

# Betrayal of Spirit: Jew-Hatred, the Holocaust, and Christianity

reviewed by [Steven Bowman](#) in the [September 22, 2009](#) issue

## In Review



## Betrayal of Spirit: Jew-Hatred, the Holocaust, and Christianity

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Imagine the shock of a young boy growing up in a polyglot, multiethnic neighborhood when confronted with the Jew-hatred of a trusted family acquaintance. This is the experience that propelled Thomas Idinopulos into a career of theological analysis and historical reading designed to help him understand the origins and development of the Holocaust. *Betrayal of Spirit* gathers a selection of his seminal studies, now updated, and a series of articles written especially for this volume.

The book is divided into four sections. In the first Idinopulos surveys the history of Jew-hatred and discusses the relationship between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. In part two he explores the theological roots of Jew-hatred. In part three he leaps into the complexity of the Holocaust with essays on the Nazi use of anti-Semitism. In part four he confronts modern theology directly: How do Christianity and Judaism respond to the Holocaust? Was the cross really triumphant over sin and death?

It is important that Idinopulos separates Jew-hatred and anti-Semitism into two distinct facets of the pervasive animosity toward Jews and Judaism in Western civilization. As S. Giora Shoham argues in *Valhalla, Calvary and Auschwitz*, this animosity is grounded in the violent antecedents of the Indo-Europeans, who killed in their enthusiasm for blood-fed gods. But the Western animosity toward Jews and their peculiar religion of monotheism and social justice, practiced with a pursuit of holiness that demands separation from corrupting influences, is also a product of the competition between Greeks and Jews in the Hellenistic period.

During those centuries following Alexander's reign, Greek concepts, culture and language drew many of the ancient peoples toward the new modernism—Jews included, although they chose to absorb the benefits into Judaism just as they had absorbed elements of the Zoroastrian revolution. So while many ancient peoples became Greeks, Jews always remained only students of Greece. This refusal to disappear into the maw of polytheism and its practices led to their rejection by the masses.

Idinopulos is a welcome guide who summarizes the content of the ongoing outpouring of monographs about the Holocaust and distills the questions we really should be asking of ourselves and our beliefs. Where were the Christians during the Holocaust? Who intervened and why? Where do the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches and their theologians stand in the historical record of the Holocaust period and its aftermath? And perhaps most troubling: What are the theological implications of Christians' betrayal of Jesus' message that we must love

our neighbors as ourselves?