congress in Basle in 1897. Nor is this all. In 1953 some circulators of the Protocols were taken to court at Berne and many former Tsarist officials were examined as witnesses. There it emerged that Nilus himself questioned the genuineness of the Protocols, but said that he did not think this mattered, for if God could speak through Balaam's ass so He

could through forgers! Thus the editor of the Protocols offered three conflicting stories of how he obtained them and then declared that it did not matter even if they were forged.

Suspicious Similarity

It was early seen that the Protocols had a familiar ring about them. About 1860 a German author, Hermann Goedsche, wrote a novel in one chapter of which he gathered together wild anti-Semitic tales that had been current for centuries. He tells a blood-curdling story of a midnight meeting of representatives of the twelve tribes in a Jewish cemetery in Prague engaged in worshipping the golden calf. The ideas of his novel are obviously reproduced in the Protocols and this is quite sufficient to demonstrate their unreliability. But further proof of actual forgery was to follow.

The Original Found

In 1921, Philip Graves, *The Times* correspondent in Constantinople, ran the actual source of the Protocols to earth. *The Times* printed the interesting story on 16th, 17th and 18th August of that year. Nilus's so-called Protocols of Zion originated not from a secret conclave of plotting Jews but from a political lampoon written in 1865 by a Frenchman, Maurice Joly, directed against the Emperor Napoleon III, a copy of which is to be seen in the British Museum. Joly penned a satire against the Emperor. He may well have been indebted for some of his ideas to Goedsche. He makes the spirits of the Italian philosopher Machiavelli and the French

philosopher Montesquieu meet and converse in twenty-four dialogues. The twenty-four Protocols of Zion are simply a plagiarism, in numerous passages copied word for word, of the Frenchman's pamphlet. From number one to nineteen the Protocols follow the same subject sequence as the dialogues. The remaining five include more original matter to bring Joly's attack on the financial policy of Napoleon III into line with Nilus's times and have references to Darwin, Marx and Nietzsche added to bring them up to date. For the most part, however, the Protocols just reproduce the dialogues with no attempt at disguise. *The Times* printed long extracts from both, showing examples of the slavish copying. They are not a report of the proceedings of sinister Jewish plotters, but words put long before by Joly into the mouths of the dead philosophers. All Nilus or his informant had to do was to substitute "Zion" for "France" and "We, the Jews" for "the Emperor" and his task was done. Is this impudent forgery rightly described as "worthy of attention"? To quote from *The Times* leader of 18th August, 1921, "The fact of the plagiarism has now been conclusively established and the legend may be allowed to pass into oblivion." What a pity it has not been allowed to! No one with regard for the truth can say that this clumsy forgery is "unconscious prophecy" and "an apt description of future conditions".

How the Protocols have been used

Nilus's work was simply a pogrom weapon. "In the first edition of his book published in 1901 he knew noth-

ing of the Protocols but was absorbed by the more abstract aspects of the problem of Antichrist. In 1905 occurred the Russian Revolution and this was followed by the incendiary conspiracy of the Russian secret police to stir up pogroms all over Russia and drown the new constitution in a welter of Jewish blood. Nilus appears to have been employed by the Okhrana in this wicked campaign" (Lucien Wolf). Even after they had been so convincingly exposed they were widely used for propaganda by Hitler and were broadcast from Axis countries. Ludendorf employed them in proof that the defeat of the German Army in 1918 was due to the Jews. In America they were circulated by the Klu Klux Klan and by Henry Ford in his spiteful Anti-Semitic campaign. In 1943 the Nazi press announced that "the eagerly searched-for original of the Protocols has at last been discovered in the town of Minsk, hidden by the Jews in a shrine of pure gold". How can any man who rightly recoils in horror and pity from what is without question the most dreadful sin of our age, the cold-blooded massacre of European Jews, calmly recount and perpetuate some of the falsehoods that were used to bring it about?

Our Attitude

We are very thankful to know that the Church as a whole rejects Anti-Semitism and deploras anything that might seem to feed and encourage it. Our brethren in Christ who are of Gentile stock tell us gladly that they owe a debt of gratitude to the people through whom have come to them the Scriptures and the Saviour,

Jesus Christ, and they regard it as a special duty to pray for the Jews and to give the chosen people the priority accorded them in the New Testament. The hope of the Church is the day of the Lord's return as Israel's King and Saviour. The religious Jew who still looks for the coming of the Messiah believes that God has a great future for His people. Such an expectation is not in the remotest way like the spirit attributed to the Jew in the Protocols. We share his hope and gladly acknowledge that he worships the God we serve and seeks the righteousness we also seek, though we are sad that he knows not Christ, through Whom alone it may be found.

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