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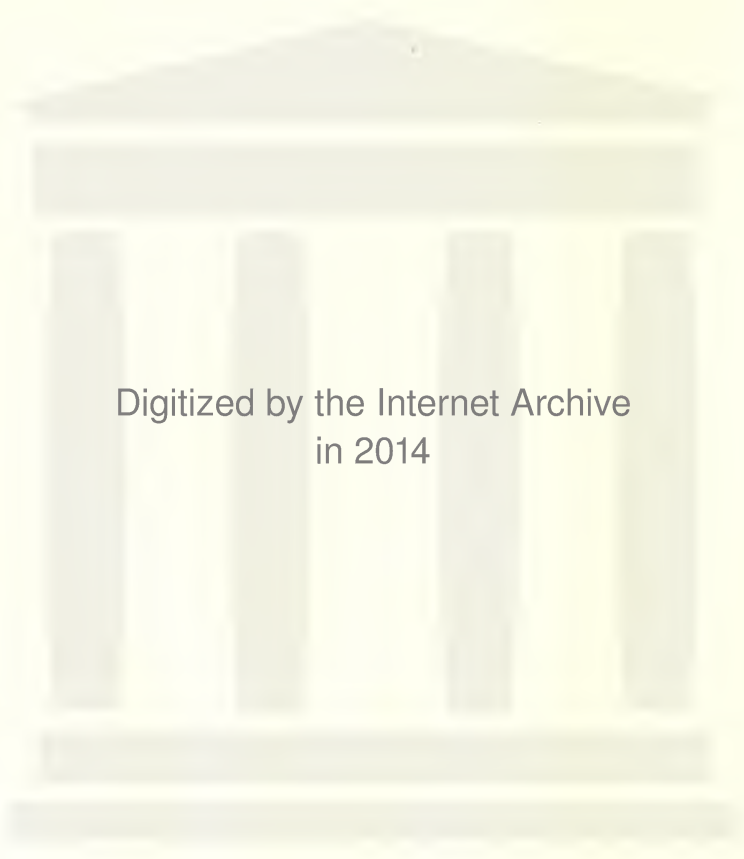
SAILS OF HOPE

The Secret Mission of
Christopher Columbus

SIMON
WIESENTHAL

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Sails of Hope

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*The Secret Mission of
Christopher Columbus*



SIMON WIESENTHAL

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

Richard and Clara Winston

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*Those who cannot remember the past are
condemned to repeat it.*

GEORGE SANTAYANA

II

Cycle of Fate





THE THREE CARAVELS Christopher Columbus was to sail to the lands of the Indies lay anchored in the port of Palos. It was the night of August 2, 1492. Columbus stood on the pier watching the last sailors and other members of the expedition climb the deck. He had ordered all to be on board their vessels by eleven o'clock sharp.

History tells us that the three caravels did not put to sea until the next day, August 3. Why should Columbus have insisted that his crew be on the ship even before midnight? Why did he personally supervise the process? His order was quite contrary to the custom of sailors, who before so long a voyage generally lingered with their families until the last moment and would not board the ship until very shortly before it was due to sail. But this time the procedure was different. Could the date have been the reason for Columbus's order? For after midnight of that day, the memorable August 2, 1492, by decree of their Majesties Ferdinand and Isabella, it would have been illegal for any Jews to remain on Spanish soil. Were the participants in the expedition affected by this decree? Could there have been Jews on Columbus's ships?

Was there any link between his voyage of discovery and the expulsion of the Jews? And finally: Was there a relationship in general between the persecution of the Jews and Columbus's voyage? All these questions cry out for an answer. But before we ourselves set out on this inquiry, let us hear from Columbus himself: "After you, Holy Kings, expelled the Jews from your lands, in that same month of January Your Majesties sent me with a fleet to the Lands of the Indies."

That is how his actual journal begins. He links the two events at the outset of his report on the discovery of America.

Our first thought might be that Columbus was confusing two historical dates. For the edict of expulsion was signed on March 31, 1492, whereas Columbus's voyage was approved three months before, in January—although the contract between Columbus and the two sovereigns was not signed until April 17. How then are we to understand this apparent confusion of dates? The only explanation seems to be that the preparations for the expulsion of the Jews were so far advanced by January that they were known to persons around the royal court. Among those persons were Columbus and his patrons. Thus the dates come together: January, Columbus's voyage is approved; March, edict of expulsion; August 2, last day for the Jews to remain legally in Spain coinciding with the eve of Columbus's departure. Columbus himself coupled the two events with a prescience he was to show on other occasions. For it is generally agreed by historians that the discovery of America and the expulsion of the Jews were the two events that had the most far-reaching consequences for the entire future course of Spanish history.

That night of August 2 was a turning point in history. One chapter was ending, another beginning. And the new chapter was to shape the history of the entire world. The fact that Columbus had his whole group on the caravels by eleven o'clock at night is one of the many conundrums of this story. Is it not significant that exactly one hour later the Spanish police, the urban militiamen, and the *familiares* of the Inquisition would begin their check of Jewish houses to enforce the royal decree? But this matter of the date and the hour cannot be discussed by itself. There are other aspects of the voyage that are equally mysterious. We must, therefore, examine all the questions and events for which we have some historical documentation. There is also the personality of Columbus, which seems to abound in contradictions. Clarification will come only after we have examined all the events in context.

The connection between Columbus and the Jews cannot have been fortuitous. A good many historians and biographers of Columbus long ago became aware of it, and it has been the subject of several studies. But so far all attempts to probe into the matter have ended in an impasse. Perhaps our present study will arrive at better results. We will present a new thesis that we hope can be substantiated by the history of the period.

Researchers long ago discovered that the group of persons who supported Columbus's plans for a voyage of discovery consisted overwhelmingly of Jews and baptized Jews. We shall go into this matter in detail later on. There can be no doubt that without the aid of these persons, who helped persuade the royal couple to sponsor the expedition, who gave financial aid, and who provided nautical documents, Columbus's voyage would never have

taken place. It may be said, of course, that the American continents would have been discovered anyway, without Columbus. The time was ripe for it. Other nations were also preparing similar ventures. But Columbus was the first man to push beyond the boundaries of the known world. And, to repeat, without the help of Jews Columbus's voyage would not have taken place. In order to explain the connection, we shall have to look into the situation of the Jews in Spain at the end of the fifteenth century.

Jews settled on the Iberian Peninsula a few hundred years before the birth of Christ. It is probable that they entered the country along with the Phoenicians. A goodly number of Spanish cities—Toledo, Maqueda, Escalona, Joppes, and Aceca—suggest Palestinian-Jewish origins. These cities have Hebrew-sounding names. The name Toledo comes from *Toledoth*, that is, City of the Generations. To this day Toledo's official city guide acknowledges the Hebrew origin of the name. It is assumed that members of the tribes of Israel settled in this city. The name Aceca means Strong Fortress. Escalona is named after Ascalon in Israel, in the tribe of Simeon. Maqueda is a borrowing from *Maceda*, in the tribe of Judah; Joppes from *Joppe* (Jaffa), in the tribe of Dan. A number of other towns, such as Layos and Noves, were probably Jewish settlements; their names recall those of Palestinian cities of the period.

Around the time of Christ, Jewish pilgrims from Spain came to Jerusalem. They were called Sephardim. The word Sephard comes from the Biblical *Sepharad*, the name for the westernmost country on the Mediterranean—Spain. The prophet Obadiah also refers to this western-

most part of the Roman Empire as Sepharad. Later, the apostle Paul speaks of the need for missionary work among the Jews of the Iberian peninsula.

During the medieval persecution, the Spanish Jews tried to preserve themselves by pleading to the Spanish rulers their long connection with the land of Spain. They pointed out that they had come into the country after the destruction of the first Temple and that they were of the tribe of Judah. The Visigoths, the Vandals, and many other peoples entered Spain many centuries after the Jews and the Romans.

The Jews survived all the conquerors in Spain. For the conquerors soon mingled with the native population and merged with it. The Jews suffered, were persecuted, made deals with the conquerors—and kept their identity. We find mention of Jews in the earliest documents. They lived among the Moslem Moors and among the Catholic Spaniards, who were divided into several kingdoms. In the ninth century Arab historians refer to Granada and Tarragona as “Jewish cities.” Both Jews and Christians enjoyed full freedom in the Arab kingdoms and had their own courts of law. The Jewish population in Moslem Spain constituted the largest body of Jews in Europe.

The Jews were the one people to disprove the axiom that every immigrant sooner or later becomes absorbed into the populace. Immigrants normally adapt very rapidly to their new environment, giving up whatever they have carried with them in their cultural baggage. They do so for reasons of security and expediency, for a newcomer has special difficulties to face in becoming established. Not so the Jews. They have kept a great deal of whatever they brought with them. In this respect the Jews constitute an exception in history. That exceptional status is

what has repeatedly brought hatred and persecutions down upon them.

The antisemitism of many peoples was the revenge of the natives upon those who refused to assimilate. To be sure, there were other reasons for this ancient phenomenon, but this is one of the most central.

It is difficult to speak of "native" ethnic groups in connection with Spain. Everything depends on the time we are considering. But whatever the period, the Jews are there as old settlers. One could not say of the Jews in Spain that they had failed to become identified with the country. The Jews of Moslem and Christian Spain were united by ties of friendship and culture with the rest of the population. They formed the bridge between the Arabic-Moorish and the Christian-Spanish cultures.

In the year 612, King Sisebut of the Visigoths began placing curbs upon the Jews, separating them from the rest of the population. The principle of separation was to become a permanent institution in the Spanish kingdoms. A large number of Christians were converting to Judaism. Sisebut issued laws imposing the severest penalties upon such conversions. Any Jew who undermined a Christian's faith was liable to death and confiscation of property.

The history of Spain continued its restive course. The Moors overcame the Visigoths and set up their kingdoms, the caliphates. Later Christian kings drove some of the Moors back. The Jews remained in both parts of Spain. After Moslem power had receded, the Christian kings were astonished at the high level of the culture they found in the reconquered lands. The Jews, who had been intimately associated with this Islamic culture, assumed the role of mediators, making the achievements of Islamic

civilization accessible to the Christians. Nevertheless, the transition from Moorish to Christian rule was a shock to Spanish Jewry. It struck Jewish life a hard blow.

The Jews lived in quarters that at the time were called *alhamas*. These autonomous communities maintained links with the Jews of all other Spanish cities. The closed ghettos did not come until later on. The kings of Castile and Aragon conferred autonomy upon the Jews for fiscal reasons. The duties paid by the Jews were the only reliable and constant source of income for the royal treasuries. In addition to their normal taxes, the Jews paid an additional annual toll of thirty denarii as a kind of "repayment" and annual reminder of the legendary thirty silver pennies paid to Judas. The Jewish community as a whole was responsible for collecting these fees. Since the kings were always in financial difficulties, the ghettos often had to advance sizable sums out of future payments. Thus they purchased a measure of tolerance and liberty.

But if the secular rulers had seen fit to favor the Jews, the Church took a different view of the question. To the Church, the Jews were still the murderers of Christ and hence the archenemy of Christendom. When, toward the end of the twelfth century, an epidemic of heresy spread within Christendom, the dangerous doctrines were instantly traced to the Jews. The fourth Lateran Council was held to deal with the peril, and Pope Innocent II issued a bull calling for a revival of the ancient anti-Jewish laws that had remained a dead letter for centuries.

Because of their special aptitude in economic and scientific matters, Jews had attained fairly good positions in many European countries. They were financial counselors and taxfarmers. They had a hand in much international

trade. On a humbler level, they were skilled artisans. In Spain, for instance, they were tanners, shoemakers, saddlers, jewelers, cutlers, and weavers. Among the Moors, Jews were considered the very best blacksmiths. Above all, they were versed in the arts of medicine. Almost every secular ruler, and many a high ecclesiastic as well, maintained a Jewish personal physician.

The Church was well aware of the power and influence accompanying the Jews' skill in medicine. From the thirteenth century on, Church synods dealt repeatedly with this problem. The pronouncements of the synods of Béziers in 1255, of Vienna in 1267, of Avignon in 1326, and of Bamberg in 1491 are almost identical in wording: "It is better for a Christian to die than to owe his life to a Jew." But the very fact that such admonitions had to be repeated every few decades is evidence that the rulers were reluctant to part with their "physicians in ordinary." For self-protection many doctors in Spain and Portugal pretended to be converted to the Church. Their patrons knew that such baptisms were largely sham and winked at the deception. But the Church continued to inveigh against the doctors and the foul tricks of "Jewish medicine."

The situation bred other ambiguities. Ancient sanctions against the Jews, prohibiting them from practicing certain crafts and from possessing land or engaging in agriculture, had virtually forced them into the role of money-lenders. They had become this with the connivance of the Church. According to ecclesiastical law, lending money at interest was a sin. If anyone was going to sin, let it be the Jews. Frequently the Church itself entrusted its funds to a Jewish agent who could lend them out at interest. As government and commerce are totally de-

pendent on sources of credit, the moneylender had become indispensable to the economic life of the times.

The strict application of ecclesiastical regulations concerning money would have led to economic chaos in Spain and elsewhere. The Church knew this as well as the Crown, and consequently the old practice was tacitly tolerated. In 1462, when there was a threat of excluding the Jews from the money trade, the representatives of the cities petitioned the Cortes, the Spanish parliament, not to take any such step.

But in other fields the Church was determined to erect a wall between the Christians and Jews.

Christianity, of course, was willy-nilly associated with Judaism through the Bible and also through the beginnings of the religion. The history of Judaism in the Christian era is intertwined with the history of Christianity. The efforts of the Christians for the past two thousand years to mark themselves off and wrench themselves free of the Jews only demonstrate the ties.

In the age of ferment within Christendom, when deviant doctrines were making alarming headway, the Church fought the sectarians in public disputations. These were verbal tournaments, popular among all classes of the population and conducted with great passion. In time the Church extended these disputations from the sectarians to the Jews.

In the relationship of Christians to Jews, especially in Spain, the question of the interpretation of the Bible, which was common to both religions, runs like a red thread through the centuries. The arguments left the chambers of scholars and were carried into the streets in the form of compulsory public disputations. Sometimes these went on for several months at a time. The Jews,

however, argued at a disadvantage. Whereas their opponents could rant as much as they pleased, could indulge in accusations, insinuations, and denunciations, the Jews had to remain calm and stay strictly within the bounds of logic. The rabbis, in fact, issued prescripts for Jewish disputants; they warned that the "opponents may silence Truth with a blow of their fists."

Christians frequently forgot, perhaps deliberately forgot, that it was they who had carried the Jewish Bible to the rest of the world, to the pagans, to the inhabitants of distant islands. They were responsible for its wide currency. Christendom cannot dispense with the Jewish Bible, for Israel's Torah is one of the pillars of Christianity. Paul of Tarsus, whose efforts to separate Christianity from Judaism were crowned by success, acted out of the famous Jewish self-hatred. But in the case of Paul his motivation was not self-hatred alone; often it was love-hate. In his relationship to Judaism Paul was full of contradictions; another way to express it is to say that he proceeded dialectically. The Jews charged Paul with having falsified the Jewishness of Jesus. Paul, for his part, did not understand the charge and finally became angered because the Jews refused to accept his interpretation of the risen Jesus. Consequently, he saw no further possibility of remaining within Jewry, in which he had been born. He burst out of the Jewish religion. In the eyes of the Jews, consequently, Paul was the principal apostate, not Jesus.

In their desire to eradicate Judaism a good many Christian dignitaries claimed they were acting as deputies of Jesus. They called for the destruction of the scriptures of Judaism, of the Talmud, and of other works, failing to consider that these Jewish writings had been

prime influences on Jesus and were composed in the same language Jesus had used. Jesus spoke Hebrew and probably Aramaic also.

The personality of Paul has recently been portrayed in a most convincing study by the Jewish writer Shalom ben Chorin. Paul was the type of apostate Jew who in turning against his origins was left in an unhappy, ambiguous position. A Roman citizen of Christian religion, he was rooted in Hellenistic-Judaic culture. Jewish history records many such defectors. It was Paul's personal tragedy that to the Jews he was a Greek, to the Greeks a pharisaic rabbi. He could not continue to be a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks. Christians reproached him for having introduced the Talmudic spirit into the Gospel. But many of his successors preferred to blot out the affirmative things he had to say about Judaism, his preaching the doctrine of the light of Israel. They looked only to his negative comments on Judaism. What is more, the Christians usually misunderstood supposedly negative statements and did not recognize them as part of an internal Jewish dispute—which they mostly were. More important than Paul's occasional outbursts of irritation (1 Thess. 2 : 14-16) is the grandiose theological picture he paints in Romans chapters 9-11. The assertion of the primacy of Israel contained in that passage was so intolerable to many medieval Christians that they simply usurped the salvation promised in it for Israel. They conceived the theory of disinheritance, and thus they were able to exclude the Jews from the whole of a theology founded upon Judaism. That is, before getting rid of the Jews as human beings—quite often by killing them—the medieval Christians employed an ingenious pseudotheological theory to remove the Jews from the

New Testament wherever it conceded them salvation and spiritual blessings.

The disputations centered around the question of whether this world is a redeemed world. Although Jewish scholars may have differed on other matters, on this one question all agreed: The world as it was could not be regarded by Jews as redeemed. No wonder. The second question always arose in connection with the trial of Jesus. The Jews pointed out that at the time of the trial only a small part of the Jewish people, in fact an eighth, was living in Palestine; the Jews in other countries or their descendants could not be held responsible for the trial of Jesus. They pointed out that judicial errors and judicial murders had always existed, right down to the present time, and that if every people were made answerable for every wrong verdict, no nation would survive. They also pointed out how many hundreds of thousands of Jews before and since had suffered the same fate as Jesus.

To match wits with Jewish theologians the Church would draw its spokesmen from the ranks of the renegades. Thus arose the ridiculous spectacle of the disputations turning into verbal battles between baptized and unbaptized Jews.

Generally, the disputations were held in a large square in the heart of the city. Their real purpose was to incite the mobs for whose edification they were held. The rabble waited impatiently for the end of the arguments in order to begin breaking into the Jewish quarter, pillaging and killing.

Disputations did not always end with a defeat of the Jews. From July 20 to July 31, 1263, one such public disputation was held between the apostate Jew Pablo

Christiani and the rabbi of the Barcelona Jewish community, Moses ben Nachman, called Nachmanides. Nachmanides was adjudged the victor in the disputation. He is quoted as having said:

From the time of Jesus Christ down to our own days the world has been full of violence and robbery, and the Christians have spilled more blood than all other peoples, and in their morality they are just as licentious as others. Oh, how differently everything would be for Your Majesty and your knights if they were no longer trained for war!

The king gave the rabbi a reward of 300 sueldos, saying to him: "Never before have I seen a man defend a bad cause so well." On Saturday the king went to the synagogue, accompanied by Dominicans, and addressed the Jews. This was a unique incident in the Middle Ages.

The most important disputation of the Middle Ages was held in Spain. At the end of 1412 there were three popes simultaneously. The antipope Pedro de Luna, who went by the name of Benedict XIII, with the consent of the king of Aragon ordered the Jewish communities to send representatives of their religion to Tortosa. The communities sent twenty scholars. The Christian side was represented by the baptized Jew Geronimo de Santa Fé. The antipope himself presided. He hoped that this disputation would win him a better position in his struggle with the two other popes, for overcoming the Jews in a disputation and subjugating the Jewish religion would surely be a great accomplishment in the eyes of the Christian world. The arguments began in February 1413 and dragged on until November 1414. When Benedict XIII saw that the results were not what he had hoped for and that the Jews were ably defending themselves, he

gave the word for intimidation to begin. In a number of the cities of Aragon, monks forced Jews to undergo baptism. They brought others into the hall where the disputation was taking place and terrorized them into publicly repudiating Judaism and mocking the Jewish scholars. But the scholars, who were familiar with the other side's practices, remained undaunted. The disputation was called off. In May 1415, the disappointed pope issued a bull commanding destruction of the Talmud and isolation of the Jews, who were, moreover, required to gather in the churches three times a year to hear missionary sermons. But this bull soon lost its validity, for in November of that same year Benedict XIII was deposed by the Council of Constance.

As long as the Moors dominated a large part of the Hispanic peninsula and were at war with the Spanish kingdoms, the Christian rulers were often dependent on the Jews living in their kingdoms. In spite of the Church's rulings, the kings had entrusted high positions to the Jews, especially in commerce and finance.

The situation was complicated by the special position of the Church in Spain. Here it was more nationalistic than in other European countries and, therefore, made greater claims to power within the state. The struggle against the Moors was simultaneously a national struggle for the liberation of Spain and a battle against infidels. The Church was bent on dominating all of Spanish life and extending its sway to the nonreligious areas. But such ambitions did not always coincide with the plans of the secular rulers. And since there were usually Jews among the Crown's advisers, the wrath of the frustrated Church was turned against them. In 1109 the first pogrom took place in Toledo, and subsequently in other

Spanish cities. Under pressure of the Church, Castile and Aragon introduced a number of anti-Jewish measures. But within their ghettos, known as *juderias*, the Jews at least still had full autonomy. From the point of view of the Church this was a scandalous degree of tolerance.

The Church became increasingly chauvinistic, and under its influence so did the Spaniards. In addition to Judaism they began to combat all outside ideas. Since the world of that time was restricted to Europe, anything non-Spanish was branded as *européizante*. To this day the concept *européizante* has remained a term of opprobrium in Spain.

Just as Hitler, centuries later, would hold the Jews responsible for all misfortunes and regard everything Jewish as the quintessence of evil, so the peoples of Europe responded at the end of the fourteenth century, after the outbreak of the plague. Some explanation had to be found for this scourge that was sweeping away people by the thousands—best blame the Jews. In Germany, France, Spain, and wherever else Jews lived in Christian Europe, pogroms of inconceivable proportions began. These attacks were frequently led by members of the Catholic clergy. In Spain great waves of attacks on the Jews began with the first pogrom in Seville on June 6, 1391. A Father Ferrand Martinez whipped up the masses in defiance of the pro-Jewish sentiments of the king and the archbishop; with the priest at their head, the mob overpowered the guard that the king had placed around the Jewish quarter, and the ghetto was put to the torch. There were similar outbreaks in Barcelona, in Gerona, and in many other cities of Catalonia and Castile. Martinez was not the only cleric to incite the masses to seize the accumulated goods of the Jews. Avarice was every-

where kindled under the guise of a struggle against the infidel. The pogroms continued for three months. Pope Boniface IX dispatched emissaries to halt the killing, but in vain. The fanaticism of local branches of the Church rode roughshod over the Pope's commands. Once the masses had been set in motion they could no longer be checked. The chancellor of the king of Castile, assigned by his master to investigate and report on the extent of the destruction in the kingdom, summed up his findings in one pointed sentence: "Greed to rob and not religious zeal was the motive force."

Some of Spain's Jews fled; those who remained and had been able to save some of their possessions succumbed to the endless exhortings to abjure their false faith. By forcible conversion the Church hoped to obliterate the Jews who had been left alive. Pressure to accept baptism spread throughout the peninsula. The driving force was the Dominican monk and preacher Vincente Ferrer, who would make use of any means to convert the Jews. His greatest feat was the conversion of an influential and highly respected rabbi, Schlomo Halevi, who as a Christian adopted the name Pablo de Santa Maria.

This Pablo de Santa Maria rose in the Catholic hierarchy, becoming bishop of Burgos, chancellor of Castile, and leader of ecclesiastical antisemitism in Spain. He established each of his four sons in a prominent position within the government and took all converts under his protection. Again and again, the converts were to play an important part in the history of antisemitism. A franciscan friar, Alonso de Espina, surpassed all other converts in this respect. Espina became confessor to King Henry IV and wielded great influence in state and Church. He openly called for compulsory baptism of

Jews and the introduction of the Inquisition. The chief victims of his zeal were former converts, whom he accused of insufficient piety, rather than the Jews themselves. Thus his activity prepared the ground for the subsequent tragedy. Heretofore, converted Jews had merged into their Christian surroundings, and intermarriage had gradually obliterated all differences between them and their fellow countrymen. But now there formed a hostile front between the converts, the "new Christians," and the "old Christians." This dividing line soon led to the pogroms against the new Christians that started in Toledo in 1467.

The paradox could not be resolved. On the one hand the Church was trying to convert the Jews, and on the other hand it cast them in so bad a light that it became impossible for the people to trust the converts.

An attempt was made to give a "scientific" explanation for the obstinacy with which the Jews held to their ancient faith. A Madrid physician, Juan Huarte de San Juan, offered historical "evidence." In his treatise on the question he maintained that the Jewish character had been formed thousands of years ago, during the forty years of wandering in the desert between Egypt and Palestine. The eating of manna, the nature of the air, and the hot desert climate had caused the birth of highly intelligent children. But these children also had a black gall, which made them cunning. They were sly and hostile to all non-Jews.

We will seek in vain for the logic behind such reasoning. There was none. Had there been, the Church should have given up trying to convert an obstinate and by birth unworthy people. Instead, it promised converted Jews a good livelihood and offices in state and Church. All their

problems would vanish as soon as they crossed the threshold of Christianity. And the promise was true: When Jews accepted conversion, they climbed all the steps of the hitherto forbidden secular and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Such worldly success, however, earned them the envy of the populace and of some members of the clergy. The vicious circle was inescapable; for some they remained Jews; for others they were only sham Christians.

In 1903, there was published in St. Petersburg the record of an alleged Jewish meeting, the notorious *Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion*. There had never been any such meeting or any such protocols; the document was a crude forgery aimed at inciting fear and hatred of the Russian Jews and was so designated by courts of law. Eventually, as is well known, the Nazis took up the protocols and used them for their own purposes. What is not so well known is the fact that the *Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion* had been anticipated in medieval Spain. The forgery in this case was a letter of 1066 that one Rabbi Samuel of Morocco supposedly wrote in Arabic to another rabbi. The fictitious Rabbi Samuel recommended to the Jews that they accept conversion to Christianity and baptism. They would then be able to occupy all the important positions held by Christians, and so Jewry could extend its dominion over the Christian world and over all other countries. The "letter" aroused great excitement; it was translated into several languages, for centuries providing the basis for attacks upon the Jews. Spanish antisemites repeatedly cited this letter as evidence that the Jews were seeking to dominate Spain.

In the eyes of antisemites the fact that baptized Jews held positions in the state was proof enough that they were following the counsel of Rabbi Samuel of Morocco.

They did not consider that the baptisms had been coerced or that in fact Christians themselves were responsible for this development.

Before the invention of printing, pamphlets against the Jews or against converts, often written by monks of the mendicant orders, were laboriously copied by hand and read or recited to the people. Printing made possible the wider circulation of broadsides. One of these, "The Verses of the Provincial," enjoyed great popularity during the reign of Henry IV. It used what was to become the typical device of seasoning antisemitism with a heavy dose of pornography. Stress on sadism and racial defilement worked on the emotions of the populace, arousing them to a murderous pitch of fury against the wicked aliens in their midst.

In Spain, however, the fiercest denunciation of the Jews came from among the ranks of the new converts. Such traitors were not very numerous, but they provided proof that in times of crisis baseness and bad character are much in demand. Since these converts were needed, they rapidly climbed the steps of power. But they were well aware that once they had climbed to the middle and high positions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, their origins would prevent their further progress. Hence they tried to obliterate knowledge of their origins by exterminating Jewry. It is one of the special tragedies of the Jewish people that careerists of this sort have so often played a leading part in antisemitic persecutions.

Moreover, these ambitious apostates could all too readily understand the feelings of other converts. They knew that many had adjusted to the new religion only in regard to the outward trappings but had inwardly remained Jews. The converts were forced to thrash in

the nets of double loyalties. They hated the circumstances in which they had abandoned the religion of their forefathers. They felt that they had become apostates for the sake of safeguarding material goods or their positions. Guilt toward their Jewish faith made them all the more determined to follow the prescripts of the Jewish religion, even though that might mean mortal danger for them.

The way Jews were forced to undergo baptism had naturally stiffened their inner resistance. As one chronicler of the time puts it, during the ceremony the tears of the baptized mingled with the water of baptism. Confronted with the choice of submitting to baptism or leaving the country, those Jews who went over to the Catholic faith were on the whole the prosperous and propertied ones. In time they became habituated to the show of conformity, but it was an open secret that many of the new Christians had not abandoned Judaism. They were generally called *Marranos*, a word that has two meanings in Spanish: "damned" or "swine." Thus there arose the distinction between the *Conversos*, those converts who totally broke off relations with Jews and became assimilated, and the *Marranos*, those who outwardly pretended to be Christians but secretly remained Jews. It was not always possible to differentiate between the two groups because many *Marranos* managed their camouflage perfectly. The Church had to depend on informants from the populace in order to determine who was a *Converso* and who a *Marrano*.

Thus a close watch was kept on converts. Neighbors noticed whether they kept their Jewish eating habits and what kind of cooking their womenfolk practiced. If they prepared dishes with onion and garlic, fried meat in oil and avoided the use of lard or any other animal fat, their

conversion was open to question. They smelled just like Jews, and in time that fact sealed their fate. Their food habits constituted a relapse into Judaism, one of the aspects of *judaizante* with which the Inquisition charged them.

Marranos intermarried because they wanted to keep to themselves. Slowly, the gulf between new and old Christians deepened. Small wonder that in perennially drought-stricken Spain the saying arose: "In three cases water has flowed in vain: the water of the river into the sea, the water in wine, and the water at a Jew's baptism."

Both the baptizers and the baptized knew that the first phase after conversion was one of mere lip service to the new religion. The deceived wanted to be deceived, and the deceivers played along with them. Ecclesiastics could report to their superiors impressive numbers of baptized Jews, and all were surely *ad maiorem dei gloriam*. The Church itself, after all, had created this problem of new Christians and potential new heresy. Since the imposed baptism was an act of opportunism or a last resort in an intolerable situation, the Church could not very well expect fervent belief from the newly baptized. For a while outward conformity would have been sufficient. But the conversion of the heart, which the Church had expected would follow, did not—at least it was absent in many cases.

According to the law there could be no restrictions upon new Christians. All the offices of state and Church were open to them, and soon they were found as advisers to the kings, as teachers in the universities, as officials in the administration, the army, and the judiciary. Inevitably they married into the noble families of Spain; for a while it was a matter of honor in the Spanish nobility

to have at least one Converso in the family. At the same time, slanders against the Marranos began—initially on the part of the lower clergy. There were enough reasons for this. Taxation and the administration of government finances were in the hands of the Conversos, and the tax burden was extremely heavy. Riots against Conversos continually erupted. Finally the pope had to intervene and order the Spanish Church to control such outbreaks.

Among the Jew-baiters who prepared the way for the Inquisition, one man in particular stands out. He was Prior Hojeda of the Dominican monastery of San Pablo in Seville. The diatribes of Hojeda against Jews and Marranos at the royal court have been preserved in the archives of Seville. He seized every opportunity to rant against the "Jewish masters"; he noted even the most insignificant incident that could provide fuel for his polemics.

In 1478 the Jewish Passover coincided with Easter Week. On the evening celebrated by the first of the festival meals, the seder, a young Spanish nobleman stole into the Juderia in Seville for a secret meeting with a beautiful Jewish girl. The young man apparently did not altogether know his way about the mansion and by mistake entered a hall in which the seder was being held. Both Jews and Marranos were present. The many burning candles, the festive dress, the wine-filled cups, struck this Catholic as a mockery of the Christian religion, and that during Easter Week of all times. Dumbfounded, he left the Juderia and told his friends about what he had seen. Before long Prior Hojeda heard of the incident. This insignificant episode, which took place on March 18, 1478, became a central item in an elaborate charge against the Jews and the Marranos. Hojeda drew up an indictment

in which he particularly emphasized that Jews and heretics assembled to mock the Christian faith during the very week commemorating the sufferings of Christ. The Dominican prior then went straight to the royal court, ranted like a madman, and demanded immediate introduction of the Inquisition.

Soon afterwards a group of high ecclesiastical dignitaries met in Seville, with Queen Isabella in person presiding at the session. The theme of the conference was "Consolidation of the Faith." But that was merely a circumlocution. In reality the only thing discussed was the Marrano question and the need for the Inquisition.

As a religious institution the Inquisition is difficult to comprehend. Certainly it is a highly dubious auxiliary arm for a faith that bases itself upon the Gospels. One may well ask how a religion that preaches love of neighbor, tolerance, and mercy could have had human beings burned alive solely because they would not accept certain of the Church's doctrines or because they interpreted these doctrines in another manner.

The Inquisitors attempted to find in the Gospels the authority for their activities. There were, for example, certain statements by the apostles on the harmfulness of heretics, and they construed these statements in their favor. One of their favorite quotations was from the Epistle of Paul to Titus, 3 : 10-11, "A man that is heretical, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned." But it would not be amiss to have the Inquisition look into the case and pass an official sentence. No note was taken of the recommendation of the same apostle in his second Epistle to

the Thessalonians, 3:15, "Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." The pronouncements of other apostles were treated in the same cavalier manner. Driven by a savage and blind fanaticism the Inquisitors used only the words that served their purposes. They doctored texts by omission and mutilation and offered their distorted versions as authoritative. Since they had the power, their falsifications acquired the force of law.

The Gospels are unequivocal in decrying all compulsion in matters of belief. The early Christians abhorred coercion, the more so because they themselves were being cruelly persecuted for their faith by the Roman emperors. Testimonies to tolerance by saints of the early Church can be found in the writings of St. Cyprian of Lactantius, St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Ambrose of Milan, and St. Gregory of Nazianus, to name only a few. Yet only a few years after Constantine the Great put an end to the harassment of Christians by his Edict of Milan, in 313, the Christians themselves began enforcing religious orthodoxy. In 325, the Council of Nicaea banned under penalty of death the reading or possession of the writings of Arius. In 353, Emperor Constantius issued an edict against heretics; subsequent edicts were directed against the pagans, against the Jews, against all other dissidents. From century to century persecution by Christians mounted. Around the year 1000, the Cathars (Albigensians) began developing an independent church that repudiated Roman dogma. As Catharism spread, the Roman Church created the Inquisition to deal with such mass defection. The Dominicans were given the assignment to enforce orthodoxy in the rebellious areas. They did so with a terrible thoroughness and annihilated the Cathars by the thousands.

Only a few princes of the Church here and there dared

to question these practices. One of these, Bishop Wazo of Liège, protested that God did not wish the sinner's death. But the death sentence for heresy became more and more firmly established and *autos-da-fé* a recognized procedure. Even St. Thomas Aquinas, in 1274, employed his formidable powers of argument to demonstrate that it would not be enough to excommunicate heretics; they had also to be excluded from the world by death.

The inquisitorial routine was divided into two parts. The Inquisitors by their judgment cut the victim off from the Church, and the secular judge cut him off from life. First, of course, there were a number of practical questions to be settled. A man condemned for heresy had to forfeit all his possessions; therefore, to whom, then, did this property belong? On this matter there was protracted haggling between Church and Crown.

A dramatic instance of such conflict of interest took place in Spain during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. The pope was anxious to install inquisitorial tribunals within their conquered domains, and he made overtures to this effect to the royal pair. Isabella, eager to prove her piety, was ready to acquiesce, but Ferdinand hesitated for some time. The Dominicans were aware of his reservations and managed to allude to the other than spiritual benefits that would flow to the realm from the rooting out of heretics. This argument appealed somewhat more to Ferdinand, and he issued the necessary invitation.

But at this point Pope Sixtus IV became wary. The proceeds of this operation promised to be extraordinary, and the Church wanted to be sure of the lion's share of the booty. Now Sixtus procrastinated. Ferdinand, who was also king of Sicily, had learned from experience the need for shrewd bargaining. In Sicily the Inquisition was con-

ducted by an archbishop, and the property of the condemned was going entirely to the Church. Consequently, Church and Crown continued sparring for some time over the terms of their joint action. It was several months before they reached agreement.

On November 1, 1478, Pope Sixtus IV issued a bull empowering Ferdinand and Isabella to introduce the Inquisition into the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. The conduct of the religious tribunal was to be in the hands of three bishops, and the Crown was assured a significant part in the proceedings.

Until this point Aragon had been something of a haven for Marranos and Jews. Ferdinand's father, King Juan of Aragon, had been well-disposed to this group of his subjects. He was even connected to them by marriage—his second wife, Ferdinand's mother, was the granddaughter of the beautiful Jewess Paloma of Toledo. The Jews in turn were always grateful for the favor he had shown them and loyally aided their king. Juan's Jewish physician, Don Abiator Aben Crescas, watched over his master's failing vision and used every technique of medicine known to the times to keep the king from going blind. One of the ruler's most cherished plans was to unite Aragon and Castile through the marriage of his son Ferdinand and Princess Isabella of Castile. The Jews were heartily in favor of such an alliance, for they had reason to hope that the prince would follow in his father's footsteps, especially in view of Ferdinand's Jewish descent on his mother's side. Therefore, the matter was broached by influential Jews in Aragon to their co-religionists in Castile. Finally the royal, chief taxfarmer of Castile, the Jew Don Abraham Senior of Segovia, universally respected for his wisdom, communicated with a number of

Castilian grandees to propose the marriage of the infanta Isabella with her cousin Ferdinand.

Isabella herself apparently favored Ferdinand's suit, but some of the Castilian nobility raised objections.

The grandees of Castile had three other marital candidates in mind: the king of England, the king of Portugal, and the duke of Berry. Significantly, perhaps, the anti-Ferdinand party consisted largely of ecclesiastics, among them Don Alfonso of Carillo, archbishop of Toledo, and Don Pedro Gonzales de Mendoza, then bishop of Sigüenza, later cardinal of Spain.

Abraham Senior conferred with Aragon's leading jurist and the king's friend, Jaime Ram. Ram, son of a rabbi of Monzon, furnished Ferdinand with twenty thousand sueldos to enable him to visit Isabella. Disguised, the young man crossed the frontier of Castile and made his way by the quickest route to Don Abraham Senior. Taking the greatest precautions, Abraham Senior accompanied Ferdinand to a secret nocturnal conversation with Isabella. Presumably the young people settled matters between them, but the hostile Castilian nobles had still to be persuaded or bribed. A number of influential Marranos, led by Pedro de la Caballeria, finally succeeded in silencing the opposition to Ferdinand, and the way was open for the marriage.

At once a further obstacle appeared. The treasuries of the kingdom of Aragon were empty, and Ferdinand was in no position to present a suitable bridal gift to Isabella. Wealthy Marranos of both kingdoms again came to the rescue, purchasing a necklace worth 40,000 ducats for the purpose.

The wedding finally took place in 1469.

Ferdinand knew that there had been a cabal against



Portrait of the Catholic Sovereigns Ferdinand and Isabella.

him, and consequently he had little love for the grandees of Castile. His animosity included those Marranos who belonged to the nobility, even though they had exerted themselves in his behalf. Whatever gratitude he may have felt was transformed into an inferiority complex toward Marranos. Their very existence reminded him of his former poverty, and this was unendurable.

Ferdinand's attitude was an example of the ingratitude accorded to Jews throughout history. But it was also the result of miscalculation on their part; they had placed their hopes in an impoverished prince and helped him to power. Ferdinand evidently felt their aid as a humiliation; he rewarded his benefactors with expulsion and death.

Ferdinand had a similar need to humiliate and to subjugate the Castilian grandees and especially the ecclesiastics among them. The country was engaged in struggle with the Moors, who still occupied Granada. Ferdinand saw the chance to finance the war by confiscating the fortunes of the wealthy new Christians and by imposing higher taxes on the income of the Jews. He was, in fact, desperate for revenge and was already taxing the clergy, which had never before been done in Spain.

Isabella, for her part, had already established a grim precedent for royal expropriation by her use of summary tribunals. Every Friday the queen rode to another city in Castile to administer justice. Any citizen who wished to lay a case before her had only to appear at one of these sessions. If the defendant were a rich man, the chances were good that he would be condemned and his property claimed by the Crown. Isabella's sentences varied somewhat, ranging from death on the gallows to drawing and quartering. A sentence of forced labor in the galleys was regarded as a special act of clemency.

Confessions were common enough, for the culprit would be tortured for hours before the official questioning. The interrogation itself commonly lasted only a few minutes. Provision was also made for the salvation of the culprit's soul, for a priest was always in attendance beside the executioner.

In addition, the queen had a habit of addressing the populace in the market places of her cities and promulgating a kind of state socialism. She promised the people that their lot would improve as soon as the Crown had curbed the grandees who had long been oppressing them. In attacking the rich, Isabella was essentially attempting to lay the basis for a centralized state. But the effect was to send thousands of the more prosperous citizens of Castile fleeing to Granada and Portugal with what few valuables they could take with them rather than await the verdict of Isabella's tribunals.

Another of Isabella's innovations was a people's militia, a kind of police force, which called itself the Santa Hermandad, or Holy Brotherhood. It consisted originally of a motley crew of thieves, vagabonds, ruffians, and former convicts and was meant to be used against the nobility who had opposed Isabella in the war of succession. Later, these troops were placed at the service of the Inquisition, in which capacity they acquired great influence. There was then a rush to join the Hermandad, and its composition changed to include a sizable contingent of respectable householders. Noblemen who felt threatened also deemed it wise to enter the Holy Brotherhood and formed a kind of elite guard beside the others. Thus opportunism and baseness became virtue in the service of the fatherland.

Once created, the Inquisition needed an elaborate ap-

paratus: a bureaucracy, a police force, and a network of informers. The three groups were drawn from different social classes, which made the bribery of individuals difficult, for each group kept jealous watch upon the other. The ecclesiastical police alone would have been susceptible to corruption but were held in check by the flourishing system of informing. Informers tended to be religious zealots who believed that their own salvation was the better guaranteed by their helping to expose dangerous heretics. But there were also more tangible rewards for such services. By agreement with the state, informants were excused from taxation. They also enjoyed considerable leniency in the courts if they themselves ever were to run into trouble with the law. Moreover, the informer was entitled to a certain portion of the confiscated property of his victim. This could amount to a pretty penny. To further add to the prestige of the informer the Church had a special medal struck. It depicted a cross flanked by a dagger and an olive branch and was worn with considerable pride. The recipients of the medal were also entitled to decorate their houses with this emblem.

Under the aegis of the Dominicans a horde of ecclesiastical police began combing the country. They concentrated their attention upon the new Christians, in particular questioning their servants. They would gain admittance to homes of Conversos on Friday nights, where they took particular note of any trace of religious festivity. Were there lighted candles in the house? Were the members of the family dressed in their finery? For these were telltale signs that the Jewish Sabbath was being observed and were sufficient evidence for an arrest warrant.

There were other tricks for discovering sham Chris-

tians. Observation posts were set up on towers and rooftops, and watch was kept over a town's chimneys. If a chimney did not smoke on Saturdays, this was reported. Jewish religious law forbade the lighting of fires on the Sabbath. Should the house belong to a Marrano, the absence of smoke on Saturdays was a betraying sign that he still kept to the customs he was supposed to have abjured.

Some of these customs persisted remarkably. Although the Marranos in fact had long since abandoned most of their Jewish beliefs, they had certain rites and habits to which they clung even in the third generation. Hence women were encouraged to denounce any neighbor who was known to prepare certain Jewish delicacies or to cook in a specifically Jewish manner. To make the work of detection easier, the Dominicans prepared a list of twenty rules by which a Jew could be recognized. These rules concerned habits, phraseology, and physiognomy.

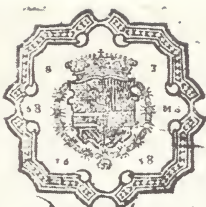
It was by no means easy to identify a Jew by his appearance, especially in Spain. For by the fifteenth century, Spain had been the home of Celts, Iberians, Romans, Phoenicians, Basques, Vandals, Visigoths, Jews, and Arabs. To further complicate the picture, during the period of Roman occupation soldiers from all parts of the Roman empire, including members of all the peoples conquered by Rome, mingled with the native population and married and begot children. And Roman legionaries stationed in Spain brought back from their campaigns in other lands their share of booty in the shape of slave girls. Hence even more exotic strains of blood were added to the general mixture.

If the Dominicans had imagined that it would be relatively simple to separate the Jews from the rest of the

population, they soon found that they had been mistaken. With the onset of the Inquisition, Spanish society itself underwent a painful upheaval. The general confusion, the rash of denunciations, produced a sense of universal insecurity. The tribunals uncovered some astonishing facts: certain monasteries whose monks had had themselves circumcised by fellow monks of Jewish descent; Marranos who returned to Judaism in order to suffer with their people; secret synagogues in which high government dignitaries had their reserved seats.

Nevertheless, the proceedings continued, with dire effect. Within the higher levels of the Marrano community, particularly, there were terrible choices to be made. To save themselves and their nearest kin many Marranos became collaborators of the Inquisition. Fritz Heymann, in his book *Der Chevalier von Geldern*, vividly describes the situation in a single sentence: "It happened that of five brothers, one gave the orders as a minister of the king, the second was burned as a heretic, the third was a bishop, the fourth lived abroad as a Jew, and the last served the royal commissioner supervising the expulsion of the Jews."

The incessant invective of the Church against the "obstinacy and wickedness" of the Jews had a notable side-effect: a blood-and-soil mythology. Spaniards were encouraged to feel superior to Jews, Moors, and all other foreign races. Under the spur of the Inquisition, Spain began instituting "pure blood" laws. Those of "pure blood" constituted a kind of master race, destined to rule all those who could not demonstrate such lineage. Foreign blood was *mala sangre*, bad blood, and those with the misfortune to have this were consigned to a lower caste in society. To qualify for any post or privilege, people



Dos reales

**SELLO TERCERO DOS REALES
AÑO DE MIL Y SEISCIENTOS Y
CINQUENTA Y OCHO**

Genealogía de
Diego de Silua Velasquez, aporcentador de Palacio y ayuda
de Cámara de S. Mag.^a tiene Esd. mnd del Sinto & Sant^a
y natural de la Ciudad & Sevilla

Padres

Juan Rodriguez de Silua y su muguer Doña Ger^{ma},
Velasquez naturales de la Ciudad & Sevilla

Abuelos Paternos

Diego Rodriguez de Silua y su muguer Doña Maria
Rodriguez naturales de la Ciudad de Oporto en el Reyno
& Portugal

Abuelos Maternos

Juan Velasquez y su muguer Doña Catalina de
Cayas naturales de la Ciudad & Sevilla

Por orden de S. Mag.^a & Camarada que las informaciones
quetocari en la Ciudad & Oporto del Reyno & Portugal
donde nacieron los Abuelos Paternos del Pretendiente
de España en sus confines & Galicia, y sean señalados por
Confines, los lugares & Monterrey. 2.º Jun. 2.º 1658

Limpieza de sangre of Velásquez, 1658: "... His parents were Old Christians, untainted by any bad races or by mixture with Jews or Moors or recent converts."

[illegible]

were required to prove that no *mala sangre* flowed in their veins. Such proof was set forth in the *limpieza de sangre*, the certificate of blood.

Centuries later the proponents of a German blood-and-soil mythology would be requiring proof of Aryan descent. But the concept of a "pure race" first arose in Spain in the last decades of the fifteenth century. And there, too, "pure blood" was found in the northern part of the country, in the Pyrenees. Impurity had flowed south into the lowlands. The "pure" had withdrawn into the mountains and were preserving the blood heritage untainted.

The pursuit of *limpiezas de sangre* continued for centuries. One hundred fifty years after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain the painter Velázquez wished to have access to a military barracks so that he could sketch the soldiers and equipment. He was asked to provide a *limpieza de sangre*. The document, dated 1658, has been preserved. It is based on the statements of witnesses, one of whom testified concerning Velázquez's parents.

He knew of them that they sprang from a legitimate marriage, because he had heard nothing to the contrary, and that they were old Christians, pure of all bad races and of the mixture with Jews or Moors or recent converts. He has also heard nothing to suggest that any of them or their forefathers had been punished by the Holy Inquisition for any of the offenses specified in the inquiry, or for any others, either publicly or secretly.

Pure Spaniards, those beyond suspicion, had to have an exemplary *limpieza de sangre* to the seventh generation. To be able to trace one's Christian ancestry only as far as the fifth generation was taken as strong evidence

of Jewish taint. If a witness could be found—and one was usually forthcoming—to testify that he had seen the man's grandfather eating meat on Fridays, the ancestor would be convicted of having followed Jewish customs. Then the grandfather's bones would be exhumed—the Inquisition desecrated Catholic burial grounds as freely as it did Jewish cemeteries—and burned at stake along with the living grandson, who in many cases had never know this grandfather and often discovered the existence of his Jewish forbears only in the course of his efforts to obtain a *limpieza de sangre*.

Again in a curious foreshadowing of measures to be taken centuries later in Germany, the authorities of the period passed numerous laws prohibiting the mixing of races or miscegenation. One of these decrees read:

No Christian woman, whether she be married or single, housewife or prostitute, durst by day or by night cross the threshold of a house inhabited by Jews. If a married woman enters a Jew's house, she pays a fine of four hundred maravedis. If a single woman enters a Jew's house, she loses the dress she is wearing. If a prostitute enters, the court must sentence her to a hundred lashes; furthermore she shall be expelled from her city, her town, her village.

Many localities prescribed even more stringent penalties. As for any Jew who had intimate relations with a Christian woman, he suffered the most extreme sentence of all: death at the stake.

"Brother in Christ"—that was how the Inquisitors addressed their pitiable, writhing, half-dead victims. Everything that cruelty and ingenuity could devise to wring a confession from a suffering body was applied with a

mercilessness and a pretense at Christian concern, which even now, after all the intervening centuries and their horrors, can make us shudder. Perhaps what was most revolting about the Inquisition was its hypocrisy. Thus it invented a whole set of terms to disguise the true nature of its activities. The house in which the instruments of torture were stored and the victims "put to the question" was called *Casa Santa*, holy house. The condemned unfortunates were dressed in white from head to foot, with white paper caps on their heads, for the forthcoming ceremony was one of "purification." Each victim was given a tall lighted taper to carry, and the white-clad procession was marched to the central square of the city where the pyre was already prepared for them. Their death had to be by burning because the Church was not permitted to shed blood. The Gospel of St. John had prescribed: "If a man does not abide in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned." These words were the Church's justification for the stake.

From our present vantage point it is easy to see that the Inquisition represented a genuine relapse into primitivism. Essentially it was revival of the cult of human sacrifice. Civilization would seem to have left such practices behind. For centuries, in Europe or in the then known world, there had nowhere been a religion that called for the offering up of human lives to propitiate the gods. Even animals were no longer sacrificed. The nearest approximation was the persecution of the Christians under such emperors as Nero. Those early martyrs had been tortured or thrown to the wild beasts in the arena to serve as sport for the bloodthirsty Roman populace.

But those operations had been on a small scale compared to the vast toll of lives taken by the Inquisitors.

Was it surprising that thousands of persons took flight from Spain? They fled to Granada, to Portugal, to France, and to Rome. The first to flee were the wealthy Marranos and the wealthy Jews.

For the time being the Inquisition did not bother about the fugitives; they had after all left behind much of their wealth, which was fraternally divided between Church and Crown. Only later were efforts made to obtain extradition of the fugitive "heretics." The Marranos who remained behind were not rich, and with the passage of time poorer and poorer ones were arrested. Only their houses, which were sold by the Inquisition, yielded a profit. The expected shower of Marrano gold did not appear. In fact, collection boxes were placed in the churches to solicit funds for the work of the Inquisition. Profitable though it might be to certain persons, the Inquisition also consumed a great deal of money, for it developed into a monstrous bureaucracy that degenerated into an end in itself.

In the nature of things, dividing the goods of condemned and outlawed persons gave rise to constant friction between Church and Crown. Either King Ferdinand cheated the Church or it cheated him. The conflict over a "just" division of the spoils resulted in scandals that became notorious beyond the borders of Spain. All Europe talked about it; the general opinion was that the Spanish monarchs had introduced the holy tribunals solely to enrich themselves from the property of the condemned. Isabella and Ferdinand protested against the "lying rumors," but they could do nothing effective to stop



Banner of the Inquisition. (Picture Archives, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)

them. In a letter to the pope they appealed for his apostolic aid against such “falsehoods.” But the pope seemed

not inclined to save the reputation of the Spanish pair. He preferred not to answer the letter—a most uncommon discourtesy for the period.

Ferdinand was a king of soaring ambitions. Together with Isabella he wanted first to unite Spain, then incorporate Italy into the Spanish Empire—he was already king of Sicily and Sardinia—followed by France. Thereafter, Ferdinand contemplated crossing swords with the Turkish sultan. For such vast plans of conquest he needed enormous sums of money. The sources he intended to tap were the Jews, the Moors, the Marranos, and his own and Isabella's refractory nobles.

In 1465, long before Ferdinand's coronation, some stalwarts in Spain in the name of patriotism introduced into the Cortes a motion to confiscate the property of the Jews in order to finance the struggle against the Moors. Similar proposals cropped up whenever warlike feelings mounted. Invariably there were "patriots" around who were burning to wage battle against the nonbelievers with others' money. As Valeriu Marcu pointedly comments in his *Die Vertreibung der Juden aus Spanien* (*The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*), "Those who were always hated held in their hands what men have always loved."

In 1465, no one had taken these proposals seriously. Fifteen years later the Dominicans reminded Ferdinand of this source of revenue when they approached him on the matter of the Inquisition. Ferdinand was not slow to see the connection: On the one hand, he could strike a blow against the rich Conversos; on the other hand, he could use the funds thus obtained for a holy war against the infidel Moors who were still established in their kingdom of Granada to the south of Castile. Armed with

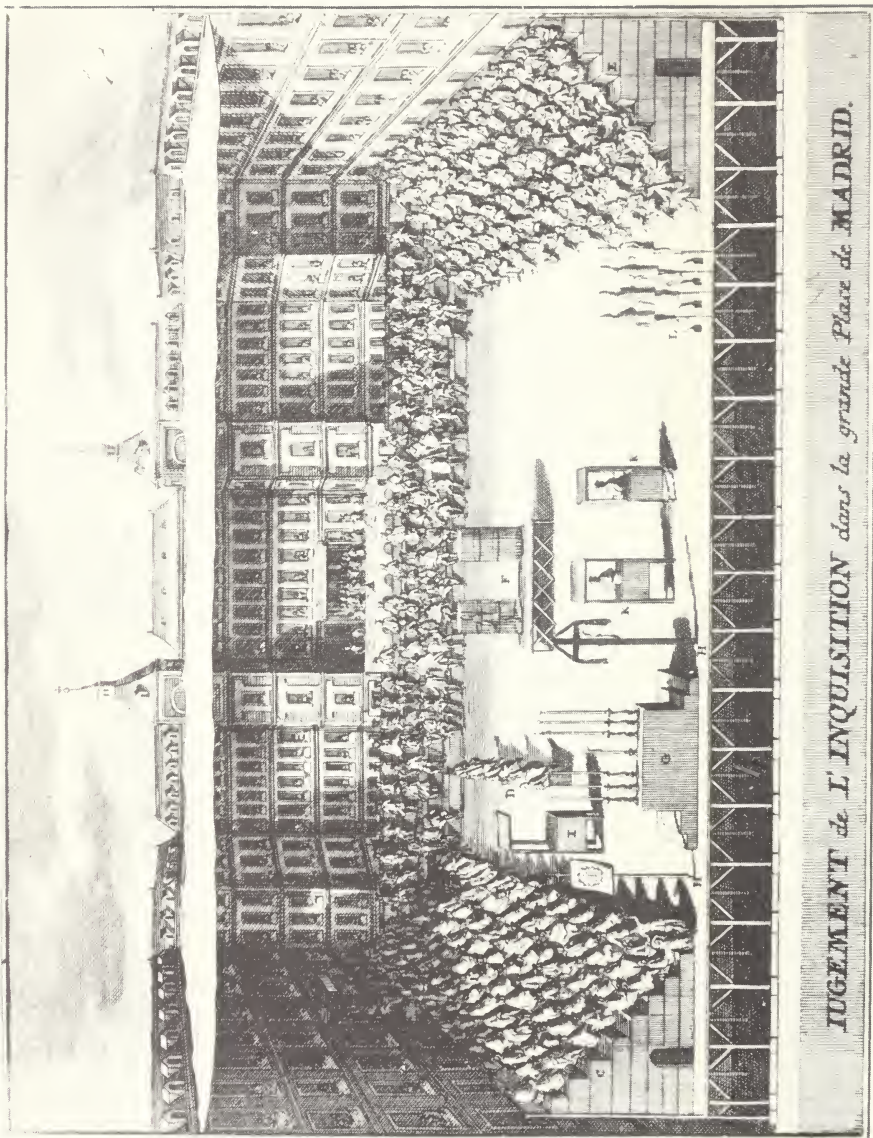
these arguments, the royal couple went to the Cortes and wrested from the grandees their necessary consent to the introduction of the Inquisition. Nevertheless, strong opposition arose almost as soon as the Inquisitors, Canon Pedro Arbués and the Dominican Gaspar Juglar, set about their task. The indignation grew even greater after the first *auto-da-fé*. When one of the richest men in Saragossa, Leonardo (or Samuel) de Eli, had been denounced and brought to trial, the pattern of future events grew all too clear and the King's intentions all too obvious. In the name of the Marranos the grandees petitioned the king and the papal Curia to call a halt to the persecutions. They were ready to pay a considerable sum in return for immunity. But Ferdinand would make no such bargains, and the Inquisition intensified its operation.

In their despair the Marranos decided upon extreme action. Don Sancho de Paternoy, grand treasurer of Aragon; Vice-Chancellor Alfonzo de la Caballeria, who had his reserved seat in the Saragossa synagogue; Juan Pedro Sanchez; Pedro de Almazan; Pedro Monfort; Juan de la Abadia; Mateo Ram; Garcia de Moros; Pedro de Vera; Gaspar de Santa Cruz; and other highly placed Conversos of Saragossa, Calatayd, and Barbastro, met in the home of Luis de Santangel, uncle of the later Aragonese treasurer. They decided to assassinate the chief Inquisitor. On the night of September 14, 1485, two young men of prominent Converso families, Juan de Esperandeu and Vidal Durango, lay in wait for the chief Inquisitor at the metropolitan church of La Seo. They attacked Pedro Arbués with daggers and severely wounded him. He died forty-eight hours later. When the queen heard of this deed she ordered extreme measures to be taken against all Marranos in the country. The conspirators

themselves were ferociously punished. Juan de Esperandeu had to stand by and watch as his father was burned at the stake. His own hands were then cut off, and on June 30, 1486, he and Vidal Durango were quartered in the market place and their bodies consigned to the flames. Juan de la Abadia, who had attempted to commit suicide in prison, was burned together with Mateo Ram, whose hands were also hacked off before his execution. Three months later Abadia's sister, the Caballero Pedro Munoz, and Pedro Monfort, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Saragossa, were burned as adherents of Judaism. Pedro's brother, Jacob Monfort, and his wife, were burned in effigy in Barcelona. Burning in effigy was the Inquisition's answer to the flight of so many defendants.

Sancho de Paternoy, the grand treasurer, had his sentence commuted to life imprisonment at the intercession of his kinsman, Gabriel Sanchez, royal adviser in Aragon. The conspirators Garcia de Moros, Juan Ram, Juan Pedro Sanchez, Juan de Santangel, and Luis de Santangel, likewise suffered death in the flames. Pedro Sanchez, the head of the conspiracy, managed to escape to Toulouse. There he was recognized by Aragonese students at Toulouse University, was arrested, but soon released. Gaspar de Santa Cruz died in flight. Both of them were burned in effigy in Saragossa. The other members of the Sanchez family, the merchant Bernard Sanchez and his wife Brianda, the scholar Alfonzo Sanchez, Anton Perez, and Garcia Lopez, were likewise condemned to the stake.

The Inquisition spread terror everywhere. Many Marranos suffered death by fire; many became martyrs of their faith. The more cruelly they were persecuted, the



JUGEMENT de L' INQUISITION dans la grande Place de MADRID.

Inquisitional tribunal in the presence of the royal couple.
(Picture Archives, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)

more steadfastly they clung to the religion of their fathers. Dalman de Tolosa declared publicly that he, his mother, his brothers Gabriel and Louis, and their wives, had in spite of all the snares set for them adhered to the commandments of the Jewish religion. The wealthy Jacob de Casafranca, for a time deputy treasurer of Catalonia, whose mother also died in the Inquisition's dungeons, freely confessed that the rabbi of Gerona had supplied him with kosher meat and everything else needful to keep the dietary laws. The inquisitional tribunals declared all his descendants *judaizantes*.

Thus the Church in Spain became entangled in a nationalistic and racist mythology whose course led directly to the stake. When the pyres were lit, the choir would begin singing "Te Deum laudamus." What god were they addressing? Surely not Christ, for he had proclaimed himself the God of love. The Spanish Dominicans can only be understood as the promulgators of a new religion of fear and ravening greed and cruelty. The populace referred to them as *domini canes*, the hounds of the Lord.

Tirelessly they continued their search for heretics, plucking them out of palaces, the homes of burghers, and the houses of the Juderia. Together with the Holy Brotherhood, the Hermandad, they dragged their victims to the cellars of the Inquisition. From day to day the number of these prisons increased. Dozens of monasteries converted their cellar vaults to dungeons, yet such multitudes were arrested that the lack of space was acute. Some prisons were so crowded that the prisoners had to stand.

The victims did not discover the charge against them until they reached the torture chamber. None knew his

accuser or his judge. None were permitted to make a real defense or to consult an independent lawyer. Torture, which was a recognized judicial technique of the times, was especially applicable in such cases of "spiritual" wrongdoing. Those who confessed and showed themselves "penitent" might receive one of the Inquisition's lesser punishments—imprisonment, exile, scourging, or service as a galley slave.

The sovereignty of the Church in Spain was virtually complete. Preachers and confessors molded the thoughts of the people. And these churchmen constantly called for the complete isolation of the Jews. A Christian must have no economic dealings with members of that abominable race. He was imperiling his soul if he entered the ghetto, and he was not to use a bathhouse shared by Jewish neighbors.

Jewish delegations appealed to the pope who condemned these racist teachings. But the pope was a distant voice, while the voice of the Spanish Church and its newly founded Inquisition was very near.

It was the common root of Judaism and Christianity that led to the hostility between the two religions. Most popes respected this common root; many issued statements stressing the brotherhood of the Jews and testifying to the universality of the Church. Within Rome itself, there was a long tradition of tolerance toward the native Jewish community. Fugitives from Spain were given a kind welcome by their Roman brethren, with papal permission. From time to time the popes proved their tolerance by issuing bulls for the protection of the Jews. All through the Middle Ages there was a marked contrast between tolerant Rome and the intolerant churches of various countries.

After the first great exodus of wealthy Conversos from Spain, both Church and Crown perceived that the wider they spread their net the greater would be their profits. With this in mind, the Inquisitors tried a "merciful" turn. They informed the Marranos that all who wished to "reconcile themselves with the Church" could do so within a certain period of grace without serious consequences, although they would have to confess their sins and renounce some part of their possessions. Trusting the Inquisitors' word, many Marranos voluntarily appeared before the tribunals, admitted to "judaizing," and professed repentance. But the Inquisitors would not leave it at that; they made the further stipulation that they denounce their judaizing friends and kinsfolk. Those who could not or would not were judged not truly repentant; the promise of mercy was withdrawn, and they became prisoners of the Inquisition. In this way the number of victims took an enormous leap.

The Seville tribunal was particularly noted for its cruel practices, and Marranos who fled to Rome gave such vivid reports of horrors that they procured intervention by the pope. Sixtus IV reprimanded the Inquisitors for acts that had cost the lives of so many persons. Three months later the pope sent another bull in which he bluntly accused the tribunal of being guided "not by zeal for the faith and concern for the salvation of souls, but by avarice." The pope desired a change in the makeup of the Inquisition. Ferdinand regarded this bull as an infringement upon his rights and a sign of papal jealousy in regard to Marrano property. He sharply rejected the bull, and the pope fell silent on the matter.

The Inquisition's sphere of influence was extended even further. The office of Grand Inquisitor was created,

and in September 1483, Thomas de Torquemada was entrusted with it. When all other names associated with the Inquisition are forgotten, his will continue to send a shudder through our souls. His unrelenting cruelty and bigotry were unmatched within his times. Curiously enough he too had Jewish ancestry—his grandmother had been a convert. Throughout his life he cherished a fanatical hatred for the Jews, for he was convinced that there would be secret Jews in Spain—Marranos—as long as there continued to be Jews in the country. They were the source of heresy and backsliding. Once it was no longer possible for the New Christians to be reminded of their old religion by their recalcitrant Jewish brethren, their conversions would become thorough and the ends of the Church would be realized.

Torquemada knew he was hated. He lived in constant fear of death. Wherever he went he was surrounded by a large band consisting of 200 foot soldiers and 50 mounted *familiars* of the Inquisition. At home he kept on his table a unicorn's horn, which was believed to provide protection against poison.

Thomas de Torquemada is said to have been the author of a portentous slogan that became the watchword of the state: "One people, one kingdom, one faith." The slogan implied an unyielding hostility to the Jews. And in fact it became Torquemada's supreme aim to expel the Jews from Spanish soil by any means whatever.

In time Torquemada succeeded in convincing Ferdinand and Isabella, who had already entertained the idea on their own, that exclusion of the Jews was a necessity. Like so many an antisemite of later times, they believed that with the expulsion of the alien element the Golden Age would dawn for their country.

In one respect Ferdinand and Isabella were typical figures of their age. Their own piety enabled them on the one hand to practice the greatest mercy and on the other hand to inflict enormous cruelty. Both tendencies were intimately linked, and neither the royal pair nor their contemporaries saw anything extraordinary or contradictory in the combination.

Many Conversos who were threatened by Inquisitorial proceedings had taken the precaution of transferring their wealth to their purely "Aryan" relatives. When they were brought to trial and sentenced to loss of property, the results were greatly disappointing. But the Inquisitors soon found a counterstratagem. A decree was issued declaring null and void all transfers of property after the introduction of the Inquisition into Spain.

In the course of time Grand Inquisitor Torquemada became so obsessed with hatred that he saw heresy everywhere. Soon he was denouncing even high ecclesiastical dignitaries. In fact, he pushed matters so far that the pope, after a number of fruitless admonitions, actually excommunicated the Grand Inquisitor. Nevertheless, the excommunicate continued to hold his post and pursue his self-appointed task.

The fate of the Jews and the Marranos had been sealed since the beginning of the Inquisition. Total disaster was only a question of time; the horizon was visibly darkening and one dire blow had scarcely fallen when there was news of another. Many who were threatened refused to admit the truth; they lulled themselves with a false sense of security and recollected similar persecutions in the past that had eventually simmered down. Time and again their ancestors had found a way of averting the worst. Surely something would happen to turn

the tide in their favor. Or would the sorrows of the year 1391 be repeated? Would the Jews of Spain, of whom a third were by now baptized, be forced to leave the country in which they had so long been at home?

With heavy hearts, the more prudent began making preparations for departure. They renewed ties with acquaintances and relations in other countries. But such shifts could do no more than soften the fate of individuals; there was no solution for the masses of the Jews. The unconverted and converted alike were now experiencing that typical Jewish situation: living under constant menace. And now old Jewish dreams and longings for a land where they could live unmolested began to reawaken. These longings had accompanied the Jews on their wanderings ever since they had been driven from their homeland. Everywhere they had been persecuted or tolerated, but nowhere had they ever been masters of their destiny.

The last feverish decades of the fifteenth century were marked by another fever: that of exploration. Men were emboldened to set out on voyages that had hitherto been inconceivable. What laid the basis for such exploits was progress in shipbuilding and in the art of navigation. Nautical instruments, maps, and marine charts revolutionized seafaring. And remarkably enough, the Spanish Jews were prominent in this field.

Cartography had long been a concern of the Jews on the Iberian peninsula. Learned Jews presided over a number of schools of cartography whose contributions vastly enlarged the boundaries of the known world. The Spaniards and Portugese would refer to such specialists as "map Jews" or "compass Jews," and the products of their skill and knowledge were highly esteemed throughout Europe and in great demand among sea captains.

The great period of Jewish cartography had been the thirteenth century, and it had been centered on the island of Majorca, then the principal seat of the nautical sciences. Mestre Jaime or Jafuda (Jehuda) Cresques, son of Abraham Cresques of Palma de Majorca, headed the school of cartography. Rulers purchased the maps prepared by the Jews, maps so valuable and rare that they made choice gifts from one king to another. Ambitious rulers also engaged Jewish cartographers to come to their court. As islands were discovered and coastlines traced, the cartographers amended their readings, redrew their charts. Everyone knew that the maps were in the process of revision, that much remained to be discovered about the vastness of the world, and that many additions to the maps would be needed in the future.

The Jews had been potent allies to the Spanish kings in their ambition to make Spain the foremost sea power of Europe and above all to surpass her keenest rival, Portugal. During the second half of the thirteenth century, Jehuda of Valencia, who was adviser to King Jaime I of Aragon, applied himself to the task of building up and equipping the Spanish fleet. Jewish astronomers and mathematicians furnished the necessary calculations for sea voyages; cartographers provided the geographical concept; and Jewish instrument-makers created the requisite technical apparatus.

The achievement of the Majorcan scientists in reshaping cartography, which was so essential for the voyages of discovery, has not yet been adequately evaluated. Theirs was a momentous chapter in Jewish history; Jewish diligence and Jewish intelligence of the period contributed greatly to what might be called, to borrow the sometimes convenient modern practice of code names, "Operation New World."

As I began to look for some material about the thirteenth-century cartographers, I recalled a Jewish joke dating from 1938. After Hitler's invasion of Austria a Jew goes to a travel bureau in Vienna and inquires about the possibilities for emigration. The clerk has a globe in front of her and runs her finger from country to country, saying: "Emigration to Palestine is blocked. American quota is already filled. Visa for England, very tough. China, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Brazil want financial guarantees. Poland will not permit even Polish Jews to reenter." When she has completed the circuit of the globe with her finger, she concludes, "I guess that's all." Resignedly, the Jew gestures toward the globe and asks, "Is this the only one you've got?"

How often in Jewish history must Jews have stood over a map or before a globe and asked the same question as the man in the anecdote?

Almost every adventure in the history of mankind began with the study of some kind of map. To know that there is more of the world to range through is always an exhilarating experience. How much more so for those who were confined to the narrow lanes of the Juderias. Their imaginations peopled the unexplored regions; their hearts yearned for some land where they could live in peace and freedom.

By the fifteenth century it was well known in Spain that the earth was a sphere (although not everyone was willing to believe this) and that there were still many unknown regions upon its surface. For the persecuted these unknown lands were rich in promise.

II

The Hope





DURING THE LAST DECADES of the fifteenth century the Spanish Jews became acquainted with a much-traveled Christopher Columbus who understood their longings and their faith. Here was someone who claimed to know the water route to India and was looking for support to outfit an expedition. The name of India naturally meant a great deal to Jewish merchants of the period. But the place was important for reasons beyond commerce. For once in India it would not be too difficult to make contact with the neighbors of that country. Who, in the eyes of the Jews and of a large number of non-Jews too, dwelt on the frontiers of India? The answer to this question is a bit involved and necessarily takes us far afield.

The patriarch Jacob had twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin. The descendants of these sons formed the tribes of Israel and peopled the land of Palestine. Out of the vicissitudes of Jewish history two kingdoms emerged, one in the North and one in the

South. The southern kingdom was called Judah; it was much smaller than the other and made up of only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. The northern kingdom, Israel, included the remaining ten tribes.

Some 700 years before the beginning of the Christian era Israel was destroyed. The Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser III and Shalmaneser V occupied the entire country with the exception of Samaria, the capital, and deported the inhabitants to Babylonia. After Shalmaneser's death his successor, King Sargon II, marched upon Samaria, which held out for three years but was finally subdued. The surviving inhabitants were also deported. The Book of Kings relates that the Israelites were carried off to remote regions of the Assyrian Empire, "and [he] placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions on monuments in Mesopotamia give us some notion of the number of deportees. After Samaria fell, 27,290 persons were carried away from that city alone. The total number of those deported from the kingdom of the ten tribes is unknown. We may assume that it was many times the above figure.

The emptied areas of the former Kingdom of Israel were settled with pagan Assyrians, Babylonians, and Aramaeans, who mingled with the remaining Israelites and took over many Jewish rites and customs. A new people arose out of this amalgam, the Samaritans, small numbers of whom to this day live in the same territory.

In this way the Israelites, descendants of the patriarch Abraham, returned as captives to the original land from which Abraham had come. Some of the deportees wandered further eastward, some merged with the population, some remained true to their religion. The King-

dom of Judah suffered the same fate; it was conquered by the Babylonians and its inhabitants likewise removed to the lands between the Tigris and the Euphrates. One hundred fifty years later the descendants of the inhabitants of Judah returned to Palestine from their Babylonian exile. With them came a small portion of the earlier captives from Israel who had clung to their religion.

The Jews who lived in Spain in the fifteenth century and all Jews living today are descendants of the two southern tribes. The other ten tribes seem to have vanished, to have been lost to Judaism.

The Jewish people have never been without their land. Although transplanted thousands of miles from Palestine, they have always carried their country with them. It was the goal of their longings; it was present in their hopes. By their commandments and their prayers they daily recalled the old homeland and always preserved ties with it. Despite thousands of years of separation they never gave up the hope of a return to their country. And similarly they did not forget their lost brethren of the ten tribes. Such memories would be revived with special vividness in times of persecution. At such times they resurrected every rumor, every legend, every tale, no matter how dubious. They did not try to discriminate between truth and fantasy, for they needed illusions to preserve their sanity in times of tribulation. Beset by terrible dangers, they could think that perhaps the day would come when the lost ten tribes would emerge from the darkness of history and extend welcoming and protective arms toward them. Then new doors would open for the persecuted, doors to countries in which Jews were not temporary guests but hosts and masters.

A menaced people without a country, such as the Jews

truly were, gazes longingly into the distance toward lands they know little about and on which they can focus their hopes. Perhaps those lands had become the abode of those fellow Jews who were driven from their homes or taken captive at the time of the first Temple, in the age of the kings.

People knew the world of the fifteenth century only from tentative maps, travel narratives, and the tales of sailors and merchants in ports. Every now and then someone would report that far away, in lands rarely visited by the occasional traveler, there were Jews who lived in freedom, belonging to the ruling class, and governed the countries. The stories of Jewish principalities persisted even beyond the Middle Ages.

Every person facing the problem of emigration looks around for relatives. That is true not only for Jews. The impulse to turn to kin has been typical for emigrants of all nations at all times. The Jews, who have always been fugitives, recent fugitives, or would-be fugitives for 2,000 years, have this trait to a very high degree. Therefore, it was natural enough that they should dream not only of some geographical haven but of reunion with their long-lost brothers. The question was: Where had these brothers settled? And how could they be reached?

Where those ten tribes of Israel moved in their further wanderings, whether into the Arabian desert, or through Syria and Iraq to India, or to China, or even further, has remained one of the mysteries of history, which many investigators have tried vainly to solve for more than a thousand years. In recent times, after the creation of the state of Israel, Jews have been brought to Israel from Cochin, India. These still called themselves the *B'nai Israel*, the Children of Israel, though they have lived in

India from time immemorial. It is known that there are yellow-skinned Jews in China, and efforts have been made to find the remnants of the ten tribes in these tiny Chinese communities. Some scholars even contend that elements of the ten tribes crossed the Bering Strait from Asia to Alaska and thus lived in North America long before Columbus discovered the New World. We shall have occasion to consider these stories later.

There is a great dearth of historical material concerning the life of the Jews from the expulsion from Palestine to the ninth century. This is in great contrast to the period around and before the birth of Christ, which is so richly documented. And so we do not really know for how long the Jews have been preoccupied with the question of the ten lost tribes. But there are some ninth-century documents from which we may infer a long tradition. In any case there were tales and legends that belong to a far earlier time. It is necessary, therefore, to go back a bit in history, first, because nowadays too little is known about the search for the lost tribes of Israel, and secondly, because in my opinion this matter is intimately bound up with the venture of Christopher Columbus.

At any rate by the ninth century it was an article of faith, not only among the Jews but among the Christian population, that the ten lost tribes did exist somewhere outside the borders of the known world. It was thus something of a sensation when a man who called himself Eldad had-Dani turned up in Spain and alleged that he was a member of the tribe of Dan, one of the lost tribes. The historians call this man Eldad the Danite. It was known that he had previously been in Egypt, North Africa, Morocco, and probably also in France and Italy. He spoke

Hebrew. The Spanish Jews took him to be an emissary from distant lands who had come to gather information about his co-religionists of the West. They found his stories entirely believable and speculated over these stories for decades.

The Danite reported that four of the tribes had founded a kingdom called Havila beyond great rivers in Abyssinia. The other six tribes had remained in Asia. The tribe of Issachar had settled in the vicinity of Persia, the tribe of Zebulon in the Paran mountains, whence it roamed about in the vicinity of the Euphrates. The tribe of Reuben was inclined toward banditry and beset the road from Bagdad to Mecca, making it unsafe for travelers. The tribe of Ephraim lived in the mountains of the Nejd, near Mecca. The tribe of Simeon and half of the tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land of Kardim. The Danite even specified distances: The journey from Jerusalem to the land of Kardim took six months. And he also mentioned the kingdom of the Khazars.

The rabbis and learned men questioned the Danite. They were anxious to know what religious rites and what customs of old Israel the lost tribes had retained. For the Jews of the period that was the crucial question far more than what secular ways these people followed. The Danite gave cogent answers to all their inquiries. He described certain rites that while not identical with the practices of the Spanish Jews were similar enough to authenticate his story.

Eldad is in fact one of the most mysterious Jews of those Dark Ages. His statements contain enough truth so that he cannot be dismissed as a rank swindler. His contemporaries accepted his stories at their face value, adding them to the store of legends and fantasies on the

theme of the lost tribes with which they beguiled themselves. By the twelfth century, as more was known about geography, the tales of the Danite acquired new interest and began to be studied more critically by others among whom was Abraham ibn Ezra of Toledo, the famous poet, astronomer, grammarian, and theologian. But as the age of exploration neared and interest in the wider world spread throughout Europe, a whole Danite literature arose. As for the Jews themselves, they had very definite motives for wishing to reach these lands inhabited and ruled by long-lost brethern.

Nowadays we assume that the Danite was drawing upon some real experiences with Jewish sects in southern Arabia, Ethiopia, and other parts of Asia and Africa, sects that had at least been there in his time. In fact, some of the rites he described have been preserved to the present day by the Jewish sect in Ethiopia known as the Falasha.

The Jewish Falasha in Ethiopia were at that time the dominant tribe in the Kingdom of Gondar. The present Ethiopian dynasty traces its beginnings to the connection between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba; and the Ethiopian Emperor, the Negus Negesti, bears the title "Lion of Judah." Jewish and Arab immigrants crossed the Red Sea into the highlands of Ethiopia and settled there in very early times. The Jewish settlers lost contact with Judaism and did not participate in any of the Jewish religious developments. Gradually Christian-Jewish sects with elements from both religions evolved. Frequently, too, there were struggles for power between Jewish and Christian communities.

The Danite reported that some of the lands he had traveled in were rich in gold and natural resources.

Among the lands of gold, he named Porainoth and Parwaim. Six centuries later we come across these names in the letters of application Columbus wrote to the kings of Portugal and Spain. Columbus was offering to find these very lands, which were familiar to both Jews and Christians from the apocryphal letters of Prester John, the legendary priestly ruler of a Christian kingdom in Africa. There is evidence that Columbus knew of them from this same source, for in his own copy of the book *Imago mundi* he made a marginal note (unmistakably in his handwriting): "Presbyter Johannes."

The letters that Prester John supposedly addressed in the twelfth century to Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and Pope Alexander III could be regarded as a kind of counter-propaganda to the tales of the Danite. Their burden was to prove that the Jews were rulers nowhere, that there was always a Christian superior over them. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars have shown that the letters of Prester John could not have been written without the basis provided by the Danite's account. Textual comparisons led them to conclude that the letters of Prester John correspond in their most important passages with Danite's travel narrative. The geographical descriptions are identical. But the Jews overlooked the main point of the Prester John letters and instead took them for new confirmation that the Danite had been telling the truth.

For the Jews such ideas were always timely because they were perpetually living on the verge of persecution or in the aftermath of a period of persecution. Insecurity was their permanent lot. There was no knowing how long the favor of a given ruler would last. Tolerance granted could be rescinded at any time, and news of discrimination in other lands awakened the fear that the blight

might spread to their own. All this gave fresh nourishment to their longing for contact with the lost tribes. The subject was constantly being discussed, and enough sailors returned with reports of finding people of a supposedly Jewish type in remote parts of the world to keep alive the hope that the contact might be made.

In this connection we must tell the story of Hasdai ibn Shaprut and Joseph, King of the Khazars. It takes us back to the middle of the tenth century and the court of Caliph Abd er-Rahman III, who ruled in Córdoba. Hasdai was the caliph's personal physician and officially no more than that. Moslems and Jews got on well together in the Arab kingdoms in Spain, but the anti-Jewish passages in the Koran were sufficiently strong to bar Jews from public office in theory, if not in practice. Nevertheless, Caliph Abd er-Rahman III held Hasdai ibn Shaprut in such high esteem that he entrusted him with the equivalent of the ministries of commerce and finance. Hasdai was also in charge of the foreign ministry, for he conducted the caliph's diplomatic business with foreign, mostly Christian, principalities and kingdoms. Still he was never awarded an official title; he was neither a vizier nor a kadip (under-secretary).

Hasdai ibn Shaprut came from a prestigious Jewish family of Córdoba. He knew Hebrew, Arabic, and above all Latin, the diplomatic language of the age. From his dealings with foreign ambassadors he had assembled a general picture of the situation of the Jews. He knew that their lot was better in some countries than in others; but that everywhere they were regarded as inferiors, no matter how well they might have served their rulers.

Hasdai maintained especially lively contact with the two great empires of his day, the Roman Empire of the East

and the Roman Empire of the West (which in later centuries would be known as the Byzantine Empire and the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation). Byzantine Emperor Constantine VIII was at that time seeking diplomatic relations with the powerful Caliphate of Córdoba because he felt threatened by other caliphates in the Near and Middle East. The German Emperor Otto I likewise sent his envoys to Córdoba, and Hasdai ibn Shaprut used his influence to promote the cause of the Jews at both courts. From his conversations with diplomats he gathered that the Jews were almost everywhere held in contempt because, among other things, they were a people without a land of their own. But were they? Some seventy years had passed since Eldad had-Dani had turned up in Spain. He had spoken of a gloomy mountain range in which two and one-half Jewish tribes dwelt, descendants of Abraham from the tribes of Simeon and Manasseh. He had told of a kingdom whose power was so great that many nations were compelled to pay tribute to it. And this kingdom was Jewish.

Hasdai ibn Shaprut had read the Danite's narrative. It had made a lasting impression upon him. He began to try to verify the facts, questioning the various ambassadors with whom he had to deal; and from the Byzantine ambassador he learned of the kingdom of the Khazars on the shores of the Black Sea. It was most certainly a Jewish kingdom, the ambassador informed him; Judaism was the state religion of the Khazars.

To this day the origin of the Khazars remains something of a riddle. Some scholars believe they were a Finno-Ugrian tribe related to the Bulgars, Avars, and Hungarians. Others ascribe a Turkish origin to them. At any rate, after the collapse of the Hunnish empire the Khazars

settled along the border of Asia and Europe, in the vicinity of the Volga and the Caspian Sea. A bellicose people, they warred continually with their neighbors and with growing success, for they recruited many mercenaries from the peoples they conquered. The more they expanded their country the more formidable they became. The Persians tried to safeguard themselves by blocking the passes of the Caucasus. But the Persian Empire had passed its peak of strength; the Khazars crossed the Caucasus and invaded Armenia and conquered the Crimea. For a long time afterward this peninsula was known by the name of Khazaria. The Byzantines trembled in fear of the Khazars and paid tribute to keep them from attacking Constantinople. Many Bulgars and Russians paid homage to Khazar lords as their vassals; the grand dukes of Kiev also paid them annual tributes. A permanent state of war existed between the Khazars and the neighboring Arabs. But on the whole Khazar expansion tended toward Europe.

In 723, the Byzantine Emperor Leo attempted to convert all the Jews in his realm to Christianity. Jewish refugees, mostly merchants, craftsmen, and physicians, poured into the kingdom of the Khazars and settled there. In the middle of the eighth century the Khazar ruler, Chagan Bulan, adopted the Jewish religion, and his nobles followed his example. Both the caliph at Bagdad and the Emperor at Constantinople had previously made efforts to convert the Khazars to Islam and Christianity, respectively. Among the Khazars themselves the tradition persisted that Bulan, after having studied all three religions, had decided in favor of the religion in which the other two were rooted, namely Judaism. Bulan's successor Obadia ordained that the reigning chagans of the Khazars

must adhere to the Jewish religion. He sought contact with Jews in Arab countries, while at home he demonstrated exemplary tolerance toward the non-Jewish parts of the population. Many Moslems dwelt in the land under the Khazar rulers; the army consisted principally of Mohammedan mercenaries. No pressure to accept Judaism was exerted on anyone. The supreme court consisted of seven judges, of whom two were Jews, two Moslems, two Christians, and one pagan who represented the Russians and the Bulgarians.

When the country became Jewish the leadership of the army was placed in Jewish hands. The Khazar military threat led to an alliance between the Slavs in southern Russia and the Byzantine Empire. In the war that followed, the Khazars under a Jewish general named Pesach defeated both enemies and imposed payment of tribute on Byzantines and Slavs alike. The Slavs, in addition, were forced to accept the obligations of vassalage.

When fresh persecutions of the Jews in Byzantium began under Emperor Romanus in the middle of the tenth century, Chagan Joseph sent a message to the Emperor threatening reprisals against the Christian Greeks in his country if the persecutions of the Jews continued. The warning was heeded.

Hasdai ibn Shaprut continued to query the Byzantine ambassadors and gather whatever information he could. He discovered that regular trade relationships existed between Constantinople and the realm of the Khazars and that this country was only a fifteen-day journey from Constantinople. He found it highly significant that the emperor of Byzantium employed humbly honorific language in addressing diplomatic notes to the Khazar king, and this fact alone meant that the Khazars were indeed a

highly respected people. He now had dual reasons for wishing to contact them. On the one hand, he could ask them to use their political influence to intercede for their oppressed co-religionists. On the other, he thought it important to demonstrate that there really were countries where Jews were not merely guests but held the reins of government. If this fact could be made known to all and sundry it should greatly add to the prestige of Jews in the West.

Hasdai ibn Shaprut, therefore, composed a lengthy message to the ruler of the Khazars, who was known as Chagan Joseph. He appointed one of his friends, Isaac ben Nathan, to carry the letter and furnished him with ample means for the long journey. When Abd er-Rahman's ambassador departed for Constantinople, Hasdai ibn Shaprut's emissary accompanied him with the caliph's approval. Isaac ben Nathan was also given a letter to the emperor of Byzantium asking his aid in continuing the journey to the land of the Khazars.

For reasons that have not been adequately clarified, Isaac ben Nathan was delayed in Constantinople for six months and was then sent back to Spain. The Byzantines informed Hasdai that they did not wish to expose his envoy to the perils of the long passage beyond the Black Sea. But possibly there was another reason: The Byzantines must have been less than enthusiastic about any link between the Caliphate of Córdoba and their troublesome Khazar neighbors. And the emperor had no interest in permitting the Jews to get in touch with the Khazars.

Hasdai ibn Shaprut had placed great hopes in this mission, and the return of his envoy was an acute disappointment to him. Shortly afterwards, however, in 953, an embassy came to Córdoba from the Slavonian King Hunu.

Two Jews, Mar Saul and Mar Joseph, were members of this embassy. Evidently Jews must be well treated in the Slavonian kingdom on the Danube, for otherwise they would scarcely have been chosen as official delegates. These two Jews declared that they were in constant touch with the Kingdom of the Khazars, and that one of their fellows, Mar Amram, had recently visited there and been received with great honors. They offered to transmit Hasdai's letter to the king of the Khazars by way of the Jews dwelling in Hungary, Bulgaria, and Russia.

Hasdai ibn Shaprut gave them a letter composed in classical Hebrew. A copy of this letter has come down to us, and since it describes the situation of the Jews in tenth-century Spain, it is a historical document of inestimable value. Hasdai was uncertain as to what tribe the Khazars belonged, but he took it for granted that they were one of the ten tribes of Israel, for in his letter he speaks of their brothers living in Spanish exile. He gives a description of Spain, of the Omayyad dynasty, and of the conditions in which the Jews live. He emphasizes that he writes not out of sheer curiosity but out of the urgent necessity of learning whether

there really exists upon earth a place where harried Israel can govern herself and is subject to no one. If I knew that this was in fact so, I would not hesitate to renounce all honors, to lay down my high office, to leave my family and travel over mountain and valley, by water and by land, until I had reached the place where I could throw myself down before my Lord the King of the tribe of Israel, rejoicing in his greatness and admiring his power.

Hasdai then asks for information: From which of the ten tribes do the Khazars descend? Do they make war on the Sabbath? Is their language Hebrew? And when, in

their opinion, will the redemption of Israel come? Sadly, he describes the scorn and mockery that he like all other Jews must daily endure when people say to them: "Every nation possesses its own kingdom, and you alone lack even the shadow of a kingdom on earth."

After numerous detours Hasdai's letter actually reached Chagan Joseph. The king of the Khazars, whose residence lay on an island in the Volga, replied to Hasdai's letter. The authenticity of Joseph's reply, or at any rate the version of it that has come down to us, remains a subject for scholarly controversy. According to the text, a Jewish scholar of Joseph's kingdom composed the answer, likewise in Hebrew. The chagan informed Hasdai that the Khazars were not descendants of the ten tribes but had been converted to Judaism. Their kinships were with the Avars, Bulgars, Savites, and other tribes that had formerly lived in Scythia and later settled along the Danube. In his letter Joseph named all the kings of the Khazars who since their conversion had borne Hebrew names: Hesekia, Manasseh I, Hanukah, Isaac, Zebulon, Manesseh II, Nisi, Menahem, Benjamin, Aaron. Aaron was Joseph's father. The chagan also wrote that he was in communication with Jews in Jerusalem and in the Babylonian academies. He ended with an invitation to Hasdai ibn Shaprut to come to the kingdom of the Khazars.

Mysticism had struck deep roots among the Jews of Spain. It served to divert their minds from their painful reality and enabled them to move on another spiritual plane. Along with it went distinctly messianic tendencies.

These messianic impulses are clear enough in Hasdai ibn Shaprut's letter to the chagan. And in fact the mere thought of an existent Jewish kingdom promoted mes-

sianism. Thus both letter and reply were repeatedly copied for centuries afterwards, the copyists embellishing the texts with mystic flourishes suitable to the moment. During the twelfth century, in particular, many copies of the letters circulated. This single document did more than any other to establish the idea that there was a Jewish state in the depths of Asia.

At the time Joseph's letter was written peace reigned in the land of the Khazars. But a few years later a struggle began with the Russian Grand Duke Sviatoslav of Kiev, formerly a Khazar subject. Other wars weakened the Khazar kingdom and ultimately led to its complete extinction. The Khazars fled across the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus and were taken prisoner. They merged with their conquerors and disappeared as an independent people.

After the disintegration of the Khazar kingdom, several members of the ruling class moved to Spain and joined the Jewish communities there. The Jewish historian and chronicler Abraham ibn Daud relates that he met and talked with descendants of these Khazars in Toledo in the twelfth century. It can easily be imagined how avidly the Jews of Spain listened to these exiles and used each scrap of material to fill out their fantasies about Jewish lands in the East.

There were a number of other documents they could draw on: the travel narrative of Abraham ibn Daud, and a tenth-century letter written by a Jew of Constantinople dealing with the wars fought by the Byzantine emperors against the Jewish kings of the Khazars. In 1104, the poet Yehuda Halevi compiled a history of the Khazars entitled *Kusari*, which was likewise widely circulated in many copies. Although the Kingdom of the Khazars was already a thing of the past at the time Halevi wrote,

his account was treasured for centuries, so much so that it was translated into Latin and finally printed in 1506 in Constantinople.

Documents show that the Jewish community in Barcelona had contacts with Jewish communities in Asia as early as the ninth century. Letters concerning a number of religious questions were dispatched from Barcelona to Rabbi Amram Gaon in Babylonia. It may be assumed that many more such letters were written, though unfortunately they have not been preserved. What little has come down to us in documentary form indicates that there was the keenest interest in such contacts.

This interest intensified with the spread of cabalistic doctrines. The kingdom of the Khazars became a standard motif of folk tales and legends. Its power and size was magnified by the storytellers. Soon it became common belief that far off in the East, beyond the Sambation—a raging torrent on the border between Europe and Asia—the ten lost tribes of Israel ruled several kingdoms.

The belief was as established as the need for it was compelling, for the hope of an eventual reunion with the lost brethren only increased with the passage of the centuries. The case of Hasdai ibn Shaprut must stand for many others. Here was a Jewish dignitary, prosperous, enjoying excellent connections and the friendship of the Caliph, who nevertheless was ready to give up all these advantages if he could but live in a Jewish country. We may assume that other Jews who did not hold such exalted positions would have felt much the same. And how much more intense such a wish would have been for Jews who lived in perpetual fear and wretchedness. The dream of finding a Jewish homeland must have had a profound allure for the entire body of Jewry.

Nor would the New Christians have been exempt from

such a dream. Even those Marranos who had completely severed ties with Judaism knew that the existence of a Jewish kingdom would raise them in the esteem of their fellow citizens. They might not have wanted to emigrate to any such country, but they would have rejoiced to know that it existed. This was all the more true for New Christians who still had bonds of kinship with unconverted Jews threatened by expulsion. They longed to know of a Jewish country where their kin could settle and where, perhaps, they themselves, or their descendants might some day find refuge.

One of the most important travel narratives of the twelfth century is the journal of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, who in 1159 set out on a journey through Europe, Asia, and Africa. After thirteen years he returned to Spain and assembled his copious notes into an account of his travels. What he had to tell was so singular that the journal was almost at once translated from the Hebrew into several languages. It widened the horizons of geographers, while also corroborating many of the stories Eldad had-Dani had related three centuries earlier.

Rabbi Benjamin's itinerary begins modestly with his journey through several Spanish cities to Barcelona, then on to France, Italy, Corfu, and across Greece to Constantinople. He then continues on to Armenia and to Antioch and to Syria. The main object of his journey seemed to have been to visit all places containing Jewish communities, and he consistently keeps count of the Jewish inhabitants with a brief commentary on their status, their degree of learning, and their occupations. He also describes some of the other peoples inhabiting these territories. In the mountainous country beyond Bayrut he encounters the tribe of the wild Druses, "who are called

heathens and nonbelievers because they practice no religion" and are given to various abominations, such as living in incest with their daughters. In one of his rare judgments, Benjamin comments tersely: "This their way is their folly." But they are friendly to their Jewish neighbors, who range freely through the country to carry on trade with the Druses.

In Palestine Benjamin visits Jerusalem, "a small city fortified with three walls" containing a numerous population of people of all tongues including a small colony of Jews to whom the city's dyeing house is rented and who enjoy a monopoly of this craft. He pays his respects to the many sacred sites in the neighborhood—the remains of Solomon's stables, the pillar erected on the site of Absalom's palace, the sepulcher of King Uzziah, the great springs of Shiloah, and the pillar of salt into which Lot's wife was transformed. He then passes through areas rich in memories and sepulchers but markedly sparse in Jewish inhabitants.

This however changes as Benjamin pushes on into the region watered by the Tigris. Here the cities come thick and fast, and in each he records an impressive host of Jews—in the city of Gezir ibn Omar live four thousand Jews, and in Great Ashur seven thousand. "Mosul contains the synagogues of Obadiah, of Jonah, and of Nahum, the Elkoshite. It is three days to Rahabah, which is Rehoboth, by the river Euphrates, and contains about two thousand Jews. The city is surrounded by a wall, is very handsome, large and well fortified, and the environs abound with gardens and orchards."

He mentions the city of Juba, with two thousand Jews, a great Talmudic school, and historic sepulchers. As Benjamin approaches Bagdad, he stops at the city of

Hardab, with a population of fifteen thousand Jews and at Akbara, with ten thousand Jews. He finds Bagdad itself to be a great center both for the Jews and the Mohammedans. The palace of the caliph is three miles in extent and the caliph himself a great friend of the Jews, well versed in Mosaic law, and able to read and write Hebrew. The city's ten thousand Jewish inhabitants enjoy peace, comfort, and much honor. They maintain ten schools and twenty-eight richly embellished synagogues. Bagdad is also the home of the so-called prince of the captivity, who is the highest dignitary of the Jews and occupies a position equivalent to the pope's. Benjamin records:

All the Jewish congregations of these different countries receive authority from the prince of the captivity to elect rabbis and ministers, all of whom appear before him in order to receive consecration and permission to officiate, upon which occasion presents and valuable gifts are offered to him, even from the remotest countries. The prince of the captivity possesses hostleries, gardens, and orchards in Babylonia and extensive landed property inherited from his forefathers, of which nobody can deprive him. He is very rich, an excellent scholar, and so hospitable that numerous Israelites dine at his table every day.

Benjamin goes on to Babylon, the ancient Babel. Only ruins remained of the city itself, but some twenty thousand Jews were living in the vicinity and performing their worship in the synagogue of Daniel, which was still housed in the ancient original building. Benjamin is shown the ruins of the Tower of Babel, and he records: "The base measures 2 miles, the breadth 240 yards, and the height about 100 *canna* [over 400 feet] . . . The

heavenly fire, which struck the tower, split it to its very foundation."

But the great sensation of these travels comes later on. After a twenty-one-day journey through the desert of Sheba, "from which Mesopotamia lies in a northerly direction," Benjamin reaches a land inhabited by Jews who called themselves the Children of Rechab.

The seat of their government is at Thema, where their prince and governor Rabbi Chanan resides. This city is large, and the extent of their country is sixteen days' journey towards the northern mountain range. They possess large and strong cities and are not subject to any gentiles, but undertake war-like expeditions into distant provinces with the Arabians, their neighbors and allies, to take the spoil and prey.

The province, Benjamin relates, contains 40 cities, 200 villages, and 100 small towns. Three hundred thousand Jews, many of whom are "well-informed, wise, and rich," inhabit it. They are descendants of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, who were taken into captivity by the Assyrian kings. But they found their way to these mountainous regions surrounded on all sides by vast deserts. Here they erected large and strong cities and have successfully defended themselves. In addition to being formidable warriors, they practice agriculture and raise cattle. They maintain a number of learned scholars, who spend their lives in the study of the law, and a sizable group of ascetics, called "Mourners of Zion" and "Mourners of Jerusalem," who practice penances for the sake of all the Jews in exile.

Benjamin's discoveries were far from over. This indefatigable traveler crossed the whole of Persia, visiting

a bewildering number of cities and never omitting to set down his account of the Jewish inhabitants. In Samarkand he heard of still another Jewish principality situated in the mountains of Khazvin, on the river Kizil Ozein. It was said to be inhabited by four tribes of Israel. The extent of their country was a twenty-day journey, and again it was sufficiently mountainous to be impregnable. Like the children of Nichab, its inhabitants were excellent scholars, skilled farmers, and vigorous warriors. They were in alliance with a neighboring people, the Caphar Tarac, or infidel Turks "who adore the wind and live in the desert." This is a people, Benjamin reports, who eat no bread and drink no wine but devour their meat raw and unprepared. "They have no noses but draw breath through two small holes." They would seem to be the dreaded Mongols, who emerged from obscurity at this time and conquered so much of Asia. The Jews' reputed connection with these people, as mentioned in this chronicle of Benjamin's, was to have unexpected repercussions for the Jews in Europe.

Benjamin travels down the Tigris to the Indian Ocean. He describes an island called Kish, which is the great exchange mart for trade with India.

While the traders of Mesopotamia, Yemen, and Persia import all silk and purple cloths, flax, cotton, hemp, mash, wheat, barley, millet, rye, and all sorts of comestibles, those from India bring great quantities of spices, and the inhabitants of the island live by what they gain in their capacity of brokers to both parties. The island contains about 500 Jews.

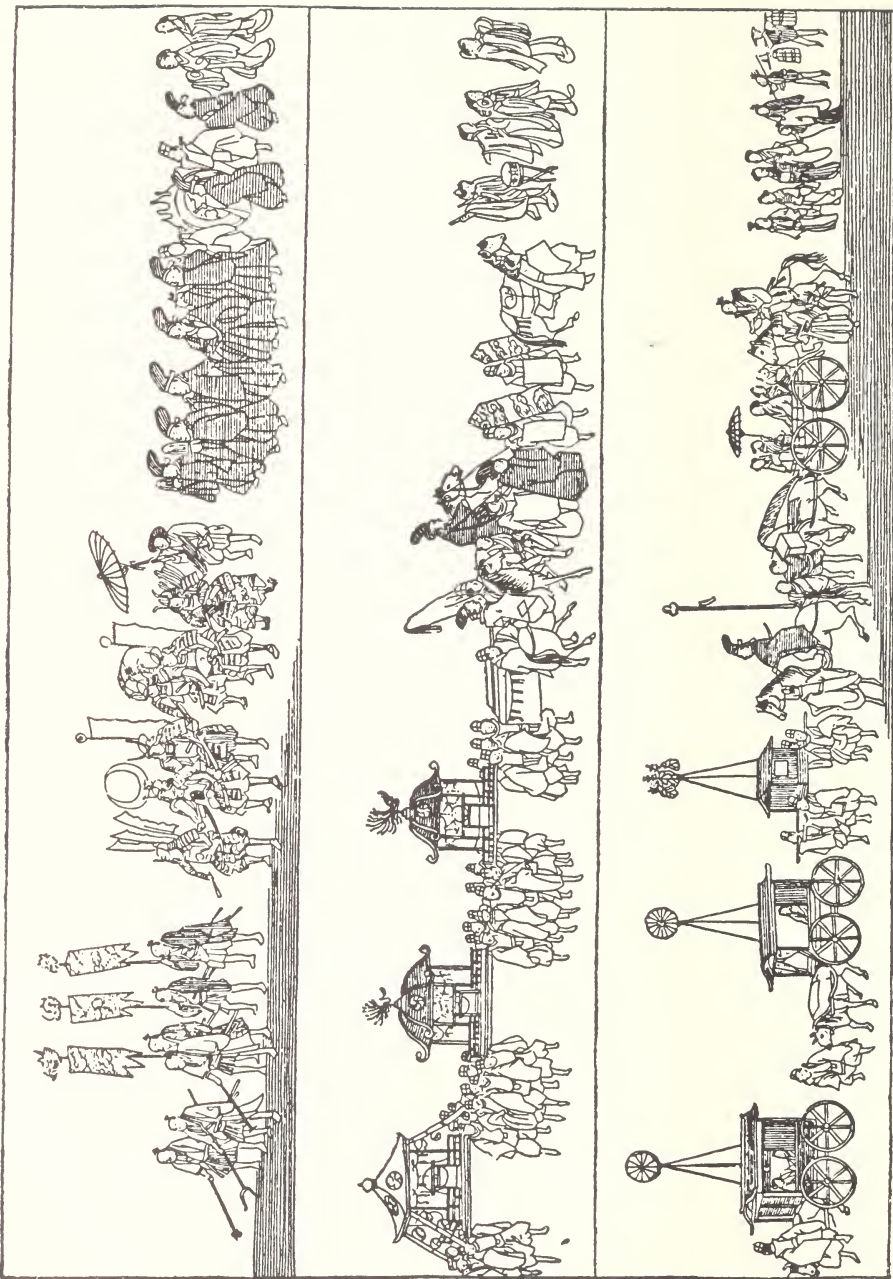
He describes his voyage to the island of Khandy (Ceylon) whose inhabitants are fire worshippers. "These pagans have priests in the houses consecrated to their

idols, and these priests are expert necromancers, the like of whom are to be met with nowhere." The people practice voluntary self-immolation in the flames. And even here Jews are to be found in large numbers. Twenty-three thousand live on the island.

According to Benjamin's account, he would have had to sail for forty days through perilous seas to reach China. Instead the rabbi turns back and makes his way to Aden in Middle India where he again finds independent and warlike Jews. He travels through Egypt, making a point of visiting every place containing Jews from the city of Kuts, with thirty thousand Jewish inhabitants, to a town called Pitham, which contains a mere twenty. He is once again in the known world. He returns to Europe by the way of Sicily, where he visits sizable Jewish colonies, and after wending through Italy, Germany, and France to make contact with co-religionists, he is once more back in Spain, apparently none the worse for his arduous journeys. He closes his account with pious prayers for the reuniting of his people:

May the Lord in his mercy be full of compassion toward them and us, and may he fulfill towards both the words of his Holy Scripture: "Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee."—Amen, Amen, Amen.

Benjamin's account aroused enormous excitement among the Jews in Europe. Other Jewish scholars were spurred to set out on similar journeys. One of the more prominent of Benjamin's imitators was Rabbi Petachia of Regensburg, who set forth some time between 1175 and 1180. He tracked down Jews in Poland, southern



Japanese representation of the entry of the ten tribes of Israel into Japan. (From the book, *Waar zijn de verstrooide stammen Israels gebleven*, by Dr. A. van Deursen)

Russia, the Crimea, Persia, Georgia, Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine and described his experiences in an opus entitled *Sibbub olam* (*Voyage around the World*).

The fame of these travel narratives was so great that they were translated into several languages and eagerly read by Christians. Soon the belief was established that there were Jewish tribes in the depths of Asia who unlike European Jews were bellicose and attacked their neighbors. When the Tatars began their incursions into Europe during the first half of the thirteenth century, Rabbi Benjamin's story was remembered. These were the savage Mongols who were allied to the Jews and who now threatened Christian Europe. The fear they aroused was greatest in Germany where it gave rise to a new wave of anti-Semitism. The view spread that the Tatars were themselves descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel and were attempting to overrun the Christian West. The Jews at home were surely in alliance with their brothers of the ten tribes and meant to kill Christians as they had killed Jesus.

The fantastic nature of this theory is self-evident. I mention it only as evidence that by this time legends about the ten lost tribes were widely disseminated even among the Christians and were taken not as fables but as reality.

The Venetian Marco Polo, who in 1271 set out on his celebrated long journey to China where he became a favorite of the Emperor Kublai Khan, mentions that he met Jews several times in the course of his travels in India and China. It is interesting that Marco Polo's narrative was translated into Castilian by Rodrigo de Santaella of Seville, a Converso. Henceforth, Spanish Jews also vaguely as-

sociated the Japanese and Chinese with the ten tribes. In later times comparisons were made between Jewish rites and Shinto ritual, and the slightest similarity was eagerly seized upon. Studies of physiognomies were undertaken in the hope of discovering resemblances between Orientals and Jews. Names were scanned for some sort of linguistic clues. Thus it was noted that the first king of Japan whose name is known was Osei, and his reign began in 730 B.C. The last king of Israel was Hosea, who died in 722 B.C. Some rash theories have been founded on this coincidence of sounds and this time-gap of eight years. Stress has been laid on certain features common both to Shinto and Jewish temples; in both cases the shrine is divided into a holy part and the Holy of Holies. The prescribed linen clothing and headdress of the Shinto priests is said to correspond to the dress of priests in ancient Israel. Old Japanese prints have been discovered that seem to depict the arrival of the Israelites in Japan. Along with such data, there has been much speculation on the route by which the Israelites would have come to Japan. The usual course suggested has been across the Continent of Asia and by way of Sakhalin Island. The theory continues to have its advocates to the present day.

While I was working on this book I learned of a work entitled *The Japanese and the Jew* published in Japan in 1970. It is an ethnic study whose author calls himself Jeseia Ben Dassan. This is a pseudonym; the author is said to live in the United States. The publisher, Schichi Hai Yamato, is unwilling to reveal the author's identity but has indicated that he is an American Jew who was born in Kobe, Japan, in 1918. This book, which has enjoyed a great popularity in Japan, analyzes both the dif-

ferences between Japanese and Jews and the features common to both peoples.

There is apparently a long tradition in Japan for such a viewpoint. Japanese investigators long ago began looking for connections between their people and the ten lost tribes of Israel. Many of these investigators have come from the priestly caste of Shintoists, and some of them have converted to Judaism, even assuming Hebrew names.

The American Army of Occupation that moved into Japan at the close of World War II contained a good many Jews in its ranks. One of these was a rabbi, an army chaplain, who became friendly with Prince Mikassa, the brother of Emperor Hirohito, and was invited to examine a "holy mirror" that allegedly bears on its back an inscription in ancient Hebrew dating from the time of the first Temple. But how authentic the inscription is and how its date can be deduced with any precision still remain open questions.

There must have been many earnest attempts on the part of Jews to get in touch with their supposedly lost brethren. The meagerness of records on the matter is hardly a sign of a feeble interest. Rabbi Benjamin's account is of course invaluable and indicates what incredible distances could be covered and what facts can be amassed by a single-minded traveler. Yet we must realize that given the circumstances of the time Rabbi Benjamin's venture was in every sense exceptional. Though he himself says nothing of the risks he was running, his safe return after thirteen years seems almost miraculous. Traveling itself was extremely difficult; the roads were poor, and means of transportation were lacking or non-

existent. We are not told, for instance, whether Rabbi Benjamin used horses or camels or whether he proceeded entirely on foot. The country was carved up into a medley of small realms and provinces, in all of which different laws and customs obtained. It could not have been easy to cross borders. Nor should we forget the linguistic difficulties, the absence of maps, the undependability of guides, whose motives were not often the best. There were pirates on the sea and bandits and robbers on the highways.

Marco Polo was less reticent than the Rabbi Benjamin in describing the perils that lay in wait for every traveler. He had to reckon with the possibility of being killed, robbed, or sold into slavery. And there was the simple matter of food and drink. For a Jew the question of provisions was even more difficult than for a Christian, since he had to remain faithful to the Jewish dietary laws, on which the Jews of the Middle Ages laid great stress.

Yet we still possess mute tokens of those courageous Jewish travelers who pressed on across the dangerous land route to the East. They all wore amulets against disease, and these amulets, made of silver and hence objects of value, may still be seen in large numbers in museums and in collections of antiquities. How many more were melted down by the Arab robbers into whose hands they fell cannot be estimated.

We may assume that the current also flowed the other way. The Jews of Asia must have made efforts to reach the Jews of Europe, and presumably many met the same sad fate. Perhaps there were successful journeys but no word of them has come down to us. The vicissitudes of the Jews, the book burnings, expulsions, plunderings, and

forced baptisms they underwent, made the preservation of records highly unlikely.

At any rate, accounts of far-off places and strange peoples who might be members of the lost tribes of Israel were always welcome. The chief purveyors of such stories were sailors who claimed to have heard them from Arab merchants. The waterfront taverns teemed with such tall tales, many of which might have come out of the *Arabian Nights*. But given the state of knowledge in those days, who was to say that these were fantasies?

Columbus, too, spent a good deal of time in such taverns and listened to the sailors trade yarns of distant voyages. Naturally he heard about the "gold lands" and their inhabitants. Later he would incorporate such material into his recitals of his proposed voyage to India.

Today we know that as early as the time of Christ Jewish merchants from Persia and India established trading settlements in China, along the Yellow River and in the Yangtse delta, and that they also located on the island of Ceylon. We know that among the multitudinous small states in India there was one named Anjuvanan, which had a sizable Jewish population and was presumably governed by Jews. The entire coast of western India was an area to which Jews fled from the Persian-Arabic sphere. On the Malabar Coast there were virtual Jewish colonies; the Jews actually carried on missionary work among the native population. The later Christian missions of the Nestorians found favorable soil that had already been prepared by the Jews. The Syro-Chaldaic Church in India thus arose on this Jewish basis. Up to the fourteenth century there were large Jewish settlements on the

Konkan Coast in western India as well as on the Malabar Coast. Benjamin of Tudela did not visit these regions, but he alludes to them in his account.

The presence of a Jewish community in Kaifeng dates back to the eighth century. Kaifeng is one of the oldest cities of China and the capital of Honan Province. From documents found there it is apparent that the Jews of Kaifeng built a synagogue in 1183 and renovated it in 1488. Kaifeng was a city with a Moslem population and good contacts with the West. It is probably some time during the fifteenth century, with either Moslems or Jewish merchants from Arab countries acting as intermediaries, that the Jews of Kaifeng made contact with the Jews of Europe.

In the fifteenth century, therefore, there was ample evidence to support the widely held opinion that the lands of the ten tribes of Israel were to be found in the depths of Asia. Of that Jews and Christians alike were convinced. Tidings of a kind that today we would smilingly dismiss as legends were taken as literal truth, and these prompted kings and governments to the practical steps of launching expeditions.

On May 4, 1487, Pero da Corvilha and Alfonso de Paiva, at the request of King John II of Portugal, undertook a voyage whose aim was to find the kingdom of Prester John. The Jews, too, believed there was such a kingdom, for they had been much taken with some travel accounts that spoke of good relationships between the Jewish and Christian kingdoms in the eastern part of Africa. The Portuguese explorers believed that they had discovered the kingdom of "Prester John of India" in Ethiopia.

The Christians of Spain and Portugal were also con-

ducting a search for lost brethren. According to a legend, so hoary that no one presumed to question it, in the year 711 the Visigoths had suffered so terrible a defeat in a battle with the Moors that they were forced to flee from the Iberian peninsula. Under the leadership of the archbishop of Porto and six other bishops, they escaped westward across the ocean in seven ships. After being buffeted by heavy storms, they landed on an island and burned their ships to cut off all possibility of returning. On the great island in the middle of the ocean they founded seven glorious cities. The Spaniards called this island Antilla.

This legend was widespread and was still firmly believed 700 years after the supposed event. (The basis of the legend was, of course, the Islamic conquest of Spain, which had begun in 711.) Thus the world-famous cosmographer Martin Beheim drew in this island far to the west of Spain on his globe of the world. When King John II of Portugal issued a license for voyages of discovery in 1489, he stipulated that the licensee was to try to find the Kingdom of the Seven Cities. Before the voyage of Columbus became known in England, the Venetian who went by the name of John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto) was planning a voyage financed by Bristol merchants to reach the "island of Brazil" and the Seven Cities. All this should indicate that the Jews were not alone in taking stories of this sort at face value.

There were a number of cabalistic texts that appeared in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain from which the oppressed Jewish people must have derived a good deal of consolation. They contained calculations showing that the messianic redemption of the Jews was due to take place around the year 1490. To be sure, this glorious

event would be preceded by a wave of persecution, but with the Messiah's appearance all that would be ended, and the dispersed children of Israel would be gathered together again. Curiously enough, these particular cabalistic manuscripts have disappeared. We know of their existence chiefly from certain rabbinical polemics of the sixteenth century attacking mistaken and misleading doctrines.

These ideas were not new. They had been bandied about for more than two centuries, and we cannot know how literally they were believed. Yet times of oppression are fertile grounds for dreams and hopes, and as the wave of persecution proved all too sound a forecast, the expectation of some extraordinary upswing in the fortunes of the Jews must also have quickened. Of late there had been many efforts at opening new routes across the oceans, and Jewish cartographers and instrument-makers had contributed a good deal to these ventures. Might not Jews justly hope that in the course of these expeditions of discovery a way might be found to reach those Jewish lands in Asia of which they had long heard tales?

The benefits of such discoveries would be manifold. For one thing, these lands would represent a new place of refuge. Then again, such refuge might not be needed because the status of the Jews in Europe was bound to improve as a result. Christian rulers would be eager to enter into trade relations with the rulers of the new-found lands, who would thus have something to say concerning discrimination against or expulsion of their western brethren. This after all was how the caliphates extended some protection to the Moslem populations of Christian countries. The Jews had heard of numerous instances of

such intervention and could only feel how enviable was the situation of the Moslems compared to their own.

One of the most dramatic of such episodes occurred, in 1490, when preparations were being made for the storming of the last Moorish stronghold on Spanish soil. A delegation of Catholic monks from the monasteries of Jerusalem had come to Queen Isabella, carrying messages from the sultan of Jerusalem. They had been instructed to say that the sultan was not prepared to accept any further mistreatment of the Moors and that he would take countermeasures against the Christians living in Palestine and Syria. The warning made a powerful impression upon Isabella. She begged the monks to reassure the sultan and to point out to him her "tolerant treatment" of the Moors in Spain. And indeed the subsequent siege of Granada had quite a different ending from previous victories, with the Moorish governor being granted a tiny mountain kingdom of his own and the Moorish population being given assurances that they would be allowed to practice their religion freely, to be judged by their own laws, and to retain their traditional dress, language, and customs. The Jews could rightly conclude that their own plight was so bad because they had no one to intercede for them. This would change as soon as they had established contact with the lands of the ten tribes. And indeed, they felt they were now on the verge of making such contact.

III

The Man of Mystery





WHO WAS THE MAN who gave so sharp a spur to the hopes of the Jews and Marranos? Hundreds of books have been written about him. His name is one of the best known in history. Yet he is one of history's most controversial and shadowy figures, with mystery surrounding his birth, his character, his career, and his achievement. For centuries scholars have attempted to track down his origins. The trail has been blurred by forgeries, implausible assertions, and deliberate obfuscation by those who want to prevent the truth from coming to light.

Any investigation of the life of Columbus leads by a direct path to the plight of the Jews in Spain at that time. His story appears to be intertwined with theirs, and this would be the case whether Columbus was himself a Jew, a Marrano, or not of Jewish descent at all. His plans, however, were of utmost significance to the Jews, and Jews played a great part in his venture.

After I had done some preliminary study on Columbus, I felt it essential to go to Spain and examine with my own eyes the material preserved at the Biblioteca Columbina in Seville. I was particularly anxious to see the books

berxemiās ē p̄r /

transitū ad insulas gēthim et vultū fortitū }
est / et mardas militū et cōsiliatū vigh- }
mūtr / et vultū / et mardas si factū est }
quāvismodi / p̄ mutabit gēns dōs suos / et }
arbitrū ip̄s nō p̄t dī

~1161

Es temperancia niente y manera.
que todos continuo deñemos tener
en nūca temptar dezir ni hazer
cosa que deua no Ser bajadera
es esta la larga y estrecha carrera.
A do de continuo virtud es hallada.
Sin Ser cometida ni Ser saltada
del miao ni del quedalla deueca

+

Quare fremuerūt gentes &c. dicitur hebrei matiens q̄ dāuid fecit
hūc p̄s laudando dōm de victoria hūa de philisteis q̄s ascendere

A page from the *Book of Jeremiah's Prophecies* copied by Columbus. (Biblioteca Columbina, Seville)

Et erit in die illa. Vocabo seruum meum Elyachim filium
 helchie: et induam illum tunica tua: et cingulo tuo confor-
 tabo eum: et potestatem tuam dabo in manu eius. Et erit qui
 pacem habundantibus iherusalem: et domui iuda. Et dabo
 clauem domus dauid super humerum eius: et aperiet: et non erit
 qui cludat: et claudet: et non erit qui aperiat. Et signa
 illum paxillum in loco fidei: et erit in solium glorie domus pre-
 sinit. Et suspendam super eum omnia glorie domus presinit eius: ba-
 sonem dimicanti generis: omnes bas puerulum: (i. basus ceterarum)
 usque ad omnes bas musicorum. In die illa dicit dominus exercituum
 auferet paxillum qui fixus fuerat in loco fidei: et franget
 et cadet: et percibit quod preponderat in eo: quia dominus locutus est.

Isa . 55 .

Omnes sitientes venite ad aquas: et qui non habetis argentum
 cum: properate: edite: et comedite: gratis. Inclinate
 aurem vestram: et venite ad me. Audite: et uiuere anima
 vestra: et faciam vobiscum pactum sempiternum: misericordias
 dauid fideles. // Ecce agitem populum dei eum:
 ducet ac preceptorem gentibus. // Ecce gentes quas
 nesciebas vocabis: et gentes que non cognouerunt te:
 ad te accurrent quia dominus deus tuus: et semper israel qui gloriatur te.

Et erit dominus notum in signum eternum
 quod non auferetur.

that had been part of the explorer's library, some of which, I had learned, bore marginal notes written by his own hand. My feeling was that these notes would provide some clue to the personality of the man who had made them. I had also learned of a mysterious sign appended to one of Columbus's letters to his son. This cipher, too, I felt, might be an important clue.

The Biblioteca Colombina is attached to the cathedral, whose bell tower is a former mosque. The archives themselves were established by a gift of Fernando Colón, Columbus's illegitimate son. Fernando had amassed an extensive library of over 15,000 volumes, some of them items of the highest value. Among them were the books that had been his father's property. Fernando was an exceedingly cultivated man. He bequeathed his great library to the Dominicans of the Monastery of San Pablo in Seville. The collection is now housed in several rooms, in glass-doored cabinets lining the walls. The volumes that had belonged to Columbus are on view in glass cases in the center of the room.

A strange feeling took possession of me when, with the librarian's permission I removed book after book from a glass case, all books the explorer himself had once pored over. Perhaps the most thrilling of all was a compilation by Columbus himself called *Book of Prophecies*, which is a collection of prophecies from various sources that Columbus drew up in order to persuade the king and queen to let him liberate Jerusalem. There were quotations from Rabbi Samuel Jehudi urging the Jews to accept conversion and many quotations from the prophet Isaiah, whom Columbus specially venerated. Other works that were particularly important to him were Cardinal Pedro d'Ailly's *Imago mundi*; a volume of Plutarch pub-

lished in Seville in 1491; Pliny's *Natural History* (which I saw had marginal notes by him in Spanish, Portuguese, and a single entry in Italian); and a Latin edition of Marco Polo, *De consuetudinibus et conditionibus orientalium regionum*. He had owned a copy of the tragedies of Seneca, a book of studies by San Antonino de Florencia, and a Spanish translation of Albertus Magnus's *Natural Philosophy*. He seemed to have read Pope Pius II's history of his own times with great enthusiasm, for it is heavily annotated by him. And finally there was the *Almanaque de navegación* by Abraham Zacuto.

Most of these books had been acquired by Columbus before the period of his voyages. There are indications that this collection represents only part of his library.

The picture most of us have of Columbus was shaped by either Italians or Spaniards. We know that he was a man obsessed by an idea, that he often lived in need but never abandoned his project, and that he stayed in a number of countries but was at home nowhere. But what do we know of the cast of his mind? Only what we can deduce from his letters, his books, and the marginal notations he made in these. These markings were intended for no one but himself. They were meant as an aid to his memory and are full of personal symbols. One of his characteristic notations is a graceful drawing of an index finger pointing to some sentence he wanted to emphasize.

I had a long talk with Professor de la Pena, the former director of the Archives of the Indies in Seville, and I asked whether the books in the glass case represented the intellectual equipment of a seaman of the period. Professor de la Pena described a study made by American naval experts on the basis of Columbus's notes and the nautical instruments available to him at that period. The experts

were solely concerned with the navigational aspects of the enterprise. They came to the conclusion that Columbus had been a notably gifted seaman.

Before my trip to Spain I had already read a good deal and had hoped to fill in the blank spots in my knowledge and arrive at some satisfactory picture. But though I felt somewhat nearer to him through his books and handwriting, I was not a bit wiser concerning his identity. The more I tried to approach this, the more elusive it became. Nor was this my experience alone. The difficulty seemed intrinsic to the subject and had been increasing from decade to decade. Thus, whatever had been clearly known about the early life of Columbus, in say the latter part of the nineteenth century, has since been called into serious question.

The source material has added to the mystery. The documents relating to Columbus seem to have undergone more than the usual vicissitudes of family papers. Only a portion of the relevant records has been preserved. That is scarcely to be wondered at, since in the course of time these papers passed through many hands and traveled from continent to continent. After the death of Columbus's son Diego in 1526, Diego's wife, Maria of Toledo, and her son Luis Colón, fell heir to the family correspondence. In 1544, they moved to the Indian lands, where Maria was vice-reine, and took the papers with them. Bishop Las Casas was there at the time; he was permitted to use the documents for his biography of the discoverer. Five years later, after the death of Maria of Toledo, the documents were returned to Spain and were placed in the care of the monks of Las Cuevas Monastery. Soon a dispute arose over the papers and continued on into the seventeenth century. Muno Colón of Portugal, one

of Columbus's descendants who lived in the early eighteenth century, was awarded the legacy by a judicial decision. But only part of the papers were involved, for another batch of the Las Cuevas documents was in the possession of the Duke of Alba's family. Diego Colón had married a niece of the Duke of Alba, who was also related to King Ferdinand. Alba, who had a Marrano grandmother, distinguished himself in the Netherlands as a willing tool of the Inquisition. The Alba family kept the Columbus documents until 1790; then they passed to another branch of the family, the Colón-Artegons and the Avilas, and were already considerably diminished by the time they became the property of the twelfth Duke of Veragua. Only Columbus's letters to his son Diego were left. The other documents in the family archives suffered a similar diminution. But the whole matter is still further complicated by the many forgeries of items supposedly once part of the Columbus family archives. It would seem that the forgers were bent on producing another version of the discoverer's life and voyages, and in all likelihood the originals were destroyed when the forgeries were interpolated.

In 1791, a Spanish naval officer named Navarrete discovered in the archives of the Monastery of San Esteban and among the papers of the Duke of Veragua, a descendant of Columbus, a cache of letters and reports written by Columbus himself. These are almost certainly authentic and of the greatest interest.

Columbus's journal has not been preserved in the original. At the end of the last century a copy, made from the original by Bishop Las Casas, was found.

There is also no authentic portrait of the discoverer of the New World. The many paintings in existence were

made decades or centuries after his death and bear no resemblance to one another. A single portrait, which can be regarded as the oldest and is believed to have been made by a painter who actually saw Columbus in person, shows him as a man with somewhat Semitic features, both in the expression of his face and in the mouth and nose. This partrait is in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. But there is no guarantee that it really represents Columbus.

The mysteries surrounding the origins of the great discoverer are similar if not even more tangled. Many of the contradictions were sown by Columbus himself and by his family. Chauvinistic feelings also have further complicated the problem. Columbus's son, Fernando Colón, commented immediately after his father's death that he had looked for family relatives in Genoa and its vicinity but had found none. This statement, however, was already prompted by partisanship. For as soon as Columbus was dead there began the rivalry of two nations—Spain and Italy—each claiming to be the birthplace of the great man. In making this statement Fernando was supporting the Spanish claim, which is why scholars place little credence in it.

If we put together everything that has previously been published on Columbus's descent, we are confronted with an absolute puzzle. Some of the stories are deliberately misleading, as though there had been many efforts to obscure Columbus's descent and to lure investigators onto false trails. Columbus himself may have wanted to keep the world, and to some extent his family, more or less in the dark. If so, he succeeded. We may well ask ourselves why Columbus said so little about his ancestry. There are merely a few references in his letters from which some scanty information may be wrung.

The data supplied by Columbus stand in blunt contradiction to official Italian documents as well as to Spanish claims. Opinions differ not only in regard to the city but even to the province from which his family is supposed to have come. The Italians have concentrated on Genoa and Savona; some Spanish scholars argue for Estremadura, some for Galicia, Catalonia, Castile, and the island of Majorca. New speculations are constantly being offered.

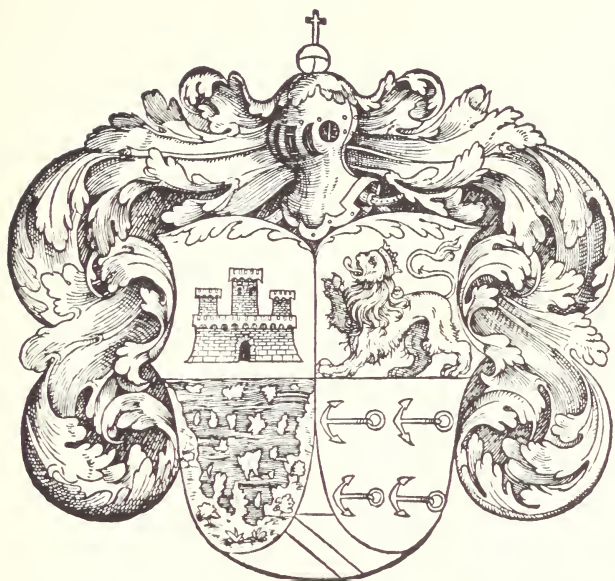
The date of his death is certain: May 20, 1506, in Valladolid. The date of his birth can be assumed to be 1451, if we accept the Italian version. According to the inconsistent statements of Columbus himself on various occasions, the date of his birth hovers between 1447 and 1453. On the basis of more precise statements made by Columbus in legal documents, we can place his birth between August 25 and October 31, 1451.

What else do we know with certainty? That around the age of twenty-five he turned up in Lisbon. The question of how he got there has by no means been settled. He himself told an elaborate story, a typical adventure yarn of the period. Allegedly he participated in an attack upon a Genoese fleet off the Portuguese coast. His own ship caught fire, sank, and he saved his life by swimming to land. There he was rescued and cared for by Genoese who lived in Lisbon. This account was repeated by his son Fernando in the narrative he wrote about his father, and is likewise to be found in virtually the same words by Columbus's biographer, Bishop Las Casas. But the only corroborating evidence for this story is the fact that at the time stated there actually was a battle in this vicinity. Almost all scholars have dismissed the story as boasting. In any case, it had no special significance for Columbus's further career.

We also know that in 1478 he married Felipa Moniz in Portugal. In 1479 or 1480, she bore his son Diego and died a year later. After losing his wife he had a liaison with a Castilian women. His son Fernando was the offspring of this union. Until about his thirty-second year he endeavored in vain to persuade the royal junta that advised the king of Portugal on voyages of discovery to support his plans. In 1485, we find him in Castile, first at the Monastery of La Rabida and then being referred to various important personages. At last, at the beginning of 1492, the Catholic Majesties Ferdinand and Isabella agree to sponsor his voyage of discovery. From that moment on the obscurities disappear, and we have ample documentation for all his actions.

Such is the outline of Columbus's past before he set out on the voyage that was to bring him everlasting fame. But we can rightly feel that the facts are few and bare and that many significant elements are missing.

The Italian documents on the family of Columbus—if they are genuine, which the Spanish side contests—indicate that he came from extremely modest circumstances. His father, Domenico Columbo, is supposed to have been a tower sentinel in Genoa and later a weaver in Savona. The family just about managed to sustain itself by manual labor. A number of documents concerning the Columbo family have turned up in Italian archives; these include legal records of the rent of a house in Genoa owned by the Church, papers concerning arrangements for subletting, various fines imposed on members of the family, and pledges of security. In one such pledge a son, Christophoro Colombo, age 18, whose occupation was weaver, figures. We know furthermore that the family,



Crest of Columbus. (From *Historia General de las Indias* by Oviedo, Seville [1535])

after moving from Genoa to Savona and engaging in weaving, was for some time involved in innkeeping. All this is unequivocally documented.

The question naturally arises: What would have been the opportunities for study of a young man of such background? At the age of eighteen Christophoro was still giving his occupation as woollen weaver; at the age of twenty-five he was already in Portugal.

This young man of twenty-five has extensive knowledge of nautical matters, is following the profession of cartographer, and is at times earning his living by making maps. Anyone who examines his books can see that their

owner had an excellent command of Latin and Spanish and that he also knew Portuguese and of course Italian, although he only rarely made use of this language. The marginal notes in these books also indicate that he was well informed in history, geography, geometry, religion, and religious writings. When he made a marginal note in studying a text, he brought to the matter at hand a good sum of knowledge. The question is, when and where did he come by this knowledge?

Had he intended to enter the clergy he might have acquired his knowledge in a monastery. But that was not the case. The Italian documents make no mention of any connection with the Church on the part of any of the Columbos. Of course his parents might have furthered the education of a talented son by sending him to school or providing him with private tutors. But it is difficult to believe that the Columbos, as they appear in the Italian documents, could have been in a position to pay for such luxuries, even assuming that was what they would have wanted. Then again Columbus's whole bearing as a mature man belies the notion that he came from people of small means and had no more than an elementary education behind him.

Columbus himself blocks any further speculation on this matter by alleging that he went to sea at the age of fourteen. The life of a cabin boy at that period was certainly not calculated to provide an education in languages and the sciences—certainly not unless the boy had had previous training. We are clearly dealing with a boy of unusual intellectual ardor, and Columbus later demonstrated both a high degree of theoretical knowledge of navigation and much practical experience as a seaman. This would confirm his story of a long association with

the sea and would testify that he made good use of his years aboard ships.

If we follow the Italian version further we are struck by the fact that Columbus almost never used his mother tongue. Even when he corresponded with his San Giorgio bank in Genoa, he did not write in Italian, as we might expect, but in Castilian. Several times in his writings he refers to Castilian as his mother tongue. But that could also be one of his deliberate obscurantist maneuvers. Spaniards assert that Columbus never made use of the Italian language. But there is a tradition that on the voyages whenever Columbus was dissatisfied with the work of his crews and flew into a fury, he reviled the men in Italian and used Italian oaths. On the other hand, contemporaries declare that he spoke Castilian very well but with a Portuguese accent.

Let us go on a bit with the Italian version of Columbus's education. The official explanation is that the boy had so keen a thirst for knowledge that he educated himself. But this thirst for knowledge concerned chiefly the fields of mathematics, astronomy, and Latin, subjects that were more or less the monopoly of certain learned circles. It is difficult to assume that Columbus could have acquired his wide knowledge of these fields in the years of his wanderings. During those years he could at best have rounded out what he already knew. Therefore, private tutoring has been assumed. But who would have paid the teachers to instruct the boy? Books in those days were not exactly cheap, and learning was not dispensed to all and sundry. Was he some kind of working student, paying for his studies by his labor? Such arrangements were known, but why did he never mention any such tutelage?

When Fernando Colón came to write about his father,

years after the discoverer's death, he knew that the world would ask where "the Admiral of the Oceans" acquired his knowledge of arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. And so he simply stated that his father Cristóbal Colón had studied at the University of Pavia. Thus another part of Italy—Lombardy—enters our story as a possible region in which Columbus spent some of his life. Many scholars have regarded Fernando Colón's statement as a fable or a makeshift reply. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, scholars of Milan, Piacenza, and Modena have clashed with each other in their efforts to prove that Columbus was not born in Genoa but in their cities. It is true that once Columbus did mention a stay in Lombardy, but he never spoke of having studied at the University of Pavia. There is not a shred of documentary evidence for such studies. We may well assume that the whole matter was invented by his son; for Columbus, in his many dealings with scientists who were examining his plans, would surely have mentioned his university studies to raise his prestige in the eyes of the scholars. But he never did so.

The marginal notes in his books make it plain that Columbus was well acquainted with the Old Testament; he cited the Prophets and was privy to information belonging to the intellectual world of Judaism. How did he come by such knowledge? In one of the volumes that he pored over more than others—the *Historia rerum ubique gestarum* written by Pope Pius II—there is startling evidence that he was familiar with Jewish chronology. He dates a marginal note with the year 1481 and promptly gives the Jewish equivalent, the year 5241. There are also other notes concerning time; Columbus inserts details such as that Adam lived to be 150-years old, and the

date of the destruction of the second Temple. Moreover, it is significant that when Columbus refers to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, he uses the phrase *Casa secunda*, the second House. This appellation is typically Jewish; non-Jews do not use it.

Not only must we wonder when and where Columbus acquired such knowledge, we are justified in raising the question: What other Christian seaman of the period, whether a captain or an admiral, had such knowledge?

In a letter Columbus addressed to Diego de Deza, the tutor of Prince Juan, he writes; "I am a servant of the same Lord who raised up David." The allusion is surely a curious one.

I found in another of the books the terse marginal note: "Gog Magog." The phrase can be traced to the Book of Ezekiel where it is said: "The Redeemer will come when the demonic ruler of Gog erects a mighty kingdom in the land of Magog." Might not this text be seen as pertinent to Columbus's time? A Jew would have been most prone to see it so, for as far as they were concerned Spain had indeed been taken over by the demon Gog.

The log of the first voyage contains two significant entries under the dates of September 22 and September 23, 1492. The voyage was dragging on, no land was in sight, and the sailors were demoralized; in fact they were close to mutiny. The wind dropped, and the sailors were convinced that they were in a zone where there were no winds at all and that they would never be able to return to Spain. Then in the distance a hurricane rose—this was the season of the equatorial storms. The sailors calmed down, and Columbus wrote in his log: "But the high sea suited me well. It was a sign the like of which has not appeared since the Jews set forth from Egypt and grum-

bled against Moses who had delivered them from captivity."

Nor was this the only situation to which Columbus responded in this way, that is, by equating the incident with some episode from the Scriptures. This love of similes and Biblical quotations was, of course, characteristic of his time, and we would have to make a careful study of such passages to see whether they form some kind of a pattern. Scholarship has not been idle in this. Investigators have thoroughly analyzed all of Columbus's letters and all his marginalia, as Fritz Streicher did forty years ago in his *Spanische Forschungen* (*Spanish Researches*), principally from the linguistic point of view. Monographs have been written on the peculiarities of Columbus's handwriting. His punctuation has been studied, as well as the structure of his sentences. His Latin and his Spanish have been minutely examined in the hope of thereby discovering where the linguistically gifted mariner may have come from. But none of this satisfactorily answers the question of where his learning may have been acquired.

Many students of the matter have shrunk from the assumption that Columbus, over whom two great nations have so long been disputing, might have been—God forbid—a Jew or of Jewish descent. Were that to be proved, a great deal that has been written on the subject of course have to be thrown on to the rubbish heap. Many a scholar is prepared to accept any version of things if only to dodge the possibility of Jewish descent. Most recently, however, there have been signs of a certain softening on the question. For there are a great many bits of evidence in favor of that thesis, and it answers a good many questions that hitherto remained unanswerable.

But as in many other intellectual disciplines it is the rare scholar who having once advocated a given opinion on Columbus is willing to discard it on the basis of new evidence. Those who have taken a stand tend to cling obstinately to it. And as a result, research into the life and origins of this great man has remained, with very few exceptions, divided into two mutually hostile camps.

Moreover, there are many episodes in the discoverer's life that add to the enigma. Let us take an example: the already mentioned participation of Columbus in a battle off Cape Vincente, where he supposedly fought against the Genoese fleet and then swam to safety in Portugal. The opponents of the Italian version pounce upon this incident. If Columbus were really a Genoese and an Italian, they argue, he could not have fought against the fleet of his native city. The Italians have no answer to this point. But there are more such episodes which raise questions that one side or the other cannot answer or for which the answers seem patently unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, Genoa stalwartly clings to the tradition that Columbus was one of her sons. To bolster this claim, a house near the Porta San Andrea, the Casa dell'Olivella, has been dubbed Columbus's birthplace—records having shown that the Columbo family once resided there. Since 1887 the house has carried a plaque reading: *Nulla domus titulo dignior hac. Paternis in aedibus Christophorus Columbus pueritiam primamque juventam transegit.* ("No home is worthier of the name. In his father's house Christopher Columbus passed his early boyhood and youth.") For Italians the plaque itself is incontrovertible evidence that Columbus belongs to them.

Spaniards, however, continue to raise questions. They point out that Columbus's holograph writings and letters

are couched in extremely fluent Spanish. Columbus supposedly left Italy at the age of twenty-five, then lived in Portugal; yet when he arrived in his "second home" of Spain he used Castilian as if it were his mother tongue. So much is evident from the marginalia in his books. That seems sufficient proof to the Spanish people, all the more so since the Italians cannot account for the way Columbus might have come by his knowledge of Spanish.

At the time of Columbus's voyages the pope was a Spaniard, Alexander VI of the House of Borgia. It was he who divided the newly discovered world into a Portuguese zone and a Spanish zone. In his bull on the matter he speaks of Columbus as a beloved son and as an honorable, especially trustworthy man fit to master so great a task. This papal bull formed the basis for the Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal, dated June 7, 1494. The line of demarcation between their two dominions was formed by the 46th degree of west longitude. Naturally there were many subsequent changes, and political events shaped the map of America in ways totally unforeseen in the last years of the fifteenth century.

What is significant here is the high praise accorded to Columbus by Pope Alexander VI. And even more significant, perhaps, is that the Vatican was to retract that praise several hundred years later. But we will go into this aspect of the Columbus story later.

For the present let us return to the contest between Italy and Spain over the nationality of the discoverer. Both sides refuse to admit that the Italians' Christophoro Columbo might be the same man as the Spaniards' Cristóbal Colón. The matter has become, almost comically, a question of national prestige. When I discussed the Columbus problem with an Italian historian and outlined

some of my own ideas to him, he said curtly, "It doesn't matter what you hit on; the important thing is that Columbus doesn't become a Spaniard." A respected Spanish scholar made a similar remark to me, in the opposite sense.

While the Italians have staked their all upon upholding Genoa as his birthplace—the claims of other Italian cities are treated far less seriously—the Spanish scholars have nothing quite so definite to offer. They imagine that by exposing the weak spots in the Italian theory they have demolished it, from which it automatically follows that Cristóbal Colón was Spanish by birth. Yet anyone can see the weakness of their position: The Italians can come up with parents, brothers, and sisters, the house, and so many other details; the Spaniards lack such specifics, for none of the towns they propose can produce personal data or family records. All they have to go by would seem to be certain remarks by Columbus himself or some few details in his letters that can be forced to fit into their theory.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century the Spanish scholars were at last able to produce family documents. It seemed as though the controversy would finally be resolved and the Italians forced to give up their claims to Columbus. The documents in question came from Pontevedra, a coastal town in Galicia. They were discovered by the Spanish historian Don Colso Garcia de la Riega, who published them in 1898. These documents, supposedly dating from the fifteenth century, mention a Colón family living in Pontevedra, and they named one Domingo Colón, one Bartholomeo Colón, and a Blanca Colón. A Fonterossa family is also mentioned. These Fonterossas were supposed to have been Jews, and according

to official records they had formerly lived in a village four miles from Genoa. The documents concerned business relationships between the Colóns and the Fonterossas and also indicated that Domingo Colón had married a Susanne Fonterossa. What is more, a family by the name of Colón, three of whom were burned at the stake in Tarragona in 1489, proved to have been related to the Fonterossas by marriage. This could again support the thesis that the Fonterossas were Jews.

The discovery of these records at the end of the last century was a great sensation. Scholars hastened to review every known detail of Columbus's life to determine whether there were any links with Pontevedra, and they came to extremely interesting conclusions. In assigning names to the newly discovered lands in America Columbus had used names of localities in the vicinity of Pontevedra: Punte de la Galera, Punte Lanzada, Porto Santo, and San Salvador.

These Pontevedra documents also rather amazingly could satisfy the theories. On the one hand, they established the fact that Columbus had been born a Spaniard. On the other, they confirmed the connection with Genoa. As for the persistent rumor that the discoverer had had Jewish blood, here was evidence that he was half-Jewish.

The great sensation blew up when the twenty-three documents from Pontevedra were subjected to an examination by the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid. It turned out that they were partly, though perhaps not entirely, forged. They were officially repudiated in an affidavit dated October 19, 1928. Today no one mentions the Pontevedra documents. If one asks a scholar about them, he waves his hand in dismissal.

Yet after this sad experience with the Pontevedra

papers, a new document turned up only two years after the Royal Academy of History had issued its verdict. A reproduction of this document is said to be in the library of the University of Barcelona. The original was found in the Casa dei Borromei, the family seat of Count Giovanni dei Borromei, who allegedly was the author of the statement in question. The deposition was dated 1494—the year in which Columbus was in Spain fitting out his third expedition. The paper was found in the binding of a book owned by Count Giovanni.

The secret document reads as follows:

I, Giovanni dei Borromei, have undertaken never to communicate the truth that I learned as a secret from Signor Peter di Angliera; but so that the memory of it may be preserved I confess before history the fact that Cristóbal Colón is of Majorcan and not of Ligurian descent. And the above-named Peter di Angliera added that Juan Colón had given himself out thus falsely for political and religious reasons, in order to receive the help of ships of the Spanish king. And further I wish to say that Colom and Colón are the same, for word has it that there is one Cristóbal Colombo Canajola, son of Domingo and Susana Fontanarossa, a citizen of Genoa, who ought not to be confounded with the West Indies seafarer. Bergamo, in the year of the Lord 1494.

This document would support the idea that Columbus came from Majorca; but Spanish scholars fresh from their disillusionment with the Pontevedra records were, and still are, highly skeptical of it.

The controversy therefore continues. The Italians take comfort in any token that Columbus was considered a foreigner in Spain. A wealth of such evidence is to be found in the records of the legal suit of Columbus's son Diego against the Spanish treasury. Diego sued when the

treasury refused to honor the written agreements between Columbus and their Catholic majesties. But the court ruled against him, on the ground that the king could rightfully have accorded such privileges only to natives, not to foreigners who had not resided in Spain for ten years. In the course of these legal proceedings a number of persons who had known Columbus personally testified that the admiral had spoken Spanish with a foreign accent. They reported that Columbus would say things that indicated that he did not regard Spain as his native land. Moreover, Bishop Las Casas in his *Historia de las Indias* spoke of the difficulties Columbus and his brother Bartholomeo had with the Spanish crews in the newly discovered "West Indies," and attributes this to the fact that the Spanish crewmen regarded them as foreigners. A number of contemporaries described Columbus as a Genoese; and the preserved letter of the magistrate of the San Giorgio bank in Genoa addresses Columbus as "Most distinguished and most beloved fellow citizen" (*clarissime amatissimeque concivis*).

As a sort of bridge between the Spanish and the Italian views, Salvadore de Madariaga in his biography of Columbus offers still another view. Madariaga asserts that "the Columbo family were Spanish Jews settled in Genoa." He believes they came to Genoa in the fourteenth century, having already been converted to Christianity. Their descendant would then have returned to Spain by way of Portugal about a hundred years later. Madariaga musters a number of details in support of this interesting thesis, including the transformation of the name Colón into Colombo and then back to Colón. But his theory fails to answer one important question. And in

order even to pose this question we must first say more about the general situation.

In 1391, there were frightful persecutions of the Jews in Spain. Many were forced to convert. Others fled to save their lives. The Jews in Seville, who held high positions and comprised about a quarter of the inhabitants of this city, were forced to leave their homes. Afterwards there was a tremendous depression throughout Spain because many of the key positions in economic life had been held by the expelled Jews or Marranos. Interestingly enough, as successors to the Jews Italian merchants came from Genoa to Seville and settled in the deserted Jewish quarter. If Madariaga's view is correct, the Spanish-Jewish Colóns would have left Spain for Italy at this time and under these circumstances. The question that comes to mind is why a descendant of these Spanish Jews would return to the country from which his family had been driven and especially at a time when the Inquisition was at its height. There are no known analogous cases that we might appeal to as examples; we cannot say that Columbus did the same as so and so whose forefathers likewise had had to go into exile. We must remember that in the very years Columbus was living in Spain, new pressures were being leveled against converted Jews and plans were afoot for the expulsion of unbaptized Jews. A wave of denunciation was spreading; and the Church was engaged in a massive search for secret Jews or sham converts.

We must, then, repeat our question: Why should a descendant of victims of persecution return in a time of renewed persecution? Madariaga does not consider this

matter. But in contrast to all the Italian, Spanish, and other scholars, Madariaga consistently and obstinately insists on Columbus's Jewish descent. Here is a postulate, he argues, that explains more logically and clearly than any other hypothesis many of the mysteries in the discoverer's life.

If we accept Madariaga's view Genoa remains possible as the birthplace, but it is difficult to accord to the family offered by the Italian scholars a Columbus of Jewish descent.

Let us see what Bishop Las Casas, Columbus's biographer, has to say. He wrote a few decades after the discoverer's death and, as we have seen, had access to the family archives. He also had the opportunity to examine other documents of the period and to speak with contemporaries. Recent researches, in particular a letter, found some years ago in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and written by some 390 Marranos of Seville to Queen Juana of Castile, suggest that Bishop Las Casas himself may have descended from a Marrano family. He came from Seville, and there were at any rate several Marrano families of the same name. The difficulties to which the bishop was exposed after his return from the West Indies also suggest this possibility. If this were so, he, too, would have had a motive to introduce some subtle distortions into his account of Columbus.

There can be no question that Columbus made deliberate efforts to veil his past and to confound questioners. But in his writings, which were intended only for himself or his immediate family, he was frequently incautious. He used a good many phrases that at that time in particular were liable to misinterpretation. But he was already dead by the time his biographer wrote about him.

Disclosures could no longer harm the Admiral but they could affect his descendants, who were perpetually engaged in legal battles to secure their share of the wealth of the New World in accordance with the royal promises made to Columbus. It is possible, therefore, that his biographer was so sufficiently concerned about Columbus's descendants that he omitted facts that would have harmed their case. We certainly ought not to exclude such a possibility if we assume that Bishop Las Casas himself was a convert or a member of a family that had converted earlier.

In his account of Columbus's life Las Casas mentions several details of great importance because they could sustain a kind of joint Italian-Spanish version such as Madariaga favors. Las Casas says that Columbus's parents and grandparents lived in Lombardy, became impoverished, and moved on from there, and that in Spain Columbus resumed his original name of Colón, which his parents or grandparents presumably discarded in order to adopt the more Italian-sounding name of Colombo.

Madariaga also deals with this presumably original name of Colón. He cites three Jews by the name of Colón who lived in Lombardy between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries.

In the course of my own studies, which I pursued a number of years ago and before I became acquainted with Madariaga's researches, I came upon many other Colóns who had lived in Lombardy—and lived there, moreover, at the time that, according to Las Casas, Columbus's parents or grandparents had been there. But I did not start with the assumption that the Colóns might be Spanish Jews who had emigrated to Italy. I proceeded, rather, from the well-known fact that the Jews in the

Middle Ages generally used the names of the cities they had come from or that such names were given to them. The Colóns in Lombardy, whom Madariaga touches on very briefly, were probably descendants of the families that I found.

Rabbi Joseph ben Salomo Colón was born in Chambéry in Savoy. After the expulsion of the Jews from Savoy he went to Mestre near Venice. He became a rabbi in Mantua and Bologna and later in Pavia. This rabbi was the most important talmudist of his age. He attracted disciples from many European countries. He distinguished himself particularly by preaching and trying to translate into practice the oneness of Jews as a people, no matter what country they lived in. It was he who in times of persecution levied a tax on the Jewish communities of Lombardy to be used to rescue persecuted co-religionists in other communities or even in other countries and to buy their freedom if they were being held in captivity. He died in 1480.

But there had been Colóns in Lombardy even before. In the thirteenth century there was a Rabbi Joseph Colón, and in the fifteenth century there was a physician of the same name. As far as I have been able to determine, these families came to Italy from the Rhineland. At this same period there were Jewish families named Colombo living in Piedmont. In the local dialect the Colombos were called Colón. The region from which the Colóns had come to Italy was the city of Cologne on the Rhine.

Cologne, one of the oldest cities of Europe, has a Jewish tradition reaching far back into the past. The city was founded almost 2,000 years ago as the Roman fort of Colonia Agrippina. Since the site was favorably located on an ancient trade route, Phoenician and Jewish

merchants came there and settled within the precincts of the fort. In the course of time the adjective Agrippina was dropped and the place was called simply Colonia. One of the oldest Jewish communities in Europe developed there. Documents from as early as the fourth century deal with the Jews of the city. In the Middle Ages representatives of all the Jewish communities in the Rhineland would travel to Cologne for the markets.

I have mentioned this matter to indicate that there were Colóns living in Italy who need not have come from Spain but from Germany. It would take elaborate investigation to determine whether any direct path leads from one of these Colóns to the discoverer. But should that turn out to be so, we would then have an explanation for the fact that Columbus moved about in a world of Jewish ideas and thought.

The name Columbus in that form as the name of a Jew also occurs in France in the Middle Ages. In 1250, a Petrus Columbus (whose French name was Pierre Colomb) was brought into court in Carcassonne. He was a baptized Jew and was charged with having secretly practiced the prescripts and rites of the Jewish religion.

In other countries we find Jews by the name of Colón whose families were at one time expelled from Spain. There were Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam, for example. One who enjoyed celebrity beyond the borders of Holland was Jacob Colón, who in the middle of the seventeenth century produced a large marine atlas, highly prized by seafarers.

The name Colón was quite common in Catalonia, among converted Jews also. The files of the Inquisition indicate that the dread tribunal was concerned with a Marrano family of Colóns who were burned at the stake.

Even while Columbus was going from court to court trying to find sponsors for his voyage of exploration, one Andreas Colón, his wife Blanca, and his mother-in-law were dressed in the garb of the penitent and, on July 18, 1489, burned at the stake. All three had confessed that their Christianity had been only a matter of lip service and that in their heart of hearts they had remained faithful to the Jewish religion.

Probably one of the earliest trials of a Converso family took place even before the introduction of the Inquisition in Valencia in 1461. Thomé Colom, his wife Eleonora, and their child Juan Colom were charged with having washed, dressed, and buried a corpse according to the Jewish rite. The body in question was that of Eleonora Colom's mother, who had lived in Thomé Colom's house and died there.

A good many scholars have been struck by the way Columbus seems to have belabored his religion. In this respect his behavior was like that of the Marranos of the period. They, too, had to publicly display their Christian faith at every possible opportunity. Equally striking is Columbus's strong family sense. He wanted to provide financially not only for his sons but also for his remoter descendants; he tried to insure that his whole line would enjoy high office. This can be regarded as a typically Italian trait, but it is also very common among Jews.

In this connection it is interesting to note how stubbornly Columbus fought for the right to bear the title *Don* in his negotiations with the Spanish kings. Almost from the first he made this a condition of his contract. Scholars have reminded us that a law of King Juan II, issued in Valladolid on January 2, 1412, prohibited a Jew from bearing the title of *Don*. If Columbus had reason to be

Dice a mi este mismo profeta en el cap. 8. / Esto dize el
 señor de las huestes. / Venid gentes muchas de muchos lu-
 gares. / (e dize el señor a su beduio. / Amos. / e busquemos al señor
 en bicia. / Et mi señor estas profecias conplidas son. / (e co-
 plése oy a los vuestros ojos. / Ca señor claravéte vuestro como
 todos los pueblos: et todas las lenguas lean los libros de la
 ley. / (e de los profetas: et el profeta. / (e desechadas ya los ydolos.
 en q ninguno de los aca por la doctrina de moysen y de aaron.
 q acia a qd mismo del qual dize el profeta abacuch e el ca. 3.
 Salije señor en salud del tu pueblo con el tu gozo.

. jeremie. 8.

. abacuch. 3.

. De Rabi samuel. cap. 17.

Temo me señor q dios benediceor viuisco et dio iuda a estas gentes
 por la su fe. / (e el nos mato a nos con la incedulidad. / (e du-
 rega. segund qd dize por la boca de ysaias en el cap. 54. v. Ona
 dize assy. / Esto dize el señor. / Per q vos llame. / (e no me
 respondistes. los mijs siervos comen. / (e vos famboraceo.
 caud q los mijs siervos beueran. / (e vos pereceredes de sed. / Los
 mijs siervos se alegraran en alegria de coracon. / (e vos sedes
 conpidos e amargura de vtro coracon. Et matare te ba dios
 o israhel. / (e llamara sus siervos por otro nombre. En el qual
 nombre bendixira a qd dios q es bendicho sobre la tierra. dñe.

. ysai. 65.

Et nos veamos las pñepciones de se nombre bendicho de dios
 sobre la su de la tierra. / (e veamos q a nos deprimio en
 captiuecio por todo el mundo. / (e por las quatro partes del
 ya son mas de mill años. / Et claravéte parese e
 nos el pñepcio de la tierra dios no para castigar mas para
 destruire. Et assy es el matamianto con el qual amenase
 dios q nos mataria. / Et a estas gentes las q las
 dios llama siervos suyos pñepciaron ya lo q dios prometio
 en la ley: ante de la muerte de vtro pñero nombre: segund la
 orden de las palabras q son dichas por ysaias. / Et la
 fambre. / (e la sed q nos padescamos no es de pan. mas es
 de las oraciones q es sed de las nras almas. / (e fambre

. ysai.

insecure about his own and his family's future, he might well have placed unusual stress on this matter. Moreover, he won his point and was further rewarded, after his first successful voyage, with a coat of arms displaying a castle and a lion. Madariaga points out that this represented a special honor on the part of their majesties, since these emblems belong to the royal arms of Castile and Leon.

We must also weigh the manner in which Columbus as a Catholic makes his professions of faith. These professions are frequent and fervent enough to seem genuine. If he were a Converso, a true convert rather than an enforced Christian, this would be entirely in character, and it would not have had to involve any degree of apostasy. To many a sincere convert Christ was a God-inspired reformer who brought about the transformation of Judaism into the "true faith." And indeed a converted Jew would be very well aware of the connections between the true faith and the precepts of Judaism. To the converted Jew a direct road led from Mount Sinai to Christianity. Had Columbus been a convert, or the descendant of converted Jews, he might very well have felt that his own piety confirmed the directness of that road. And this would also explain his urgency about the liberation of Jerusalem from the hands of the Moslems—an idea to which he was strongly committed in his latter years.

That religious elements played a great part in Columbus's thoughts and actions is evident from all his writings. It may come as something of a surprise to us that his concept of sailing west to reach the Indies was less the result of geographical theories than of his faith in certain Biblical texts—specifically the Book of Isaiah. He repeatedly cited two verses from that book: "Surely

the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them," (60:9); and "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (65:17). He felt that his voyages had confirmed these prophecies.

Isaiah seems to have been his favorite book of the Bible. He was also apt to quote from the Book of Ezra. In general he demonstrated a sound knowledge of the Old Testament. This might have been true of any cultivated man of the age. But what are we to make of the presence in the admiral's library of such items as the *Jewish War*, the account of the downfall of the ancient Jewish state by Josephus Flavius, or the *De Nativitatibus* by the Jewish scholar Abraham ibn Ezra. Then again, he would seem to have pored over another book on the Messiah by a Jewish renegade, the former Rabbi Samuel ibn Abbas of Morocco, from which work he even copied out several chapters, the better to master them.

Close investigation of the Columbus letters will reveal another riddle. Twelve of the letters, all of them to his son Diego, bear a peculiar sign or cipher in the upper-left-hand corner. The letters in question are those of November 21, 1504, November 28, 1504, December 3, 1504, December 13, 1504, December 18, 1504, December 21, 1504, December 24, 1504, February 5, 1505, February 18, 1505, February 24, 1505, and two letters without apparent date. Scholars had long noted the sign without attributing any importance to it and had taken it as a mark by the Duke of Veragua's archivist. The first to draw a different conclusion was the German scholar Fritz Streicher who discussed the sign in his *Spanische Forschungen* of 1928. Streicher had carefully studied his subject's handwriting, trying to interpret every dot, every

matically in order to determine how well Columbus knew Catalan and what light his use of the language might throw on his origins. He resolutely rejected the possibility that Columbus might be of Jewish descent. Nevertheless, he considered the sign to be some secret code between father and son.

Dissatisfied with this explanation the American Jewish scholar Maurice David looked into the matter of the secret sign. To him the mysterious cipher consisted of two Hebrew characters, *beth* and *hei*, which could stand for *baruch hashem* ("Praised be the Lord"), a common formula of blessing. Furthermore he found it highly significant that the sign occurred only in the letters to Columbus's son Diego, child of Columbus's marriage to Felipa Moniz, for it had been established that the Moniz family was probably of Marrano origin.

Excited by this discovery Maurice David called the matter to the attention of Salvadore de Madariaga, who was pursuing a similar thesis of Columbus's ancestry. But Madariaga observed that the cipher also contained the sign of the cross, on the basis of which he ruled out David's interpretation.

This detail, however, may be somewhat discounted, for the cross might be found on all letters of the period. It signified "in the name of God," and to have omitted it from the heading, in Spain particularly, would have been to incur suspicion. We must remember that the typical feature of Marrano conduct was to make a great outward show of one's Christianity, to be one hundred percent, if not one hundred and fifty percent, Catholic, while within the intimate family circle the old ties to Judaism were never broken. Moreover, Marranos mostly intermarried in order to preserve this delicate balance. The use of these

two signs of opposite meaning in an intimate correspondence was, therefore, quite in keeping with the nature of being a Marrano. It was indeed typical of these people that they attended mass faithfully but secretly continued to obey the precepts of Jewish religion in spite of the risk of being discovered. If Columbus had been a Converso or a Marrano, he might very well have displayed to the world, with its murderous kings, Inquisitors, and *autos-da-fé*, the sign of the cross like a shielding shibboleth. But to himself and his son, he said in the language of his forefathers: "Praised be the Lord." For some reason, this interpretation did not appeal to Madariaga, who thought the sign must have some arcane significance of a different sort.

From my own findings in the Archives of the Indies in Seville I was prepared to agree with Maurice David's theory. I noted that on the letter of February 5, 1505, for example, the entire text was written in Latin letters and from left to right but that the secret cipher was written from right to left, as in Hebrew. I also found it significant that the sign is employed over the first word of the letter, just as it would be in the letters of devout Jews. Since the first word in an epistle written with Latin letters is on the left rather than the right as in Hebrew, the sign is above the first word on the left side. And it is in exactly the same place in all the letters.

If it were merely a token of intimacy between father and son, as Fritz Streicher contended, it would have been more logical for a person who writes only from left to right to make this little flourish in the same direction and not suddenly switch to writing from right to left. I was even more impressed by a letter from Columbus to Diego, dated February 25, 1505, in which the same sign occurs.

This letter is not in Columbus's handwriting. Someone else had written it for him from dictation. We must remember that Columbus was frequently ill toward the end of his life and suffered so severely from gout that pain often prevented him from writing. But we do find in this letter his own signature and up above, plain to see, was the same sign. There can be no doubt that the same hand inscribed both the signature and the cipher.

I examined these letters together with Professor de la Pena. From the start he was extremely skeptical and remained so while we studied the letter of February 5. But his skepticism gradually yielded as we examined the letter of February 25 and I showed him the various possible flourishes with which the *baruch hashem* could be written. He too pointed out the sign of the cross, as had Madariaga. I offered my own explanation of the matter. If the sign really were a *beth hei*, then without a doubt it was intended as a sign of the Marrano tradition. It was an admonition to Diego: Do not forget where you come from. The cross is a tribute to the religion you now follow, but within the circle of your family give the sign *beth hei*, so that they remember their origins. Of course we aren't going to write the *beth hei* so clearly that anyone can read it straight off; that would run counter to the Marrano tradition. And the Marranos have never openly displayed their Jewish descent. Consequently the sign must not be recognizable as Hebrew to an outsider; it must be disguised by somewhat elaborate flourishes. Professor de la Pena was much impressed by my line of argument, but I cannot claim that he was completely convinced. In Spain the suggestion of Maurice David was altogether unknown. Spanish scholars were familiar only with the interpretation offered by Fritz Streicher.

These letters to Diego that bear the secret sign in the upper-left-hand corner also have a peculiar signature of triangular shape. Scholars have long puzzled over this signature, but its meaning continues to elude them. The advocates of Columbus's Jewish descent have, of course, closely scrutinized this signature, hoping to give a Hebrew interpretation to the mysterious initials:

S
S A S
X M Y

In keeping with the spirit of Columbus's age, some religious meaning seems virtually certain. Various interpretations have been offered. Thus some scholars read this as Sanctus, Sanctus Adonai Sanctus. Or else, reading the letters in Hebrew fashion from right to left:

	SHADAY	
SHADAY	ADONAI	SHADAY
CHESED	MOLEH	YEHOVA

("Lord, Lord God Lord, God gives mercy")

Such were the readings of Jewish scholars who looked for Hebrew words behind the letters.

Christians have found a multitude of possibilities in the letters. Here are merely three of such versions.

	SERVUS	
SUM	ALTISSIMI	SALVATORIS
XRISTE	MARIA	YESU

	SERVIDOR	
SUS	ALTEZAS	SACRAS
XRISTO	MARIA	YSABEL

SALVO

SANCTUM

ALTISSIMUM

SEPULCRUM

XRISTE

MARIA

YESUS

The mysterious triangle also includes Columbus's official signature—:Xpo Ferens. Xpo, incidentally, is composed of the Greek letters *chi*, *rho*, and *omicron*. The colon before the Xpo is taken to signify the surname Colón. Xpo is a standard abbreviation for Christo; interpretations differ widely on the significance of Ferens. Meanings from both Latin and Hebrew have been suggested; there has been much discussion of the fact that Columbus avoided writing out in full his Christian name Cristóbal or Christophoro. But such speculations lead far afield, and none of them is very persuasive.

The other letters to Diego in which the triangle is present but the signature reads El Almirante (the admiral) do not contain the *beth hei* mark. These letters



Signature of letters from Columbus to his son Diego that do not contain the *beth hei* sign.

were not so intimate, and presumably Diego could show them to others.

Some Jewish scholars have pointed out that the arrangement of the signature in the form of a triangle is reminiscent of the inscriptions on gravestones in old Jewish cemeteries in Spain and southern France.

There are of course some scholars who regard this signature within a triangle as more of an ornament than a monogram. Still we must consider that a document of bequests dated February 22, 1498—it may be considered the equivalent of a testament—Columbus commanded his descendants to use the triangular arrangement of signs as their signature. He went so far as to list precisely the graduation of the letters. Interestingly, he begins from bottom to top rather than from top to bottom.

It is too much to hope that scholars will ever arrive at a conclusive interpretation of this signature. It remains one of the many riddles Columbus has left for us.

The name Christophorus—the bearer of Christ—was given to many new converts. A good many scholars assume that Columbus received it for the same reason. But the theory can be carried still further. The point has been made that Colombo—the dove—serves in the Catholic Church as the symbol of the Holy Spirit present in the act of baptism. This would again suggest the baptism of a convert.

The same Father di Angliera, who figures in the story of Count Giovanni dei Borromei and who is also known as Peter Martyr, relates that Francisco de Bobadilla, Columbus's successor in the Indies, in 1499 turned over to Ferdinand and Isabella letters from Columbus that the discoverer had addressed to his brother Bartholomeo in an

"unknown script." If Peter Martyr's story is true, could these have been letters merely written in a code or is there another possible interpretation? Madariaga thinks that the Colón family, as descendants of Conversos, probably knew the Hebrew alphabet, and that the letters Peter Martyr mentions were written in the Castilian language but in Hebrew script. Madariaga concludes: "For a persecuted race it in any case represents a considerable advantage to possess such a natural cipher, which is virtually unknown outside the circle of the race."

Unfortunately these letters have not been preserved and in fact may never have existed. Bobadilla was one of Columbus's most bitter enemies; thus we would do well to retain some skepticism about any matter with which he was concerned.

Since Columbus appears to have been a foreigner in every country that we know him to have visited, some investigators have described him as a "stateless person." It is noteworthy that everywhere he behaved as if he were being harassed and that he seemed to have no feeling for the restrictive boundaries of national states. Perhaps he was a cosmopolitan of the period, who felt attached to no country in particular but wanted to fill in some of the blank spaces on the map and make these available to every country and to the whole of humanity.

The general picture of the discoverer has varied greatly, especially since the middle of the last century. With some justice the nineteenth century has been called the century of hero-slayers. But in any case, with Columbus we are certainly dealing with a fanatic who would not abandon his project no matter what the obstacles. But there is another curious fact about Columbus: At no time did he

draw up a reckoning of the importance of his discoveries. He carried out his plans without realizing what he had actually accomplished. Many writers believe that his imagination, which was the wellspring of his actions and which sustained him so remarkably in his dealings with the grandees of his age, also became his nemesis. To them he is a kind of Don Quixote. It is easy to forget that we are dealing with a man who tried, whatever his reasons, to conceal his identity. To probing questions he had to give plausible answers, and for that he needed a great deal of imagination. In those days, in contrast to the present, the means for checking on anyone's allegations were very limited. Columbus took advantage of the slowness of communications and the absence of records and gave his imagination free rein.

In any portrait of the man his so-called "greed for gold" must be mentioned. He frequently alludes to gold in both his letters to their Catholic majesties and in the marginal notes in his books. Scholars have suggested there was something Jewish in this; they have toyed with the idea that his special emphasis on gold might signify a Jewish trait because a Jew or a person of Jewish descent is a member of a people that has always been on the verge of flight or just settling down after one. Hence such a heightened interest in movable property of concentrated value, which can be carried along in case of flight, is plausible. A member of a people that has been fleeing for centuries has had a feeling from childhood for this metal that has value everywhere in the world. This reasoning may be true or false; but if true we should have to attribute Jewish descent to all the other figures of the period who were passionately obsessed with gold—and there were many such figures.

I myself have read dozens of books by various authors, written from diverse points of view at very different times, and have formed an image of a Columbus who diverges somewhat from the Columbus in any of these works. Moreover, I naturally see Columbus from the vantage point of our own age and its special experiences. During the time of Nazi persecution I met people who were desperately intent on hiding their origins and their past. These were persons who feared one question and grew embarrassed when it was put to them: the question of who they really were and where they came from. They blustered, they changed the subject, they elaborately avoided the necessity of answering. These persons saw or scented a trap in every such question, and they were determined not to be caught.

Columbus was a homeless man who wandered from country to country, who was at home nowhere, and who when his plans came to naught did not go back home to Genoa, assuming that he did actually come from Genoa and had family there. It also seems significant that when he met with refusals in Portugal and Spain he sent his brother Bartolomé to England to peddle his plans there but did not offer them to his "home town" of Genoa, although the Genoese were certainly well versed in all matters of seafaring.

From his reaction to a letter by the king of Portugal, we know that Columbus had reasons for not returning to Portugal, which he had left under obscure circumstances even though the king assured him safe conduct and freedom from punishment. Did he have similar reasons for not returning to Genoa? Were these connected with his participation in a battle against the Genoese fleet off the shores of Portugal, or was that "participation" just an-

other of the fables the future discoverer of America concocted to impress people? Apparently his origins had given him an inferiority complex, for we are taken aback by the statement he made after he returned from his successful voyage and was covered with honors and decorations: "I am not the only admiral in my family," he said. A strange, uncalled-for remark, and one for which there is not a shred of evidence.

Whatever picture of him we may form for ourselves, the lingering impression is of insecurity, which he tried to conceal behind an intrepid manner. It is, as I have indicated, the picture of a harried, homeless man deliberately covering his tracks.

Even in death his bones found no rest. Just as his letters and documents had wandered from continent to continent, his body likewise was moved from place to place. At first Columbus was buried in the Franciscan monastery of Valladolid. Only a few years later his remains were transferred to the Carthusian monastery at Las Cuevas. There Father Gorricio, a close personal friend until Columbus's death, tended the grave. After the death of Diego Colón, the admiral's bones were taken along with Diego's body to Santo Domingo and buried there in the *capilla mayor*. In 1795, the Spaniards ceded the island of Santo Domingo to the French. Columbus's remains were then moved to Havana, Cuba. When, in 1898, Spain lost the Spanish-American War and had to give up her West Indian colonies these many-times-moved remains were translated from Havana to Seville, where they now rest in the cathedral. To add one more enigma to the mysteries surrounding Columbus it should be noted that in 1877, when a vault in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo was opened, a casket was discovered that many

scholars to this day consider to contain the authentic bones of Columbus.

In thinking about Columbus I told myself: Try to transport yourself into his own time; place him against the background of his immediate past, remembering that for many of us today the recent past still seems to be the present. Compare him with the people you meet every day and perhaps you will be able to form a believable picture. And so I saw him in ragged clothing, leading his small son by the hand, knocking at the gate of the La Rabida monastery and asking entry. How often in the history of recent times have such scenes recurred. Hunted persons denying their past, men without a present, because the present has vowed to destroy them, and without a future—for it would seem sheer insanity to plan on any future beyond the desperate needs of the moment—stood before gates like that of the monastery with the last of their possessions, their only child, and begged for admission. Was Columbus too afraid of a present that threatened to crush him, a present that had conspired not only against him but against many of his fellows?

We may also wonder how such a person, with no high connections and no credible past, could have found support. Here it is of crucial importance whether Columbus was a Jew, or of Jewish or Marrano descent. To investigate why Jews and Marranos supported Columbus's plans we have no need to know whether Columbus was Spanish or Italian. I have mentioned all these obscurations and concealments by Columbus himself or by members of his family and have suggested that such conduct has always been characteristic when people are being harried and hunted. I have met Jews who to save their lives pretended

to be Aryans and who, therefore, had to create a whole fabric of falsehood. They wore crucifixes and religious medals and made a great point of their church attendance and general piety. After having gathered a good deal of knowledge about the great discoverer in the course of years, I could not help feeling that he was in this respect like the people I met personally during the time of suffering.

Around the middle of the last century certain circles began making efforts to have Columbus beatified and canonized. The argument was that by his discovery Columbus won millions of human beings to the Christian faith. The movement was headed by the French nobleman Count Roselle de Lorique. In 1866, Pope Pius IX requested Cardinal Donnet, the archbishop of Bordeaux, to initiate the regular proceedings prescribed by the Church. The Council of 1870 also dealt with the matter. In 1892, in connection with the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America, the nation of Columbia officially joined in the request for canonization. Pope Pius IX and Pope Leo XIII took a very favorable view of the plan. The Holy Office examined all the documents on Columbus to be found in the Vatican Archives and came to a negative decision. The reason given was that blemishes had been found in Columbus's private life.

These blemishes could not have been the only reason for the rejection, and indeed it seems likely that this reason was only a pretext. I tried to find out more about the matter. But when I inquired in Rome I was informed that the Vatican's documents on Columbus are not accessible. If we compare this rejection of even beatification with the words of praise for Columbus in the papal bull of 1494, we cannot help wondering. Columbus's private

life did not greatly differ from that of many high ecclesiastical dignitaries of the period who had official mistresses and illegitimate children and who made a point of installing these children in positions within the church. Such conduct was tolerated and in no way compromised the position of these ecclesiastics within the hierarchy.

Can other reasons have decisively affected the Vatican's decision, reasons based on documents being withheld from scholars, although they might lead to a better understanding of Columbus's personality and might answer some of the many questions that perplex everyone who studies the discoverer.

I cannot and will not decide in favor of one or the other of the two nations that have been bickering for centuries over their claim to the great discoverer. I have been merely making use of the arguments both sides advance. If Columbus actually was Spanish there is good reason to think that he was of Marrano descent. On the other hand, his being Italian would by no means exclude the possibility of Jewish origins. The question of birthplace cannot be settled on the basis of the documents available at present. All of these have been scrutinized and weighed by hundreds of scholars. But if some day the secret archives of the Vatican are opened, new interpretations are conceivable and, above all, new facts may be brought to light.

IV

At the Last Moment





THE VAGUE PLANS of finding a water route to the Indies that Columbus had cherished in his youth gradually assumed more definite form during his stay in Portugal. Portugal offered him great opportunities. Columbus investigated all that was then known about India. He hung around the waterfronts listening to the stories of merchants who had something to say about India, about the trading routes to that country, and about the populations of India and the neighboring countries. As we have noted, he owned Marco Polo's book of his travels to and in China. That account, too, contained a great deal about the country and the people. Inevitably, Columbus would also have known the legends current in his time, including the legend about the lands in the depths of Asia inhabited by the ten lost tribes of Israel. His marginal notes indicate that he was also familiar with a variant of the legend of Prester John in which the priest-king was supposed to rule over Jews. There is no doubt that he was familiar with Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela's travel narrative and with many other writings on this subject that were discussed by both Jews and Christians.

The great tradition of Portuguese seafaring, which stands to this day as a virtually unique achievement, goes back to Henry the Navigator. It was continued by King Alfons V and after his death in 1481 by King John II. Portugal became the leading sea power on the continent of Europe; her vessels cruised all the seas of the known world. The king had a scientific council that advised him on nautical matters and voyages of discovery. From time to time he issued concessions for voyages in search of unknown but supposedly inhabited lands. For the Portuguese the principal direction of such voyages was southward along the western coast of Africa. The merchants followed the sailors, and so the wealth of the Portuguese Empire swelled. Portugal seemed to Columbus, at the time he arrived there, the land of the future; but he by no means concurred with the southward direction of Portuguese exploration.

Europe's trade with the East had been blocked by Arabs and Turks. The Moslems regarded the wares imported from India and other Asiatic countries, chiefly textiles and spices, as their domain to exploit, and added sizable mark-ups to the prices, while trade was sometimes halted entirely by the continual wars in those regions. If the Portuguese could find a sea route to India, they would be able to completely exclude the Turks and Arabs from their lucrative role as go-betweens. They thought they could find the route if they succeeded in circumnavigating Africa. The prospects were overwhelming. Once they had established their new route they would more or less monopolize all the trade between India and the West. The subject was on everyone's lips when Columbus arrived in Portugal.

From the start Columbus argued that the surer way

to reach the Indian Lands was to sail westward. But to sailors the westward route was a voyage into infinity, a voyage into a waste of waters to the very end of the world. The idea that the extreme West was the end of the world could scarcely be reconciled with the gradually spreading knowledge that the world was round; but old notions lingered. Only a few decades before, Peter of Albano and Cecco d'Ascoli had been burned as heretics for asserting that the world was a globe. They had been confronted with the argument that in that case the people living in the other hemisphere would logically be antipodes, with their heads pointing down and their feet up. Was it also possible for trees to grow downward and for rain and snow to fall upward? The two men affirmed that all would seem normal from the point of view of the hemisphere in which the inhabitants were located. That was stubborn heresy indeed. Religion and science were closely linked. Saint Augustine had declared the doctrine of the antipodes to be heretical and incompatible with the Christian religion. But even those who regarded the world as a globe were of the opinion that only the upper half of the globe was inhabitable; if you wanted to sail from the upper half to the lower half, how could you come back? You would have to be sailing up the water, like climbing up a mountain. This argument rested on the authority of Epicurus.

Even by the age of Columbus the idea of a spherical earth had not quite won out everywhere. The Church's opinion was divided. Columbus knew that if his expedition succeeded he would also have provided proof that the earth is a sphere—a proof that it would be impossible to deny. Seen in the terms of the present day, he was conceiving of an expedition to the dark side of the moon. But

those two great kingdoms in the heart of Asia, blessed with the bounty of nature and overflowing with gold, stirred the imagination of fifteenth-century Europe and made many a sailor toss in his bunk. Most understood that a sea route to India was fraught with peril. Many decided it was safer to grope for a route to India around the already partially known continent of Africa. But Columbus was not one of these. He sought new ways.

In 1478, he married Felipa Moniz Perestrello in Lisbon. He was a stranger in the land and really no more than an insignificant seaman without a steady income. His bride came from a highly aristocratic and influential family, which certainly must have had a great deal to say about the daughter's marriage. Scholars have puzzled over this alliance right down to the present. How could a foreign maker of maps, and what is more one of low birth, have been permitted to marry the daughter of Portuguese nobility? By the social standards of their time they were extremely unequal partners.

Some scholars have attached no importance to this personal event in Columbus's life; others have seen in it an attempt on his part to introduce his plans into powerful Portuguese circles. Some have suggested another solution. The bride was twenty-five-years old, an advanced age for an unmarried woman by the standards of the period, and the family must, therefore, have been glad to find a husband for her. There are also scholars who have looked into the genealogy of the Moniz-Perestrello family, hoping to find a clue there. Marranos usually intermarried. It was customary among them for bridegroom and bride to produce proofs of their Jewish lineage, even if it already lay many generations in the past. The investigators have actually found Marrano ancestors for

Felipa Moniz. On her mother's side she was of Jewish descent; but her forebears had long ago converted to Christianity.

The occupation that Columbus pursued during his stay in Portugal was also in those days totally "judaized." He was a cartographer and calligrapher; he drew maps and also dealt in printed books. This is why some Spanish scholars assert that he must have been born on the island of Majorca—all the more so since there is a village called Genova on the island. As we have mentioned, Majorca was the center of cartography and cosmography, and the science was mostly practiced by Jews; only occasionally was a Moorish or Christian practitioner to be found. The masters of Majorcan cosmography were frequently invited to scientific academies in other countries. The noted Magister Jacome, Rector of the Academy for Cosmographs in Sagres, Portugal, was none other than the Jew Jehuda Cresques, originally of Majorca.

With the Inquisition already raging in Spain and with Spanish Jews and Marranos refugees in Portugal, King John II, the grandnephew of Henry the Navigator, established a scientific institute whose duties involved laying the basis for voyages of discovery. A good many Jewish mathematicians, astronomers, and cosmographers were members of this institute. The problems to which these scientists addressed themselves proved to be of enormous importance to the shipping of the age. It was necessary to find ways and means to enable vessels far from any coast to maintain their chosen direction. Without a significant improvement in instruments, without some method of charting the sun at different seasons of the year and thus being able to calculate the ship's distance from the Equator, voyages into unknown seas were

virtually impossible. Joseph Vecinho, the disciple of Abraham Zacuto; Rodrigo, the king's personal physician; the mathematician Moses; and other noted Jewish scholars served on the scientific committee under the chairmanship of Bishop Castelano of Zeuta. Discovery of the method of determining a ship's position by the angle formed between the sun and the horizon was one of the accomplishments of this community of scholars.

After much experimentation a group of scientists, which included the Jewish savants Abraham ibn Ezra, Jacob Carsoni, and Don Profazius (Jacob ben Machir), succeeded in improving marine instruments. The committee also proposed inviting experienced sea captains and scientists to Portugal in order to make their knowledge available to the country. The king approved this suggestion.

The Portuguese government had early recognized the importance of cosmography to future voyages of discovery. Thus it had invited not only Jehuda Cresques but also the noted Jewish astronomer Abraham Zacuto to come to the country. Columbus had demonstrable contacts with this scientist.

Even the most arrant landlubbers were seized by this new enthusiasm for seafaring, so that trading in maps and nautical instruments flourished as never before in Lisbon. There were more than 100 bookshops that dealt in both ordinary books and travel narratives.

Columbus was engaged in active business relationships with the Jews of Lisbon. He bought and sold from them, borrowed money from them, and when he left Portugal owed money to a good many Jews. When he wrote down his will, toward the end of his life, he took occasion to mention a Jewish creditor in Lisbon—although by this time there were no more Jews living in Portugal, for they

had been expelled. Columbus also associated with the members of the scientific institute and in particular with the Jewish mathematicians, astronomers, and cosmographers. From Joseph Vecinho, the king's Jewish physician, Columbus obtained Abraham Zacuto's astronomical tables, which had been prepared for the use of sailors and which proved a vital aid to the discoverer on his fateful voyages.

In Portugal his projects evidently matured, until at last they could be presented to King John II. The precise date or even year in which he submitted his plans is not known. It must have been between 1478 and 1481, since John II was interested in sea voyages even before his accession. The final plan, a revised version of the early one, was presented to the king some time in 1483 or 1484. Columbus was then about thirty-two-years old. The sponsors of the plan were the king's two Jewish physicians, Magister Rodrigo and Magister Joseph, who also served as court astronomers.

It becomes evident that in Portugal Columbus easily found a common language with Jews and a benevolent attitude toward his projects. The king's physicians were intensely interested in his expedition and made strenuous efforts to obtain the king's support. They helped Columbus expand his frequently patchy knowledge by keeping him informed of the latest scientific discoveries. It therefore cannot be rejected out of hand that their assistance was connected with the aims of the expedition and the promise it might hold for Jews. In any case, Columbus's discussions with the two scientists enriched his background and helped him work out his plan in concrete terms.

Nevertheless, Columbus failed. The committee turned down his proposal. This negative decision must to some



Toscanelli's map, which served Columbus as a guide on his first voyage.
 (Picture Archives, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)

degree have been based on the bias against sending out expeditions in a westerly direction. And so Columbus left Portugal and went to Castile. Throughout almost the entire literature on Columbus his departure from Lisbon is treated as a flight. But opinions on the reasons for this flight differ enormously. The majority of scholars argue that crushing debts were the reason. Others suggest that he had obtained possession of notes and maps, or copies of these, that had been in the keeping of the scientific committee and concerned future voyages of discovery. Such notes and maps were a closely guarded state secret in Portugal.

Salvador de Madariaga believes that Columbus copied a letter from Paolo Toscanelli, the Florentine astronomer and cartographer to the king of Portugal, and pretended that the letter was addressed to himself. But no scholar knows for certain what really happened to Columbus in Portugal. That Columbus would have expected to face prosecution if he returned to Portugal is evident from the king of Portugal's letter to him dated March 20, 1488, in which the king assures him:

And if you are fearful of our justice in consideration of certain of your obligations, so know by the present letter that neither during your coming, your stay, and your departure will you be seized, detained, accused, charged, or prosecuted for any reason whatsoever, neither under the civil nor the criminal law, no matter what the cause.

But what had actually happened? What infraction or crime had Columbus committed in Portugal? There are no sources to explain, and the discoverer took the secret with him to the grave.

In Castile he first took shelter in the La Rabida monas-

tery. The monks also took his child Diego into their care. After some time he was received by the Duke of Medina-Celi, the wealthiest noble in Andalusia. The duke was the grandson of a Jewish woman; he received Columbus hospitably and seemed to be interested in the projected expedition. What is more, he urged it on Ferdinand and Isabella, who, however, were at the time involved with other problems and gave no clear answer. The duke then composed a letter of recommendation for Columbus that after considerable time led to an invitation from the royal couple. In January 1486, Columbus was granted an audience in Córdoba with Ferdinand and Isabella. On this occasion he proved to be an excellent psychologist, well prepared to make the most of Queen Isabella's religious fervor. He told the queen that his expedition would above all benefit the Church, since it would be possible to spread Christianity in the newly discovered lands. Then, since he was also aware of King Ferdinand's passion for wealth, he spoke of all the gold that might be found in the Indies. Changing the subject he then suggested that with the aid of this money the Holy Sepulcher in Palestine could be wrested from the infidel. The queen by now was full of enthusiasm for the plan. Ferdinand reacted quite differently. The dissemination of the Christian religion was not all that important to him; he was chiefly interested in what lands and possessions might accrue to the Crown of Spain.

On such occasions Ferdinand displayed a curious attitude. The united kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, ostensibly ruled jointly by Ferdinand and Isabella, were actually under the sway of Isabella, who was in addition sole mistress of Castile. These facts provoked strong inferiority feelings in Ferdinand. As soon as Isabella came

out strongly for Columbus's plan Ferdinand showed reserve. But he promised at any rate to submit the project to a commission of scholars. The queen agreed and appointed her confessor, Hernando de Talavera, prior of the Prado, to head the commission. Talavera, the grandson of a Jewish woman, later became archbishop of Granada and, like so many ecclesiastical dignitaries, a victim of the Inquisition. The commission rejected Columbus's project. But Queen Isabella consoled him with the promise that she would be ready to consider it again once victory over the Moors had been won.

Diego de Deza, bishop of Salamanca and professor of theology at the famous Salamanca University, generously aided Columbus. Diego de Deza was a Dominican and came from a family of Conversos. He was appointed tutor to Prince John, then archbishop of Seville, and finally successor to Grand Inquisitor Torquemada. However, Deza did not hold this latter function for long; he was replaced by Cardinal Ximenes. In order to help Columbus, Diego de Deza convoked a conference of scholars to be held in Valcuevo, a suburb of Salamanca.

The Salamanca conference had no official status but it backed Columbus's plans. Deza managed to have Columbus taken into the service of the Spanish monarchs on May 4, 1487. And Columbus now made the acquaintance of two eminent Jews, the royal chief taxfarmer Don Abraham Senior and his friend, treasurer Don Isaac Abrabanel, a member of an ancient and well-known family. His grandfather, the "great" Don Samuel Abrabanel, had been one of the wealthiest and most respected Jews of Valencia. During the savage persecutions of 1391 he had been forced to abjure his faith and take a new name. Henceforth he called himself Alfonso Fernandez de Vila-

nova. Samuel's son, Juda Abrabanel, settled in Lisbon and became treasurer to the infante Don Fernando. Don Fernando borrowed huge sums from Don Juda, and one time after his happy return from a campaign against the Moors ordered half a million reis to be repaid to his creditor.

Don Isaac Abrabanel had enjoyed the confidence of King Alfonso V and was on a friendly footing with the House of Braganza. He was forced to flee because he was a friend of the Duke of Braganza, whom King John II condemned to death. Abrabanel reached Castile safely, settled there, and soon won the favor of the royal couple. He was one of the first to offer to finance the bold navigator's project. It is possible that Columbus had known Isaac Abrabanel in Lisbon, but no one can say for certain.

For the time being nothing came of Columbus's project. He had to wait. There are no documents to show how he occupied this period of waiting. Probably he traveled obstinately from palace to palace trying to win supporters.

Columbus was well aware that his voyage of discovery would involve large financial commitments. The key positions in the Spanish financial world and in the Spanish treasury were held by Jews and Marranos. In the universities and in the domains of science there were many Jewish scholars. Columbus had to win such persons over. He was well aware of the equivocal situation of Jews and Marranos in Spain. The trials before the Inquisition's tribunals, the general attacks on Jews and Marranos, the suspicions of the Conversos, and the envy all three groups suffered because of their wealth dominated the daily scene in Spain. The sermons from the pulpits against Jews and heretics and the reactions of the rabble to the propaganda

of mendicant friars created an atmosphere of insecurity and terror for Jews and even for Conversos.

It was inevitable that Columbus's proposal should have been talked about in court circles and from there filtered down to the populace. His ideas awakened hopes among the persecuted and among the potential victims of future persecutions.

The rising peril manifested itself in an event that was calculated to destroy any pity for the plight of the Jews and in fact to kindle anti-Jewish sentiment among the entire population of Spain. It was the sort of incident that has been repeated frequently in history and can well stand as a model for similar vile acts against the Jews. It deserves to be described at some length, for it will provide us with insight into the practices of the Inquisition.

In March 1491, Benito Garcia, a dealer in textiles, came to the small town of Astorga in pursuit of his trade. He took a room in an inn. Garcia, now sixty-years old, had undergone baptism forty years earlier. At the inn some drunks pillaged his baggage. They ran to the local priest and informed him that they had found a desecrated holy wafer among the stranger's possessions. Garcia was arrested. The examining magistrate of the Inquisition followed the prescribed procedure and had him recite the Credo and the Confessio—without informing him of the reason for his arrest. The frightened man stammered and in his agitation recited the words haltingly, giving the impression that he could only painfully recall them. To the Inquisition that was proof that Garcia was long out of practice. This in itself was a severe case of heresy. Garcia was subjected to what nowadays would be called brainwashing. He had to describe his entire life and to

tell everything that he, as a New Christian, knew about the Old Testament and about Jewish rabbis. In the course of the interrogation the examining magistrate became convinced that Garcia was a secret Jew. The second stage of the investigation could now begin, to force Garcia to make a confession. Garcia was asked to tell who else were secret Jews and who had led them into their wrongdoing.

Garcia remained steadfast; he named no names. He was tortured and put to the water test. After he had swallowed several quarts of water and his stomach could no longer endure the pressure, he gave way and mentioned another convert named Juan de Ocana. This was the man who had misled him, he said. Under torture Garcia admitted that he, Ocana, and others had always celebrated the Sabbath and the Jewish holidays in the home of the Jewish family Ca Franco, together with the family of their son Yuce Franco.

The two Francos and Ocana were promptly arrested and transferred to the prison in Avila. The young Franco fell ill and asked for the aid of a rabbi. The Inquisition saw the opportunity for a confession by deception, and instead of sending a rabbi the magistrate sent Father Cuviquez, a familiar of the Inquisition and a baptized Jew who was a doctor of theology and acquainted with the Talmud. The trick succeeded. A prison doctor stood behind a door and took notes. Later he swore before a notary that there had been talk of ritual murder at the prisoner's sickbed. That was quite true; Father Cuviquez had raised the subject of ritual murder, arguing that it was no sin but a justified bloody revenge upon the Christians. Father Cuviquez was questioned by the Inquisitor and swore that the doctor's allegations were correct and that there had been talk of ritual murder. Thus a new charge was con-

structed, and the prisoners were now questioned about ritual murder.

By this time the documentation on which a future trial would be based had already swollen to volumes. Grand Inquisitor Thomas de Torquemada, who resided at his monastery of Santa Cruz near Avila, asked to be informed about the case and then took personal charge of it. Torquemada urgently needed a spectacular case to prepare the way for his planned expulsion of the Jews. He did not want to base the expulsion on questions of religion. What he needed was a criminal case to provide every Spaniard with easily understood reasons for the coming procedures against the Jews. It was essential to compromise the Jews of Spain in the eyes of all those who might be ready to defend them.

Torquemada realized at once that the Garcia case was made to order for him. Here was proof of Jewish guilt and of the evil influence that unbaptized Jews had upon baptized Jews. Torquemada was concerned with preserving the veneer of legality. By its statutes the Inquisition had no right to deal with Jews who were not baptized. Therefore, the case had to be turned over to another judicial commission, a secular one, which would meet simultaneously with the Inquisitional tribunal. The law was the law. Torquemada saw to it that the trial, which was a protracted one, received maximum publicity and that news of the wickedness of the Jews reached even the smallest Spanish village. Torquemada wanted Spaniards to see, whenever they met Jews, the Franco brothers and the Garcias thirsting for Christian blood and taking Christian lives.

Defenders were admitted to the secular court, where it soon became evident that the prosecution's case stood

on feeble legs. The indictment contained no data on the name of the allegedly murdered man, nor on the date or place of the crime. Whereupon the secular court accepted the defense's proposal and declared itself incompetent to judge the case. On Torquemada's insistence the archbishop granted an exceptional right to the Avila inquisitional tribunal to judge this one case.

Badly battered by the usual torture, the sick and weakened young man, Yuce Franco, soon obliged with the desired confession and produced the details the Inquisition needed: Three years before, the Marranos Garcia and Ocana had dragged a Christian boy into a cellar. In addition to Yuce and his father, three other members of the Franco family were waiting there. The child was undressed, nailed to a cross, his heart was cut out of him and preserved in a salt solution, and the group danced around the victim, spitting at him and calling him Jesus.

This was enough for the Inquisition. The remaining three Francos were also arrested. Now there was only one more difficulty to overcome. It was necessary for all seven defendants to confess to the same crime with the same details. Here, too, torture proved an efficient coordinator. All that was needed was to ascribe general aspects to the case. A link had to be established from the seven defendants to the remaining Jews in Spain but chiefly to the representatives of the Jewish religion, the rabbis. The torturers picked Garcia to establish this link, since he had already proved a useful victim. Under further torture he was forced to confess that the rabbis in the Juderias preached the importance of ritual murder and recommended it to the Jews as vengeance upon Christianity.

The last day of the trial was awaited with great sus-

pense. Torquemada and the Inquisitors took care that everything would receive the widest publicity. Benito Garcia was carried to the courtroom on a stretcher because the torturers had broken his bones. But then something happened that was not provided for in the script of the trial but that nevertheless delighted the Inquisitors. Garcia asked permission to speak. He declared that he had been born a Jew and that as a young man of twenty he had voluntarily assumed the Christian faith. But now, after having seen the cruel *autos-da-fé*, his heart had been filled with pity for the victims and with hatred for their murderers. Christianity, he concluded, was only a pagan farce, and the greatest antichrist was Grand Inquisitor Thomas de Torquemada. His only wish now was that his two sons, who had been born Christians, should renounce the accursed Catholic religion and become Jews.

By this declaration Benito Garcia threw off the burden on his soul; death was certain for him in any case. But this statement also gave the Inquisition just what it wanted—a proof of blasphemy. Torquemada made sure that this declaration by the “secret Jew” was published far and wide.

The defendants were condemned to death. King Ferdinand sent Torquemada a letter thanking and congratulating him. All of Spain waited for the day on which the sentences were to be carried out. A great pogrom was prepared, not only in Avila but also in other cities. Queen Isabella became alarmed at the possibility of a blood bath that might cost tens of thousands, perhaps a hundred thousand, human lives. She issued stern ordinances designed to protect those not directly affected by the trial.

The earliest known charge of ritual murder was made

in Norwich, England, in 1144. A boy named William disappeared and was later found dead. Jews were accused of having killed him; they were arrested and tortured until they confessed to a crime about which they knew nothing. The charge came up once again in Lincoln and then spread to the continent. Whenever a child or young person vanished and was not found, the fable of ritual murder by Jews turned up. This has happened again and again in almost every European country, right down to modern times. The last such trial took place in Kiev in 1913, where Mendel Beilis was charged with ritual murder. The details are always much the same: Jews are accused of having crucified Christians to mock Jesus Christ, of drinking the blood of Christians, or of using their blood for the purpose of making Passover matzos.

Several popes and the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II took a stand on the matter and tried to explain how nonsensical such charges were. But their efforts were in vain. Under torture Jews continued to confess to crimes they had not committed. And there were always those ready to seize on such confessions, those who had an interest in the persecution or expulsion of Jews. Some owed Jews money; others needed to divert attention from the country's domestic problems. Up to very recent times the popes themselves have been powerless to do anything about such cases. Where ritual murder is in question the ugliest passions are unleashed.

Torquemada was coming closer to his goal. The skies had darkened for the Jews of Spain. They were excoriated from every side; they were accused of a variety of fictional crimes and of evil influence upon the Christian population. The Inquisition called powerful Conversos before its tribunal on charges of being secret Jews. Even

the ministers of the king and queen had to appear—among others the king's treasurer, Luis de Santangel, and Alonso de la Caballeria. The royal couple were not yet prepared to yield to Torquemada's urging. The campaign against the Moors was expensive, and it was still possible to extort money from the Jews. Richer Jews began leaving the country, and a good many Marranos utilized a pilgrimage to Rome as a pretext for not returning to Spain.

Meanwhile Columbus was going about the country increasing the number of his acquaintances, meeting more and more Jews and Conversos, and expatiating on his plans. He kept his ears well cocked to his surroundings and was fully conscious of the hatred for the Jews and the consequences this might have. It seems evident that he found a hearing among Jews and Conversos. Unfortunately we have no records of just whom Columbus met and when. But if we study the final phase of his negotiations with the royal couple, noting the intervention of powerful protectors in favor of his project, it is logical to assume that he must have met these sponsors earlier and that they were familiar with his plans and their inherent potentialities.

We must put ourselves into the situation of these people and consider all the factors with the eyes of those already persecuted or fearing persecution of themselves or their children. Then we will understand why they listened credulously to the persuasions of a man who offered quotations from the prophets and other Jewish writings instead of hard scientific facts. The vision that this man's plans stirred among Jews and Conversos caused them to brush aside a good many logical and rational considerations. The desire was overwhelming to

support a man who has prepared to bring closer to reality the wish-dream of generations of Jews. Such an end seemed worth any amount of aid and any risk.

Aside from the old hopes of making contact with Jewish lands in the depths of Asia, the Jews and Marranos of Spain cherished an additional expectation. They were aware, from the demands Columbus was making in respect to an agreement with the crown, that Columbus was to assume dominion in the name of their majesties over all the lands he discovered. Columbus was insisting that he be appointed governor or viceroy in these lands after taking possession of them for Spain. This would open up for the Jews the prospect of a country to which they might emigrate, a land in which they might escape the pressure of the Church. If they regarded Columbus as a Converso or Marrano they could certainly count on such a haven. In the first place, they would be able to put a vast ocean between themselves and the witch's cauldron Spain had become in recent decades for Conversos as well as for Jews. And in the second place, the Spanish crown would suddenly find a vast new field of activity in the new territories. Such opportunities would surely turn men's thoughts from the narrow, morbid preoccupation with heresy, and this would ease the lot of the Jews and Marranos at home.

As yet they were all powerless. Jews or Conversos could not organize expeditions on their own. They could at best pay for them. The government had to approve. And at the time the government had other things to worry about. The war with the Moors meant that everything was postponed.

Columbus himself was living in Córdoba and gradually coming to a decision to leave Spain. Once again he turned

to the monks of La Rabida. Prior Juan Perez Marchena wrote a letter to the queen, who summoned Columbus to an audience. But she could do no more than put him off again because the country was making great preparations for a final confrontation with the remnants of the Moorish empire on Spanish soil. Isabella indicated to Columbus that once the Moorish problem had been finally settled she would be inclined to move his project toward realization.

Granada, the last Moorish fortress, fell on January 2, 1492. From that day on the kings of Spain could supplement their titles, by papal edict, with the adjective "Most Catholic."

For Columbus the fall of Granada was the signal to begin intensifying his efforts at court. With the victory over the Moors, the principal objection had now vanished. And in fact Columbus was once again granted an audience with the royal couple. Embittered by his long period of waiting and filled with a sense of the importance of his mission, Columbus made unusual demands, which the royal pair refused to meet. He wanted nothing less than hereditary viceroyship, the title of Grand Admiral of the Ocean Sea, and a share in whatever treasures were found. The negotiations were on the point of breaking down or, as some think, had been broken off and were not going to be resumed. At this point four men of Jewish descent intervened: Juan Cabrero, Luis de Santangel, Gabriel Sanchez, and Alonso de la Caballeria.

In addition to them, another person deserves mention: the Marchioness de Moya, a friend and intimate of Isabella. She became an advocate of Columbus's project and took every occasion to urge Isabella to accept it. Spanish scholars have hitherto been unable to clarify the

lady's motives. It is known, however, that she associated with Marrano circles and had often intervened to save Marranos who were in difficulties. As a friend of Marranos she might have shared their reasons for supporting Columbus.

The queen's principal objection was that the country had been so impoverished by the war against the Moors that it was in no position to bear the costs of the expedition. The Treasury was empty. At this point Santangel leaped into breach. Probably after consulting with Sanchez, Cabrero, and Caballeria, he offered to put up the money for the expedition. This was the crucial point; but for Santangel's offer, Columbus's voyage would not have taken place simply for lack of funds. There was the further element that Ferdinand and Isabella thought better of the plan since a man like Santangel, whom they esteemed very highly, was willing to advance the funds for such a voyage into the unknown.

This is the proper place to say something more about that important personage Luis de Santangel, whose statue occupies a place on the great Columbus monument in Barcelona.

The Santangels, or Sancto Angelos, were reckoned among the wealthiest, most influential, and most powerful families of Aragon in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. During the great persecutions led by Vicente Ferrer, when many Jews in Calatayud, Daroca, Fraga, Babastro, and other small towns surrendered their religion to save their lives, the Santangels also bowed to the will of the Church.

Like the Villanovas, whose ancestor was Moses Patagon, and the Clementes, who were descended from Moses Chamorro, the Santangels also came from Calatayud, the

ancient Calatal-Yehud, one of the wealthiest Jewish communities of Aragon in the fourteenth century. The founder of this community had been Azarias Ginillo, a learned man whose wife could not be persuaded even to pretend to give up Judaism. They divorced, and a few years afterwards she married Bonafos de la Caballeria. Azarias Ginillo, or Luis de Santangel as he was known after his conversion, had a great name as a jurist. His sons, Alonso, Juan, and Pedro Martin, lived in Daroca and had obtained safe-conducts and letters patent from King Ferdinand of Aragon.

By their wisdom and their wealth the Santangels attained high office. They had first-rate judicial minds and became members of the Cortes; they served as both government officials and prelates. Azarias Ginillo had himself attained the post of *zalmedin* which was the title of the regular judge of the capital who was appointed by the king. In order to escape persecution and to prove his piety, he destined his son Pedro Martin for the clergy. Pedro Martin became adviser to King Juan II and ultimately rose to be the bishop of Majorca. Bishop Martin de Santangel's nephew became the provincial of Aragon, residing in Saragossa. The Santangels in Valencia and Saragossa were the Rothschilds of their age. The merchant Luis de Santangel the Elder headed the Valencian house; he had enjoyed the protection of King Alfonso V of Aragon and was in constant touch with King Juan II. His son, Luis de Santangel the Younger, royal councillor in Valencia, leased the royal domains. Whenever King Ferdinand needed money he appealed to the Santangels in Valencia, and never in vain.

The introduction of the Inquisition destroyed the Santangels. Members of the Santangel family had been among

the chief conspirators against Inquisitor Pedro Arbues. To this day the guides conducting tours of the metropolitan church of La Seo will point out the spot where Arbues was stabbed. But another feature of the guided tours are the imposing houses on the Mercado, the grand and beautiful market place of Saragossa, which in the most flourishing days of the Aragonese capital were the homes of Luis and Juan de Santangel. The Santangels were among the first targets of the Inquisition in Spain. And after that first taste of blood and wealth, the persecutors implacably hunted down other members of the Santangel family.

On July 17, 1491, Luis de Santangel was also brought to trial on the charge of being an adherent of Judaism. King Ferdinand intervened on his behalf. This Luis de Santangel the Younger held, like his father before him, the lease on the royal taxes and tolls in Valencia. He was the nephew of that Luis de Santangel who had been burned at the stake in Saragossa. King Ferdinand had appointed him *escarbano de racion*, a kind of quartermaster-general to the royal House of Aragon. In addition he held the post of *contador mayor* (paymaster-general) in Castile. He was Ferdinand's favorite, knew his deepest secrets, and took care of the most onerous state business. King Ferdinand lavished praise and esteem upon him; in his letters he always addressed him as the "Good Aragonese" or "my Excellent, Beloved Councilor." On the other hand, Santangel owed his position and his life to his royal friend, for if the king had not stepped in he would have suffered the fate of his relatives.

Luis de Santangel was Spain's Lord Beaconsfield. (Benjamin Disraeli's ancestors had also come from Spain, having been expelled by the Inquisition because of their

Jewish religion.) Luis de Santangel was a good Aragonese and nevertheless worked for the unity of Spain.

This was the man who staked his money and his prestige in order to induce the royal couple to approve Columbus's expedition. At his side stood royal chamberlain Juan Cabrero, he, too, of Jewish descent, his relatives also victims of the Inquisition. Cabrero was regarded as one of Ferdinand's most faithful retainers. He had fought at the king's side against the Moorish enemy and served as a good and temperate adviser. So great was the king's confidence in him that he had been appointed executor of Ferdinand's will.

Both men were Conversos, and the richer a Converso was the more he was imperiled. Since the failure of the Marrano conspiracy the Conversos no longer had any peace. A clique of ambitious fanatics had learned how to use the long-stored hatreds within the propertyless and frustrated classes. Abruptly the fanatics wrested the power from those who had lately held it. The rabble came to the fore; they were the unpropertied who had amounted to nothing and whose one wish was to squeeze into the warm nests of others, because all their lives they had been unable to build one of their own.

As long as the Inquisition remained active, the Santangels remained in danger, as did other Conversos such as Alonso de la Caballeria. But Ferdinand simply could not do without these two men. Luis de Santangel in particular was constantly being slandered by the envious at court and by informers in the halls of the Inquisition. The royal couple had to intervene repeatedly.

This is the background of a certificate that Luis de Santangel obtained, a document altogether unique at the time. On May 30, 1497, Ferdinand and Isabella handed

to Luis de Santangel a special charter protecting both him and his descendants for all time from being summoned by the tribunal of the Inquisition. The certificate stated that they could never be required to appear before such a tribunal. Santangel and his descendants, despite the fact that they descended from Jews, were accorded a kind of honorary "Aryan" status; their charter was a special *limpieza de sangre* of the kind that, as we have seen, was so important in Spain.

The Inquisition also attacked Alonso de la Caballeria, vice-chancellor of Aragon; the judicial proceedings against him dragged on for twenty years until in 1501 Caballeria received protection by a special royal decree.

Back to Santangel. But for this man, Columbus's expedition would never have taken place. From his private means Santangel advanced an interest-free loan of 17,000 ducats for the equipping of a fleet. The originals of Luis de Santangel's account books remain in the archives of Simancas and show that his loan was eventually repaid many years later.

As we have seen, Columbus had been well prepared by his education for encounters with Jews (as reflected in his preserved letters, the marginalia in his books, his choice of reading matter, and his varied interests). He could quote the prophets to them; he understood their most secret wishes. Therefore, it was only natural that he should turn to them, for he knew that they shared his desire to discover new ways to a unknown world. This would be true also of the Conversos and Marranos whose peril was in some ways greater than that of professed Jews.

Thus the longings of these groups ran parallel to the

dreams of Columbus, and it is no wonder that they soon found that they were in complete agreement. This, I should like to stress, is the chief reason for the support Columbus found among Jews and Marranos. Otherwise we cannot explain the moves of a Luis de Santangel in hastening to Queen Isabella, after she had rejected Columbus's immoderate demands, and persuading her to change her mind by removing her most important objection—that the Crown had no money.

Why should Santangel have taken the enormous risk of offering to finance the expedition himself? What if Columbus did not return from the perils of the ocean sea, or if, even more awkwardly, he came home empty-handed? Under those circumstances Santangel could hardly have appealed to the Crown to repay his advance. He would not only lose his money but would have to swallow reproaches for having advised the queen to take a worthless adventurer into the royal service.

For someone in Santangel's position such a miscalculation could have the most serious consequences.

Santangel must have been aware that the odds were high against the success of such an expedition. The only explanation for his gesture must be the desire to help his persecuted brothers—from whom he was now separated by religion but to whom he still felt linked. It cannot have been chance that the persons who put across the project should have been precisely the three Conversos—Santangel, Diego de Deza, and Gabriel Sanchez—who would have lost more than money and prestige if the expedition had failed. At this time it was truly a matter of the last minute for the Jews in Spain. The Moorish problem no longer existed, the way was open to the "final

solution" of the Jewish problem. The groundwork had already been laid for the decree of expulsion that was soon to come.

During this period, when the Inquisition was most virulent and when victims of the tribunal were being burned in the squares of Spanish cities, one would think that people of Jewish descent had other matters to attend to than to lend aid to a foreigner who had come to Castile with some hair-brained notion of touring the Indies. The experts had pronounced the man's plans to be too risky or even basically unsound. Yet those very Jews and Christianized descendants of Jews, who were reputed to be so astute, put themselves behind a man whom the king's scientific advisory council had rejected. Why were they doing so? A single slip and they would have forfeited the good opinion of the king. And that good opinion of the king's stood between them and their ruin.

A number of scholars have tried to answer this question. The most frequent suggestion is that they wanted to perform a notable service to the Crown. But they were performing such services all the time, in spheres where they were more at home. Here was a matter involving seafaring and unknown lands about which they knew nothing. Nor was it in their character to give a loan, and not a small one, on no security.

Salvador de Madariaga argues that Columbus was himself a Converso and thus received support from his co-religionists in high places. But in spite of Madariaga's painstaking investigation his thesis is not fully convincing. Even the assumption that Columbus was himself a Converso, or the descendant of Conversos, does not suffice to explain such massive and energetic support. There must have been still another factor that exerted a

powerful sway upon these sponsors of Columbus—and that factor could only have been their enormous vital interest in the aims of the expedition. Since they were descended from Jews, they were threatened just as were the Jews themselves; it was only a question of time and men like Luis de Santangel, Diego de Deza, and Gabriel Sanchez knew it. That was why they were ready to throw their weight behind the expedition. They would have aided any such venture, even if Columbus had not been a Converso—though his being one would surely have strengthened the trust between them.

It is interesting to speculate on the nature of the relationship between Columbus and his sponsors. Did he or did they first bring up the question of the Jewish lands? How explicitly was the question treated? We can, of course, never know, but we may ponder the fact that one of the members of the expedition was an interpreter of Hebrew.

It is remarkable how little attention has been paid to this fact. To be sure, the name of Luis de Torres is usually included in accounts of Columbus's first voyage, and his role is given as "interpreter." But very few of these accounts indicate that Torres was a baptized Jew or give any inkling of the languages in which he was proficient.

From the available documents it appears that before his voyage with Columbus Luis de Torres had been interpreter of the Hebrew language in the employ of Juan Chacón, the governor of Murcia. Murcia had a large Jewish population. Torres also knew Arabic and some Chaldean. Since the expedition coincided with the expulsion of the Jews, Luis de Torres's job with the governor was obviously over. For there were no longer

any Jews for whom he might have interpreted in their audiences with the governor.

Why did Columbus take an interpreter for Hebrew with him? Hebrew was not the language of any country in the known world. The only possible explanation must be that Columbus expected to be reaching countries in which Jews lived and governed.

We also know that Torres underwent baptism shortly before sailing in order to be eligible for participation in the expedition. Was Luis de Torres the only Jew or Converso in the party? The question of the number of Jews aboard Columbus's three caravels will never be fully clarified. There is no doubt that the physicians of the party, the ship's doctor, Maestre Bernal, and the surgeon, Marco, were Jews. Among the other members there are Jewish names such as Alonso de la Callo and Rodrigo Sanchez. Sanchez, who came from Segovia, was related to Luis de Santangel. His official status was that of representative of the Catholic majesties. It is also known that he looked after the interests of the absent sponsors. He was one of the five Europeans who were the first to set foot on American soil. The sailor who first sighted land and who for that feat received a prize of 10,000 maravedis from Queen Isabella, is also supposed to have been a Jew. The scholar Meyer Kayserling lists a number of other names, from which he contends that about a third of the members of the expedition were Jewish. But later researches have not corroborated Kayserling's findings.

The fact that Columbus provided himself with an interpreter of Hebrew proves that he at least hoped to encounter Hebrew-speaking people. To be sure, Luis de Torres could also offer some Arabic among his qualifica-

tions. But in Spain at that time it would have been easy enough to find an interpreter fully acquainted with Arabic from among the ranks of the converted Moors. Why did Columbus hire Torres whose Arabic was somewhat scanty? Who had recommended Torres to Columbus? When did Columbus first approach Torres? It is known that in 1491 Columbus visited Murcia.

During my stay in Spain I tried to find out something more about Luis de Torres. I wondered whether there were any documents indicating how Columbus had been put in touch with Torres. The only answer I could obtain was a conjecture: No doubt Santangel or some other Converso must have proposed Torres. Columbus must have considered the composition of his party fairly early; he would have thought this out long before their majesties gave their approval to the venture in January 1492. Certainly he would have planned on having an interpreter along, for communication with people in distant lands is one of the most immediate problems faced by an explorer.

Was Luis de Torres the first European to set foot on American soil? The opinions of scholars differ. Some have inferred that the interpreter would be the first to go on land in order to communicate with the natives. We also read in Columbus's journal that as the ships approached shore, hordes of natives poured on to the beach. Columbus first mentions Torres when he speaks of sending the interpreter to talk with the chief of the natives. Remembering Marco Polo's narrative, Columbus calls this chief the Great Khan. At any rate, it is known that Torres was among the first of the Europeans to settle in America.

If the discovery of lands ruled by Jews was the com-

mon aim of Columbus, and of the Jews and the Conversos who had supported his voyage with their money and influence, the person of the interpreter would provide a key piece in the puzzle. Yet this crucial figure has been hitherto largely ignored by Spanish and other historians. In the *Boletín de la real academia de la historia*, in which the American scholar Alice B. Gould has summed up everything worth knowing about the members of the expedition, there is very little about Luis de Torres. Probably there is nothing more to be discovered about him in the archives. We do know, however, that Columbus sent him, together with Rodrigo de Xerez, on shore to communicate with the natives. And so we can conclude that after the landfall in America the first words addressed to the natives were words of Hebrew.

Curiously enough Vasco da Gama was to repeat the experiment a few years later. In 1497, while the expulsion of the Jews from Portugal was under way, da Gama took with him on his voyage to India around the Cape of Good Hope an interpreter of Hebrew. Vasco da Gama's man was also a Jew, João Nunez, who like Luis de Torres underwent baptism just before the voyage. After the landing in Calicut on the Malabar Coast of India on May 21, 1498, he was the first to go on land. He, too, addressed the inhabitants in Hebrew, just as Luis de Torres had done five years earlier.

Marco Polo had already mentioned the presence of Jews on the Malabar Coast (the so-called Pepper Coast) in what is at present the Indian State of Kerala. This part of India maintained extensive commerce with the rest of the world, the Arabs acting as middlemen for the trade in Indian spices and other goods. Marco Polo knew

it as the kingdom of Koulam and characterized it as follows: "It is the residence of many Christians and Jews, who retain their own language. The king is not tributary to any other."

As we have mentioned before, Columbus owned *The Travels of Marco Polo* and had read it with great care and intensity. In fact, he had modeled his descriptions of the lands of Asia on Marco Polo's narrative, hoping thereby to make a good case for his project.

Later historians have confirmed the report that Jews lived in India at this time. There were important Jewish trade centers in Calicut and on the island of Chennaman-galan. The principate of Cranganore had Jewish rulers. The founder of the dynasty there was Joseph Rabban, who went by the name of Isuppa Irappan, Prince of Cranganore. His successor was ruling Cranganore at the time that Vasco da Gama found the way to India around the Cape of Good Hope. We can assume that Columbus and Vasco da Gama were familiar with the reports about Jews in India.

It is also striking that on that first voyage, among the 120 persons aboard the three caravels, there was not a single priest—very much in contrast to the later voyages. Yet one of the arguments that had won Columbus the good will of Queen Isabella was the prospect that the inhabitants of the newly discovered lands might be converted to Christianity. It really would have been the most natural thing in the world for a priest to have taken part in the expedition. But there was none. This is but one more riddle to add to the many we have already cited.

Flushed with success, Columbus had not forgotten those who had made the venture possible. And in fact he

¶ Al Escriuano de Racion de los RR. La



Poenic que seria tierra firme la prouincia de Catayo y como no fallé abí villas y lugares en la costa de la mar/ salvo pocas poblaciones con la gente de las quales no podía haue[r] fabla
eñor: por que se que haureis plazer de la grande victoria que nuestro Señor me ha dado en mi viaje vos escriuo esta por la qual sabreys como en treinta y tres dias pasé a las Indias (con la armada que los ilustrissimos Rey e Reyna nuestros señores me dieron) donde yo fallé muy muchas yslas pobladas con gente sin numero: y dellas todas he tomado posesion por sus Altezas con pregon y bandera real esfendida y non me fue contradicho. ¶ En la primera que yo fallé puse nombre San Saluador: a comemoracion de su alta magestad/ el qual marauillosamente todo esto ha dado: los indios la llamā Guanahani. En la segunda puse nombre la ysla de Santa Maria de Concepcion: a la tercera Fernandina: a la quarta la Gabelas: a la quinta ysla Juana: e así a cada vna nombre nuevo. Quando yo llegué a la Juana seguí la costa della al Poniente y la fallé tan grande que penic que seria tierra firme la prouincia de Catayo y como no fallé abí villas y lugares en la costa de la mar/ salvo pocas poblaciones con la gente de las quales no podía haue[r] fabla

Beginning of Columbus's report to the treasurer, Luis de Santangel.

(Picture Archives, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)

sent his news not directly to Ferdinand and Isabella but to the two Conversos. In almost identical letters, dated February 15, 1493 and written on his return voyage in the vicinity of the Canary Islands, Columbus informs his

¶ La lettera dell'isole che ha trouato nuouamente il Re di Spagna.



The landing of Columbus. An engraving of 1493.
(Picture Archives, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)

two patrons, Luis de Santangel and Gabriel Sanchez, of his landfall in "the Indies." He was anxious for the news to precede him and, therefore, made use of a fast ship just departing from the Canaries for Spain. The rest of

Europe also learned of the discovery by way of Gabriel Sanchez, who sent a copy of Columbus's letter to his brother Juan in Florence. Juan had fled to Italy from the Inquisition; at a trial held in Saragossa he had been condemned to death in absentia. Since the Inquisitors could not lay hands on him, he was burned at the stake in effigy together with other "heretics." Juan Sanchez passed Columbus's letter on to his cousin Leonardo de Coscon, likewise a Marrano. Coscon translated it into Latin and had it published in printed form. Within a year the Latin translation ran through nine editions.

Inexplicably, for the Spanish world the success of the venture redounded to the glory of Queen Isabella and Castile—although both monarchs had signed the contract with Columbus and although the financing and crucial support had come from Aragonese men like Luis de Santangel and Gabriel Sanchez, both Aragonese ministers. In the coat of arms we have already mentioned, there was also a bit of doggerel:

*Por Castillo é por Leon
Nuevo mundo dió Colón.*

"For Castile and Leon Colón found a new world." For some reason the part of Aragon was slighted, but we shall never know why.



The Bitter End





BY THE TIME their Catholic Majesties Ferdinand and Isabella marched against Granada to assault the last Moorish fortress on Spanish soil, the situation of the Jews and Marranos in Spain had already become hopeless. The sovereigns deemed it wise to keep the Jews in the dark for the time being and to squeeze huge sums in the form of loans and taxes out of them in order to provide for the equipment of the troops. There is, however, no doubt that even at this time the decision had already been taken to "solve" the Jewish question in Spain. It is symbolic of that turbulent period that two persons were simultaneously present in the monarchs' immediate entourage outside Granada—the Grand Inquisitor Thomas de Torquemada, who was impatiently waiting for the campaign to end so that he could carry out his plans for expulsion; and his antagonist, the Jew Don Isaac Abrabanel, who had lent the king huge sums of money for this campaign and who had long been striving to dissuade Ferdinand from his anti-Jewish intentions.

Both men were well acquainted with each other and could measure their respective strengths. Don Isaac Abra-

banel was well aware of the limits of his power but sometimes overestimated his influence. Torquemada, on the other hand, always knew precisely where he stood. Behind him loomed a power to which the mighty of this world had to bow, especially in Spain. Torquemada knew that he could not lose the game; the Jews no longer had any counters with which to play. Yet to the outward eye they still seemed evenly matched. There was a quip describing these two antagonists that went the rounds of the Spanish court: "Gold and the stake are the props of the monarchs."

The time was ripe in January 1492. The fortress of Granada fell. The Moors surrendered after having negotiated favorable conditions. The treaty of capitulation had over one hundred points. Ferdinand and Isabella promised the Moors the free exercise of their religion and their own judiciary. Moorish private property was declared inviolable. In addition, the Moors were to be free of military service. Should any of them decide to emigrate, Castile undertook to place ships at their disposal. They were also to have the right to return to Granada if they should not like conditions in North Africa. They were guaranteed undisturbed communications with Moslems in all the countries of the Mediterranean area.

For centuries a sizable number of Jews had been living in amicable association with the Moors in Granada. At the request of the Moorish negotiators the Jews of Granada were granted the same rights as the Moors in the treaty of surrender. Each point in this treaty begins with a vow on the part of the Catholic Monarchs, reading: "I, the Queen, and I, the King, assure, promise, and swear upon our holy faith and upon our royal word to abide most precisely by every single condition of the capitulation, now and later, today and in all eternity, and

to make our subjects abide most precisely by it under penalty of death." The King and Queen swore this oath one hundred times. Three months after the oath was taken, a part of it was already retracted. For on March 30, 1492, the drummers in all the market places read the royal edict ordering the expulsion of every last Jew in Spain.

Don Isaac Abrabanel took upon himself the delicate and portentous mission of trying to persuade the rulers to change their minds. He was a wise man well versed in the history of the Jews of Spain, and he thought that things would turn out as they had several times in the past when kings and princes wanted more money than the Jews could provide. In such cases the rulers had resorted to the threat of expulsion and had withdrawn all rights previously conceded to the Jews. A bitter joke of those days compared the Jews to a money-box that you break open when you need the money.

Abrabanel was prepared for this, and he collected money so that he would not come to the conference empty-handed. In addition, he had some learned rabbis compile for him a short history of the Jews in Spain. Special stress was laid on how long Jews had been living on Spanish soil, what privileges they had received in the past, and what they had done for Spain in the course of the centuries.

Thus equipped, Abrabanel presented himself to the monarchs. He spoke movingly to Queen Isabella, pointing out that Jews had already been living in Spain in the age of King David and that therefore they were not foreigners. He promised Ferdinand millions—and since he knew his king, he brought out a small advance of 30,000 ducats.

He thought an approach of this sort would make the

rulers reconsider—just as the rulers of the past had reconsidered. But Abrabanel had miscalculated. He had overlooked a factor that in these days had more power than kings: the Church. Even while the monarchs vacillated and it seemed as if Abrabanel might prevail, Grand Inquisitor Torquemada entered the room. The story goes that he threw his crucifix on the table and said: "Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver. You would do so for thirty thousand. Here, sell the crucifix also!" The edict of expulsion remained in force.

The Spanish Jews had already shown their tendency to be incorrigible optimists. That tendency was to prove fatal for the Jews of Europe 450 years later. They constantly believed that things were not as bad as they appeared. They did not understand the extent of the hatred that was naturally or artificially built up around them or that they themselves produced. They denied its existence because it was incompatible with their innate optimism, which for centuries had formed the basis for the survival of Jewry. And so the Jews in Spain were taken by surprise—in part, also, because although they had studied the history of the people they lived among they did not know enough about their own history. Or even when they did know it, they shrank from drawing the necessary conclusions from it.

The Jews who were forced to leave Spain began making their preparations for departure at the same time as Columbus. Since the regulations allowed the Jews to take only hand baggage, they had to sell their property at sacrifice prices. The value of Jewish possessions dropped from day to day. For houses, vineyards, and orchards they received only a few gold pieces, which they could use only to buy necessities for the journey, since the edict of

expulsion also forbade the export of gold and coined gold. In addition, a tax had been imposed on them without the slightest pretense of justice. Similar to what was to happen centuries later in Germany and Austria, Spain's Jews had to pay an emigration fee, a kind of *Reichsfluchtsteuer*. A person could leave the country only if he had paid these taxes. But he also could not stay after the deadline. All in all, the Jews had been allowed a period of ninety days in which to settle their affairs. It was impossible for anyone to sell his property at a decent price within so short a time. The neighbors waited greedily to fall upon the estate that generations of Jews had worked to accumulate. And these same neighbors felt generous for paying anything at all. Rumors even circulated that Ferdinand and Isabella would soon issue a decree providing that the entire property of all the Jews was to be handed over free to the Christians. Those who spread such tales failed to realize that the rulers were thinking only of their own enrichment.

The road of the expelled Jews usually led to some port where they hoped to find a ship that would transport them to another country. They chartered half-rotten hulks that had long been withdrawn from service and were now patched together in makeshift fashion so that they could make one more voyage. The Catholic ecclesiastic Palaccio described the exodus of the Jews from Spain:

They stop to rest in an open field. Some collapse from fatigue, others because they are ill. Some die, others are born by the side of the road. Every Christian who sees these wretches is seized by pity. The common people mingle with them and plead with them to submit to baptism. But the rabbi is promptly on the spot and encourages the weary and despairing. When the processions move, the women sing,

Edict decreeing the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, dated March 31, 1492.

the children beat small drums and blow trumpets. Once one of these processions first glimpses the sea, the men and women begin to weep; they tear their hair and cry out to the Almighty for grace and miracles. For hours they stare at the water.

The populace in the Spanish ports where the Jews assembled profited hugely from them. Unscrupulous ship captains demanded huge sums for passage. They made sure that the crossings were paid for three and four times over, and even during the voyage itself the Jews had to pay "expenses" for imaginary extras. Terrible tidings about the expelled Jews repeatedly reached Spain. One ship that was to land in Turkey had suddenly changed course and taken the Jews to Africa where they were received by pirates and sold as slaves. The pirates sent two of the captive Jews to Jewish communities in Italy and France to collect ransom for the rest.

"General Edict on the expulsion of the Jews from Aragon and Castile," MARCH 31, 1492

In Our kingdoms there are not a few Judaizing Christians who have gone astray from our holy Catholic faith, a fact whose cause lies chiefly in the intercourse of Jews with Christians. In the endeavor to avert this evil We, together with the Cortes that met in Toledo in the year 1480, have ordered that the Jews everywhere be segregated and assigned to restricted places of residence. We have also provided that the Inquisition be introduced into Our kingdoms, which same has been at work these past twelve years and brought many of the guilty to their merited punishment. There can be no doubt, from the report presented Us by the Inquisitors, that the intercourse of Christians with Jews who mislead them to their accursed creed has caused the greatest harm. The Jews make every effort to seduce them and their chil-

dren [the Marrano families] by putting Jewish prayer books into their hands, by instructing them about the fast days, by obtaining unleavened bread for them at Easter, by instructing them in what foods may be eaten and what not, and in general by persuading them to follow the law of Moses. All this inevitably results in the undermining and debasement of our holy Catholic faith. Thus have We come to the conviction that the most effective means for removing all these abuses is the complete prohibition of all intercourse between Jews and Christians, which could only be achieved by their banishment from Our kingdoms. For the time being, however, We restricted ourselves to expelling them only from the cities of Andalusia, where the harm they had caused was especially great. But neither this measure nor the righteous justice that has been inflicted upon those Jews who have gravely sinned against Our holy faith, have been able to remedy the perilous evil . . . We have therefore taken the decision to banish all Jews of both sexes forever from the precincts of Our realm. Therefore We herewith decree that all the Jews living in Our dominions, without distinction of sex and age, must leave Our royal possessions and seigniories, together with their sons and daughters and their Jewish servants, no later than the end of July of this year, and let them not presume to set foot again in the land for the purpose of settlement, or to pass through to some other land, or for any purpose whatsoever. But if in despite of this command they should be caught in Our domains, they will immediately be punished without trial by death and seizure of their property. We command accordingly that from the end of July onward no one in Our realm, under penalty of seizure of his property for the benefit of the royal fisc, dare openly or secretly to grant refuge to a Jewish man or woman. In order, however, to enable the Jews to wind up their affairs within the respite granted them and to have their property at their disposal, we grant them Our royal protection and the safety of life

and possessions, so that until the end of July they may live peacefully here and sell, exchange, or give away their movable and immovable property. We grant them, moreover, permission to export out of Our kingdoms by water or land all their possessions with the exception of gold, silver, coined money, and other objects falling under the general ban on exportation.

The chances of getting away alive diminished from day to day. The undecided Jews postponed departure in the hope that powerful Marranos would put in a good word for them with the Queen. But most Jews knew that the Marranos themselves were being pressed and that at this of all times they had to deny any connections with Jewry. They could not afford to intervene. This situation was heavily exploited by the Church. Missionaries sought out the irresolute among the despairing Jews and offered those who could not bring themselves to leave Spanish soil the salvation of baptism. Most Jews knew that this would be only a respite. The sad fate of the Marranos, which they could see all around them, made it easier for them to say no to the priests. Only a few accepted the Church's offer at the last moment. Mostly, the Jews seemed to be waiting for a miracle. Frightening reports turned the tormenting uncertainty into panic. One more town had been "cleared" of Jews; once again departing Jews had been attacked by bandits, robbed of their remaining possessions, beaten, and killed. Then came stories that Portugal had closed her borders and was no longer willing to receive wealthy Jews. Word came that the prices for passage aboard ships had doubled.

The Jews spent their last days in Spain in the cemeteries. They knew that these cemeteries would not be spared. Wealthy Jews purchased, for large sums, the

right to exhume their dead and take the remains with them. For not even the dead were safe from the enemy. Destroying Jewish cemeteries was a favorite practice.

There were also Christians in Spain who took pity on the Jews. There was great fear of the Inquisition. In some individual cases, however, Christians risked their own lives to help the Jews. Since the Inquisitors had enticed more and more people into their service, they had created a great number of accomplices who desired the death or expulsion of Jews and Marranos in order to be rid of the witnesses to their own guilt.

The edict of expulsion had at first set a time limit of July 31, 1492. Queen Isabella eventually extended it for two days. Midnight on August 2 was set as the final deadline; after that time no Jew was permitted to remain on Spanish soil. It seems like one of the ironies of history that Juan de Coloma, the same man who co-signed the edict of expulsion as a high official of the court and whose signature is likewise to be found alongside those of their Catholic majesties on the agreement for Columbus's expedition, was descended from Jews on his maternal side. The memorable 2nd of August of the year 1492 coincided in the Jewish calendar with the Jews' greatest day of mourning, the ninth of Ab, the anniversary of the second destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem.

How many people were affected by the edict has remained obscure to this day. Any figure on Spain's Jewish population must be based on incomplete and to some extent not yet evaluated tax rolls. From the taxes paid by the Jewish communities in Castile, in the form of a poll tax to the royal treasury, it appears that in 1290 some 800,000 Jews lived in Castile. Since the population of Castile at that time is estimated to have been about six

million, the Jews would have made up between one-sixth and one-seventh of the total. They were chiefly urban, and in the cities of Avila, Burgos, Córdoba, Lorca, Toledo, and Valladolid the number of Jews exceeded that of the Christians. The forcible baptisms of 1391 and the flight of part of the Jewish population greatly diminished the number of Jews in Spain as a whole. That is apparent from the tax rolls of various cities, although these rolls have not yet been subjected to thorough study. By 1492, the large majority of the Jews were concentrated in the united kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. But we have no reliable figures on this matter. Estimates of the number expelled vary between a minimum of 190,000 and a maximum of 800,000.

Jewish scholars are inclined to accept the number expelled as 300,000. This is based on the statistics given by Don Isaac Abrabanel and Don Abraham Senior. As royal taxfarmer the latter certainly knew how to deal with large numbers, and he had access to the pertinent sources of information. Both men agree that approximately 200,000 Jews were expelled from Castile and about 100,000 from Aragon. By land and by water the fugitives struck out in many directions.

As we know, Columbus did not discover the way to India, although after his landing he was convinced that he had done so and remained so convinced to the end of his life. The natives addressed in Hebrew had not understood the language. The dream of the Jews and Conversos, that Columbus would show them the way to the ten tribes of Israel, was not fulfilled.

All Spain rejoiced when word came of the success of the voyage. The king and queen were grateful to Santan-

gel for his intervention and for having made the expedition possible by his generous loan. The prospect of a great Spanish empire loomed.

Years later, Santangel was paid back the entire sum that he had advanced for the voyage. But how was the financing of the other expeditions arranged?

The Jews expelled from Spain "for the honor and glory of the Lord" had left behind money and its equivalent, all kinds of property and accounts receivable. By a royal edict of November 23, 1492, Ferdinand ordered all the property of the Jews, including such goods as Christians had illegally taken from Jews, to be confiscated for the treasury and sold.

On May 23, 1493, the royal couple authorized Columbus, now governor of the newly discovered islands, and Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, archdeacon of Seville, to go to Seville and Cadiz to obtain the vessels, crews, and supplies necessary for a second expedition. On the same day Ferdinand and Isabella signed a large number of decrees addressed to royal officials in Soria, Zamora, Burgos, and many other cities. The officials were instructed to confiscate the money, jewelry, and other valuables that the Jews expelled from Spain had given into the keeping of their Marrano friends and relatives, and also Jewish property that had been "found" by Christians or otherwise illegally acquired. All such booty was to be turned over to the treasurer in Seville, Francisco Pinelo, to be used to pay the costs of equipping Columbus's second expedition.

Large sums in cash and many bills of exchange were confiscated. The reports on these are incomplete. Juan de Ocampos, the alcalde of Oruena, collected gold, jewelry, clothing, and other objects that had belonged to a Jew

who fled to Portugal. Count Alonso, an envoy of the royal couple, received orders to take possession of these objects, to sell them, and to deliver the proceeds by the end of June, or at the latest by July 10, to the treasurer Pinelo to cover the costs of equipping vessels for the purpose "of discovering the islands and lands in the ocean sea."

The goldsmith Diego de Medina had to hand over to Bernaldino de Lerma all the objects that he had received from the royal executor Juan de Soria, from the wife of Diego Guiral, from Antonio Gomez de Sevilla, from Alonso de Ledesma, and from Rabbi Ephraim, the richest Jew of Burgos. Gold, silver, and jewelry were sold, and Bernaldino de Lerma handed the proceeds to Pinelo to finance the equipping of the ships.

In addition to such valuables, outstanding bills that the Jews had had to leave uncollected were called in with inexorable severity. Thus, items such as the sizable sums owed by various merchants to the Jew Benevisto of Calahorra, who had lived in Burgos up to the time of the expulsion, and another wealthy Jew named Ephraim are recorded. Garcia de Herrera, a royal bodyguard, received strict orders to collect all such debts in the name of the Crown.

Inventories of the objects formerly owned by Jews and found in the possession of Christians or Marranos testify to the wealth of the Jews and the cupidity of the Spanish royal couple. The Jews had owned silver tableware, silver candlesticks, gold and silver rings, pearls, corals, and a surprisingly large number of silver bracelets, brooches, belts, chains, buckles, buttons, and headbands, although Jewish women were forbidden by law to wear gold jewelry. In order to finance Columbus's expedition Ferdinand and Isabella even sold the precious wrappings of

Torah scrolls and the silk coverings that had once adorned the tables in the synagogues.

Though we have only the records from a few cities, it can be assumed that similar measures were taken throughout the realm. From the accounts that have been preserved, it appears that in coined gold alone—in ducats, doubloons, reals, castellanos, florines, justos, and cruzados—at least three million maravedi (the Spanish money of account) were taken from the expelled Jews. If we add to these sums the value of the bills of exchange and notes of indebtedness collected by the royal couple in Burgos alone and the value of the existing inventories of jewelry sold, we arrive at a sum of about seven million maravedi. That is five times as much as Columbus's first expedition had cost. In addition to this amount there are the two million that the Inquisition in Seville paid to the Florentine merchant Juonato Beradi, who had been entrusted with the equipping of the ships. We cannot even begin to calculate how much the Spanish Inquisition wrung from the Jews and Marranos for the benefit of the Church and the state.

By an order of May 23, 1493, money taken from the Jews was used to pay that reward of ten thousand maravedi that the royal couple had offered to the first man to sight land. A day later the same fund was drawn upon for a special gift of one thousand gold doubloons.

The miracle the Spanish Jews had awaited did not come. They had to leave Spain. Madariaga says: "They left behind a Spain bearing a strong Jewish impress, and went abroad with no less a Spanish impress. For that very reason they regarded themselves as the aristocrats of Jewry."

Where the fugitives were granted asylum they found it hard to assimilate with the Jews long settled in that country. Refugees formed their own communities. The German-Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz comments:

Unexpectedly a mood of elation took possession of them. Not that they forgot what they had suffered, but all was transfigured. As soon as they felt somewhat freed from the weight of their thousandfold miseries and were able to breathe a little easier, they snapped back and carried their heads high. They had lost everything, but not their aristocratic Spanish natures and not their pride. Moreover, they had some grounds for feeling this way. It is true that they had fallen behind in the arts and sciences, since an anti-intellectual, strictly orthodox trend had proved victorious in Jewry and since they had been deliberately excluded from their previous social circles in Spain. But even at that they were superior to the Jews of all other countries in culture, bearing, and inner substance. And that superiority showed in their appearance and their speech. Their love for their native land was so great that it left no room in their hearts for the hatred they might have been expected to feel toward the unnatural mother who had driven them into exile. Wherever they came, they founded Spanish or Portuguese colonies. They brought the Spanish language, Spanish dignity and aristocracy, to Africa, to European Turkey, to Syria and Palestine, to Italy and Flanders, and everywhere else. Wherever fate carried them, they cherished and cultivated the Spanish personality and the pure language of their native land with so much love that their descendants have received it almost uncorrupted down to the present day.

An uncertain number of refugees reached Turkey. When they were granted a friendly reception there, the peninsula of Asia Minor also became a new home for Marranos. Here they could resume the practice of the

Jewish religion without risk. Soon they were permitted to take on assignments in economic life and at court. The Turkish Sultan Bajazet, who welcomed the fugitives, said: "You call Ferdinand a wise king—he who has impoverished his country and enriched ours."

One hundred twenty thousand of the Jews expelled from Spain found refuge in neighboring Portugal. A sum of eight ducats per head had to be paid for the privilege of stopping there. The overwhelming majority of the immigrants held together with unflinching allegiance. The wealthy paid for the poor, and so all were admitted. The huge sum of money the Portuguese Crown received was employed to equip ships for the voyages of discovery to the Cape of Good Hope and to Brazil.

In Portugal the permit for Jews to remain was limited to eight months. The permit explicitly stated that the Jews would be sold as slaves if they had not left the country after the expiration of this period. Once again, therefore, there was an exodus accompanied by large departure fees before the Jews dispersed to various parts of the world.

Their Catholic Majesties Ferdinand and Isabella were furious with the Portuguese crown for giving asylum to the Jews. They were equally annoyed that the Jews had been able to carry large sums out with them, despite the ban on exporting gold, silver, and coinage. Given a little more severity, they felt, these valuables would have remained in Spain. But beyond that, the fact that the Jews expelled from Spain were being permitted to live in Portugal made the Catholic monarchs lie awake nights, as it were. They tried to apply pressure by way of the Church but in vain. When, however, arrangements were made for the son of King Manuel of Portugal to marry Isabella's daughter, the Spanish sovereigns demanded as a condi-

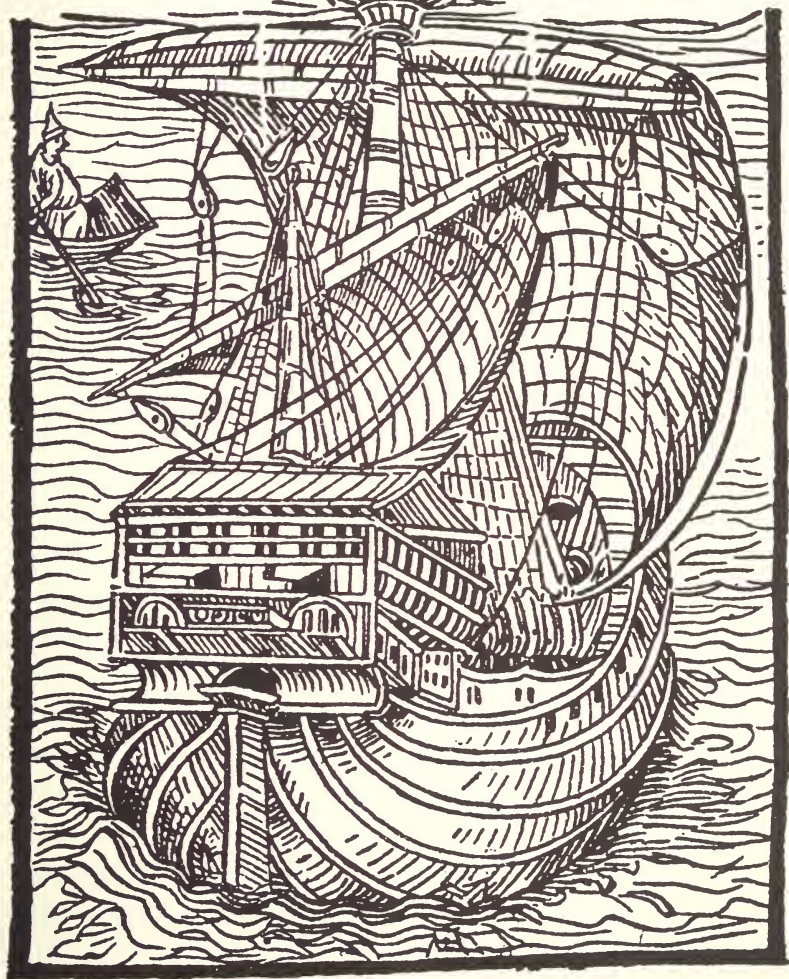
tion for the marriage that the Jews be expelled from Portugal. After all, they could not send their daughter to a country teeming with Jews. The king of Portugal was more interested in the marriage than in his Jewish subjects. Consequently, in Portugal similar edicts of expulsion were issued, with the difference being that the Jews were given ten months to leave the country, not three as had been the case in Spain.

At the end of 1492 an epidemic swept away many of the weakened Spanish refugees. The monks in the cities of Portugal stirred up the latent hostility of the populace. There was considerable muttering against the king for having admitted those "condemned by God" into the country. Thereafter there could be no question of the Jews' obtaining an extension of their respite. Once more the unfortunates faced the choice of baptism or expulsion. In the ports of Portugal ships waited to take the emigrants out of the country. For months some of these ships subsequently cruised the seas, but no port would grant them entry.

The ships' captains took from the emigrants all they possessed.

The story of one ship is perhaps typical of that merciless age. It was blown upon the Spanish coast off Malaga by a storm. Entry of Jews into Spain was forbidden, of course. The Bishop of Malaga promptly heard about the shipload of Jews. The vessel lay at anchor, and every day priests came aboard to deliver missionary sermons to these harried, homeless people. But all the arts of persuasion proved vain. The bishop then recommended to the captain that he starve out the refugees. For five days they received no food, and every day the priests admonished them: "If you wish to live, undergo baptism." At last

Oceanica Classis



A copperplate engraving. (From *Novum Mundum sive Americam R. patrum monachorum ordinis S.P. Benedicti* by Fra Don Honorius [1621])

hundreds of the despairing people consented. They were allowed to go on land—a good many of them had to be carried on stretchers. Only then was the ship allowed to depart with the remaining passengers. The Jews were finally permitted to land in Africa.

Those Spanish refugees in Portugal who were able to pay their passage could count themselves fortunate. A crueler fate awaited those who had no money; they were declared slaves and divided among the *grandees*. Minor children were taken from their parents and deported to the newly discovered island of Sao Tomé, where they were to be raised as Christians. Heartbreaking scenes took place during the parting of parents from their children. Parents and children together committed suicide by throwing themselves into the water.

Only a portion of the Spanish Jews who reached Portugal continued their wanderings. The overwhelming majority remained in the country and accepted baptism. They were weary of wandering and knew how slim the chances were of being taken in by another country. They also knew how many of the leaky vessels they had chartered for huge sums from unscrupulous ship owners had already sunk beneath the waves. They heard that other ships sailed to Africa with their human freight and that the passengers were sold as slaves to the Arabs. They heard of corsairs waylaying and seizing these vessels in order to demand high ransoms for the Jews from the Jewish communities in the rest of Europe. All such reports influenced their decision to submit to baptism and remain in Portugal.

For the Church in Portugal the large number of the newly baptized was a surprise. It at once scented a

"Jewish trick." In neighboring Spain the pyres were flaming, and the Inquisition was constantly hauling more New Christians before its tribunals. In contrast to Spain, where New Christians had been kept securely in check after the introduction of the Inquisition, they promptly became full citizens in Portugal, intermarried with the nobility, entered the highest offices of the state, and enjoyed the protection of the king, who benefitted greatly from the knowledge and abilities of the Jews.

Nevertheless, the example of the Spanish Church bore fruit. The Portuguese Church did not trust the New Christians and asked the pope to install the Inquisition in Portugal also. The pope complied. The result was that in Portugal, too, the New Christians were ground fine in the terrible mills. The first measure of the Church was to order the New Christians to wear yellow hats so that they could be distinguished from the rest of the population and kept under closer supervision.

King Philip II of Spain, Ferdinand's successor, whose Italian possessions included Milan, Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia, had also ordered distinguishing marks for Jews in those regions. When they reached the age of ten male Jews had to wear yellow hats and females yellow arm-bands. Measures of this sort were not needed in Spain, for a Jewish population no longer existed.

Differentiation of the Jews had been one of the concerns of the Church for centuries. The modes employed were many and various. Jews were required to wear a yellow patch of cloth on their clothing in a plainly visible spot. This ruling went back to a decision by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, where Pope Innocent III ordered that Jews, prostitutes, and lepers be marked by a

special sign on their clothing. When the Nazis required Jews to wear a yellow star, they were only reviving this ancient stigma of Christian origin.

Many of the New Christians in Portugal, who had accepted baptism in order to be spared the eternal flight from country to country, were bitterly disappointed. They were forced to realize that the choice between expulsion and baptism had been only a sham. And so they fled once more, going chiefly to Holland and England, where they returned to Judaism. In this new exile they considered themselves Portuguese Jews. In spite of everything they clung to their mother tongue—as German Jews were to do centuries later; they continued to use the Castilian language, which they had taken with them to Portugal and later to Holland and England. Out of this Old Castilian there developed Ladino, which the Sephardim spoke in all countries, just as the Yiddish of the eastern Jews developed out of Middle High German. The Sephardim intermarried and kept their distance from the Ashkenazic Jews, the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe. In Holland mixed marriages between Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews were rare.

The Church had not yet done with the Jews. In spite of discriminatory ordinances and all kinds of harassment, they were still there. A decree of Pope Paul IV reads like a paragraph from the Nuremberg Laws. On July 12, 1555, in the bull *Nimis Absurdum* he ordered that the honorific Signore, Seigneur, Sire, and so on be avoided in oral or written communication with Jews. Almost 400 years later the Nazis revived this ruling, banning *Herr* before the names of Jews.

By royal decree no Jews were permitted to settle in the lands newly discovered by Columbus. Any New Chris-

tians, or their descendants, who had ever been called before an Inquisitional tribunal, were likewise forbidden to immigrate into the Indian lands. Nevertheless, the Indian lands remained the goal of emigration for threatened Marranos even after it became apparent that these were not the Jewish countries dreamed of for so long. Still, these new territories seemed to promise a haven where they could throw off the cruel burdens that had been heaped on them and return to the religion of their fathers.

Several years ago a hitherto unknown document from the year 1510 was discovered in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The document illuminates the legal situation of the Marranos in Seville. It contains a list of 390 Marrano families in Seville who had agreed to pay the Crown the sum of 80,000 ducats in installments, in return for which they would be exempt from all penalties to which they were otherwise subject as descendants of persons penalized by the Inquisition.

Ever since 1481, families condemned by the Inquisition or even merely interrogated had lost all the legal rights enjoyed by other citizens. The decrees of the Catholic majesties dated September 4 and September 21, 1501, prohibited any member of such families from holding public offices, pursuing any honorary duties, emigrating to the Indies, or recovering their confiscated property. Ordinances of this sort became a rich and continual source of income for the Crown. For many years the rulers of Spain succeeded in squeezing sizable sums of money out of the New Christians. They were second-class citizens; always clinging to them was the disgrace of descent from persons who had been burned or imprisoned by the Inquisition. This document of 1510, the only one of its kind and of unquestionable authenticity, was published in 1963

by C. Guillén in the *Bulletin Hispanique*. It adds enormously to our knowledge of the city of Seville and its inhabitants. Since many of the members of these 390 families subsequently emigrated to Indian lands, the letter also furnishes valuable material on the genealogies of the upper class and the noble families in the countries of Latin America.

The great pogrom of 1391 had resulted in decimation of the Jewish quarter of Seville. Some of the surviving Jews emigrated, and the number of converts increased. After many Italians, especially Genoese, had immigrated into Seville, the Jewish quarter became an Italian quarter. Many wealthy Conversos lived on the Calle de Genova. Seville was already an ethnically mixed and cosmopolitan city in the fifteenth century. Historians have taken too little account of this fact in their search for Columbus's line of descent. When the remaining Jews were banished and an economic vacuum ensued, more Italian merchants filled the vacuum. They were mostly Genoese, who unlike the Spaniards, did not despise commerce. The Conversos now came forward as their trading partners or rivals.

There is still much to be learned about the relationship between the two groups. Research might turn up many facts that would illuminate the history of this period. The partnership would have been a natural one, for under such circumstances each side has something important to gain. The Conversos and Marranos in their precarious position would have turned to Italians to act as their agents and cover. In return they could offer their confederates the benefit of their long experience and their many contacts.

Among the new citizens of Seville at the time of Co-

lumbus was the Florentine Amerigo Vespucci. A merchant connected with the House of Medici, Vespucci is reputed to have had something to do with outfitting the ships for Columbus's second voyage. He also personally participated in various early voyages of exploration under the Spanish and Portuguese. As we all know, his name became identified with the western continents by mistake. His credit lies not in his having had any share in their discovery but in his having been the first to speak of the lands as the New World. His accounts of the voyages in which he took part quickly ran into many editions, and their many readers referred to the places he described as the lands of Amerigo.

At one point Vespucci's path did cross Columbus's for he is known to have visited the Admiral and been given a letter to deliver to Columbus's son Diego. But whether there was more than this between the two men remains a mystery.

Meanwhile King Ferdinand pursued an ambiguous policy toward the Marranos and Conversos who had not left in the great exodus. The king was well aware that these people represented a great source of profit to him, both directly and indirectly. Therefore, he was prepared to assure them equality with other citizens or to allow them to emigrate to the Indies, as the new islands were called. In either case they would pay dearly for the privilege. To this end he issued several ordinances. The first, of December 8, 1508, provided that the Marranos of Seville and Cadiz were to pay 20,000 ducats to their respective archdioceses. Only a year later Ferdinand extended the area to include three towns in the vicinity of Helve—Lepe, Ayamonte, and La Redondela—and raised the sum to 40,000 ducats. On June 15, 1511, he again doubled

the assessment. The above mentioned document concerning the 390 Marrano families belongs to this period.

To collect this money the king appointed Pedro de Villacis, one of the cruelest henchmen of the Inquisition who had already proved his ruthlessness in Seville. Obviously the Marranos could not raise such huge sums all at once. The 40,000 ducats were paid over a period of four years. Meanwhile the Inquisition's officials looked on jealously. They resented the way the king was reaping profit from their activities and did their best to frustrate him.

It was all the more vexing to the Inquisition that King Ferdinand had promised the Marranos the return of whatever property the Inquisition had confiscated from them in return for their contribution to his coffers. Petitions and complaints poured into the royal court and continued to occupy the attention of Ferdinand's successors. Meanwhile these vast sums, which were the price of the Marranos' rehabilitation, had to be raised. The collection of the money stretched out over decades. Even after Philip II had been succeeded by Charles V this extortion disguised as a treaty went on, for the new kings were no less rapacious than the old. The Inquisitors constantly made difficulties, battling with the Crown for their share in the spoils.

In 1505, the Venetian ambassador in Spain sent a report to the doge on conditions in Spain now that the Jews had been expelled and the Inquisition was concentrating its forces upon the Marranos. The report may be found in the collection of the diplomatic acts of the Venetian Republic. The ambassador noted among other things that Marranos constituted a third of the urban population in Spain. For him, this fact somehow justified the procedures of the Inquisition.

Another valuable source on this subject is the *Green Book of Aragon* (*Libro verde de Aragón*), published in 1574. This book was intended as a warning to the Old Christians not to enter into family ties with New Christians whose forebears had been condemned by the Inquisition. Hundreds of names of such families from various cities of Aragon were listed; and of course this list, too, made no claim to completeness.

Where harassment exists, the victims will always try to escape from the toils of their enemies by fair means or foul. Such illegal resorts can be found in the history of every persecution. Thus, with or without permission, hordes of Marranos left Spain for the overseas colonies in the course of the sixteenth century. After the flight had reached massive proportions, the authorities realized that the refugees had been equipped with false *limpiezas de sangre* that were confirmed by false witnesses, or else they had bought their licenses for departure. And since the Crown was loath to lose this living source of revenue, a general decree was issued on October 3, 1539, forbidding all converts to travel to the Indies.

The Holy Inquisition also kept alive the popular suspicion of the Conversos. Time and again the rabble blamed Conversos for hunger, poor harvests, bad weather—made them the scapegoats for all misfortunes. The Conversos tried repeatedly to use their influence in Rome to persuade the pope to impose moderation on the Inquisition. But even papal reprimand was of little use. The Inquisition was only theoretically under the control of the pope; the Spanish Church considered itself independent of the Holy See in such matters. That attitude was based on an ancient tradition of the Spanish Church and on various rights and privileges that the Catholic kings had pur-

chased or jealously preserved. Among these was the right to appoint bishops. The kings of Spain refused to honor any appointments that came from Rome, and they insisted on their power of investiture. The saying went: "The kings would kneel before the bishop as long as they had appointed him themselves."

Since 1941 the Archives of the Indies in Seville has been publishing an interesting *Catálogo de Pasajeros a Indias*. It is interesting to check the entries in this catalogue for the year 1509 against the Marrano document mentioned previously. Many names from the list of the 390 Marrano families reappear in the catalogue. Some of these names call for comment. First, comes Pedro del Alcazar, who was a forbear of the poet Balthasar del Alcazar. The next name is Aleman; it is known that the writer Mateo Aleman was a Converso. Then Bernal, which was a family very well known among the Conversos. As late as 1655 a Manuel Nunez Bernal was burned alive in Córdoba. In the list for 1510 we find three Franco families, those of Francisco Franco, Diego Franco, and Rodrigo Franco. Franco was a common Jewish name in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. We have already spoken of the trial for ritual murder in Avila in 1491, which ended with the burning of the Franco family.

As for the Las Casas family, it is believed that this is probably the family of Bishop Las Casas, the biographer of Columbus. Las Casas is also a common name among Jews and Conversos in Spain, as well as in Italy. We know that Bishop Las Casas had great difficulties in Seville after his return from the Indies. Was he in bad repute only because he spoke out for better treatment of the native Indios, or because relatives in Italy who like-

wise bore the name of Las Casas—among them Diego de Las Casas—had been active in urging the pope to check the Inquisition? These are questions worth investigation. As we have said, Columbus's story as written by Bishop Las Casas takes on a different aspect if we consider the possibility that its author may himself have been a Converso and would thus have wished to cover up whatever Columbus might have recklessly revealed. Professor de la Pena is inclined to think that Bishop Las Casas did belong to a family of Conversos.

Among the other Marranos who emigrated to the Indies was the Las Roelas family, probably that of the painter Juan de Las Roelas. Another painter, Lopez, likewise appears in the list.

In 1642, a large number of Jewish emigrants arrived in Brazil, which was then under Dutch rule. The Portuguese repeatedly attacked, trying to retake their former possession; the Jews paid for arms and fought at the side of the Dutch. But the colony's resistance was broken, and the Portuguese once more imposed their rule. One of the first acts of the new Portuguese governor was to order the Jews to leave. Some of the Jews returned to Holland, others settled in Dutch Guiana. Tradition has it that several emigrants from Brazil moved to the city of New Amsterdam. If that is so, they represent the forerunners of the Jewish community of New York City, now the largest in the world.

In the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, Spain had to concede to the Dutch, the English, and the French freedom of the seas in West Indian waters and temporary rights of settlement in those regions. Thus Jews from Holland, England, and France entered Latin America as

tolerated foreigners. Among them were many who had once lived in Spain. They settled by preference in New Granada, in what is today Columbia. Their descendants laid the basis for the struggle for independence of Spain. Traces of this Marrano influence remain to the present day. Many upper-class families in South and Central America demonstrably descend from them. Beyond that, whole provinces such as Antioquia in western Columbia have been shaped by the descendants of Marranos. Those among the 800,000 inhabitants of Antioquia who are not of Indian descent are derived from Marranos. They have a great deal in common with the Juetas of Majorca. Their dialect contains expressions that are not found in ordinary Spanish but do occur in Ladino, the language of the Sephardim.

The influence of Jews was so strong in the realm of the Turkish sultan that no Spanish ships were permitted to anchor in Levantine ports. For centuries the entire Spanish economy was boycotted by Jews, especially those of Holland, England, and Italy. In these countries the Spanish immigrants soon occupied important positions in commerce, especially in the overseas trade, and made significant contributions to the economic expansion of the countries that had given them asylum. The Marranos who had established themselves in England took part in those raids on Spanish colonies and in attacks on Spanish shipping led by privateers like Sir Francis Drake. In such ways, then, Spain was repaid for her ruthless treatment of what had been a loyal and useful segment of her population.

The Inquisition, however, could claim success in having wiped out all traces of Jewry in Spain, except for what survived among the Juetas on Majorca. In Portugal

its sweep was less thorough. Thus in the northern provinces of Trazoz-Montes and Beira, in particular in Belmonte, Covilhã, Castelo Branco, and Braganca, but especially in Porto, the Marrano tradition has survived down to the present. The descendants of those who were forced to accept baptism centuries ago have preserved a number of Jewish rites. They celebrate the Sabbath and Yom Kippur, Passover, and the feast of Purim, although they do not abide by the Jewish calendar. This dual existence among the descendants of Jews who have been faithful to elements of their old religion has survived the Inquisition and the stake.

The Jews were fleeing from the "Jewish question." They moved to where there was none. But they had no sooner settled down somewhere when it turned out that they had brought the "Jewish question" with them. Many Portuguese Marranos fled to India. There the Portuguese Crown had established an enclave, the province of Goa, thousands of miles from the motherland. Soon the first piles of faggots were blazing in Goa, and Marranos who had thought they would no longer need to conceal their Judaism in their new homes paid with their lives for their loyalty to the Jewish religion. Among the vast records of the Inquisition in Lisbon are documents concerning the trial of the da Orta family. The Inquisitors had closed in after the death of the family's head, Garcia da Orta, formerly a famous doctor in Goa. Under torture his descendants confessed that they had all been living by the principles of the Jewish religion. Thereupon, da Orta's grave was opened, his remains exhumed, and burned at the stake together with his hapless sons and daughters. In the South American continents, too, the Inquisition



Banner of the Inquisition of Goa. (Bibliotheque Nationale,
(Picture Archives, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)

pursued its human prey until the nineteenth century. The greatest *auto-da-fé* in the New World was staged in Lima, Peru, on January 23, 1639. Similar fearful spectacles took place in Brazil, Chile, and Mexico.

The Indies were to be made Catholic. Aside from Jews, Protestants and all non-Catholics were forbidden to enter this part of the Spanish empire. Twelve priests, experienced servants of the Inquisition who had already brought many heretics to the stake, were selected to convert the Indians. Bernardo Buyl, a monk from the Benedictine monastery at Montserrat, was appointed by the pope to head the group; he bore the title of Apostolic Vicar to the Indies.

The Spanish bishops in the Spanish possessions overseas were supposed to be caring for the souls of Spaniards as well as making new converts to Christianity. Soon, however, the king of Spain appointed them Inquisitors. Their mission was to combat heresy, since the hordes of Marranos who had settled in their territories were trying to throw off the fetters of the Church and return to the religion of their fathers. In later times the Inquisitors had to deal not only with Judaizing Marranos but also with Lutherans and Calvinists among the immigrants.

In the Indies the Spanish conquistadors and their troops behaved much as the SS did centuries later in the occupied regions of Eastern Europe. They regarded the Indians as subhumans upon whom they were conferring a blessing by converting them to Christianity. If they proved refractory they were slaughtered. The Indians were regarded as having no property rights at all; their land, their possessions, and their women belonged to the Spanish conquerors.

The pyres flamed for the *autos-da-fé*. Indians accused

of heresy did not understand what they were being charged with. But that was a minor detail. To give them to the flames, however, the Inquisition required confessions; so the ritual prescribed. Consequently torture was applied. The confession was formulated in a language that the defendants could not understand, but that, too, was incidental. The point was that everything should follow the pattern used back home in Spain. The inventive spirit of the torturers celebrated triumphs in the Indies also. New instruments of torture, hitherto unknown in Spain, were devised and tried out on the Indians.

It must not be forgotten that the natives had greeted the landing Spaniards with sincere joy. They had taken them for sons of heaven, figures from their legends and myths.

In no time at all, they were to find out differently. To the Spanish settlers, the Indians were part of the inventory of the newly discovered lands. Whatever the natives owned—gold ornaments, food, cotton—was wrested from them and they were made to work for the Spanish colonists. Those who performed their stint of forced labor received a brass token like a dog tag to wear around their necks; they were required to keep this on them all the time as a sign that they had fulfilled their obligations.

Thus the free natives were subdued and regimented. Some tried to flee into the bush, but they were tracked by the packs of special bloodhounds imported from Spain. The unfortunate fugitive would be surrounded and torn to pieces by the baying dogs. It was a form of sport, and some of these dogs were as celebrated among the Spanish colonists as toreros are in today's Mexico. Even their names have come down to us, such as that of the dog

Bercerrico. Special methods were used to train the bloodhounds for this type of hunting.

When the Indians rose up against their oppressors and attempted to fight with their primitive weapons, the colonists were greatly incensed at the ferocity of these "savages." Such uprisings were put down by the most brutal methods. Meanwhile Bishop Las Casas made several trips to Spain where he pleaded for the cause of the natives, describing what was being done to them and warning that they were dying by the thousands. His appeals were in vain, for the Spaniards regarded themselves as a master race destined to lord it over lesser peoples. Their haughtiness had been nourished by a racial mythology, and they would brook no criticism from a mere ecclesiastic and one, moreover, who was of Converso stock. Las Casas suffered the fate of so many other fighters for justice: He was viciously attacked, his motives impugned and his stories branded as falsehoods. Nevertheless he is remembered in history under the title he earned in the new world: The Apostle of the Indians.

Incidentally, one of the "blessings" the expedition brought back for the rest of the world was connected with Luis de Torres, the interpreter. After the landfall Columbus had sent Rodrigo de Xerez and Luis de Torres to visit the ruler of the island. They had returned bringing rolled up, half-burned weeds that the natives called *tabaccos*. Columbus himself paid no attention to these weeds; upon his return to Spain he did not even mention them in his report. But this is how tobacco first came to Europe. When the Spanish observed that the natives were highly dependent upon their *tabaccos* and that even after their subjugation smoking the weed remained their

sole pleasure, they created something that was later to serve as a model for the entire world: the tobacco monopoly. The Spaniards forbade the Indians to plant tobacco without permission. They were allowed to smoke the tobacco they raised only after they had paid a tax.

To the last, Columbus believed that the islands he had reached were close to India. To what extent he hoped that Jewish people would be found there is of course not known. This was a concern he locked away in the innermost recesses of his soul. But among his contemporaries the belief was slow to die. And since the first voyagers and colonists carried this notion with them, it is not surprising that they regarded the natives from this angle and looked for whatever sign might link the "Indians" with the ten lost tribes of Israel.

The first to broach this possibility was Bishop Las Casas, who spent much of his long life in the New World and wrote a number of invaluable accounts of the Indians and their customs. When the Spaniards reached the mainland of South America and conquered the kingdom of Peru, they were again disposed to look for evidence that the Peruvians were of Jewish origin. In 1607, Gregorio Garcias expressed the view that the first inhabitants of the Americas had been Jewish. In 1650, this same opinion was put forward by the Englishman Thomas Thorowgood. Menasseh ben Israel, a Portuguese rabbi who lived in Amsterdam and was responsible for persuading Cromwell to readmit the Jews to England, also shared this conviction. He had been assured by a Portuguese Marrano from Villafior, who called himself Montesinos and then assumed the name of Aron Levi, that in South America he had associated with Jews who belonged to the ten

tribes of Israel. Menasseh ben Israel issued a pamphlet in which he tried to support this contention. The essay created such a stir that it was soon published in Latin, Spanish, Dutch, English, and Hebrew.

In 1823, Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon sect, wrote a lengthy treatise propounding his own version of the idea. The theory was to excite interest throughout the nineteenth century. In 1881, Santiago Perez Janquera reissued Smith's treatise in Spanish. Lord Kingsborough devoted the greater part of his time and his fortune to publishing a collection of American documents that might serve to prove that the original inhabitants of the Americas had descended from Jews. The Spanish ecclesiastic Roldan came to the same conclusion; his unpublished manuscript on the subject may be found in the *Bibliotheca de San Pablo* in Seville.

Scholars now began to approach the problem from a scientific point of view, drawing upon the old accounts of the first voyagers, explorers, and missionaries. They noted many parallels in basic religious tenets (including a belief in a life after death), in religious customs, in the organization of the priesthood, in prophecies and dream interpretation, in religious sacrifices, and in the appointment of a day of rest—a sabbath. Similar features could also be found in the myths of the Indians and the ancient Hebrews.

The Spanish ecclesiastic Roldan undertook to prove a common origin between the Jews and the original inhabitants of America on the basis of linguistic evidence. He had studied the language of the Indians on Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica, and the neighboring islands and maintained that it showed similarities to Hebrew. According to him the islands had been given their names by the first

caciques, the tribal leaders of the nomads who had discovered or populated them. The names Cuba and Haiti were, to Roldan's mind, of Hebrew origin. He believed that much of the basic vocabulary and the common names in use among the Indians likewise came from the Hebrew. Thus, he argued, the word *haina* (water) came from the Hebrew *aim* (spring), *Yones* from Jonah, *Yaque* from Jacob, *Ures* from Urias, *Siabao* from Sebah, *Maisi* from Moysi. The names of some Indian tools, of the narrow trails they used (*cansas*), the word *axi* for pepper, the word for a corn granary and for grain in general suggested kinship with the Hebrew language.

The anthropological approach also yielded some interesting parallels. Sixteenth-century accounts of Indian customs proved a rich source of information. The Indians had been required to practice frequent ritual washings in rivers and springs. They had been forbidden to touch the dead, to drink blood, or to eat on certain specific fast days. They married their sisters-in-law if these were widowed while childless; they also divorced women who remained childless. Like the Israelites, they sacrificed first fruits and made offerings to their god on high mountains under shady trees. They had temples and a sacred object that in wartime they carried before them as the Israelites had borne the Ark of the Covenant.

The fundamental religious view of both Jews and Indians consisted in belief in a single omnipotent God. Nevertheless there were vestiges of an earlier polytheism among both peoples. The Israelites had been nomadic Semites and like all primitive people had lived in a world that their imaginations had peopled with supernatural beings. This may account for the many different names they had for their supreme being. For the Indians, natural

phenomena played a great part in their conception of God, so much so that it is difficult to say where the forces of nature end and pure godhead begins. But we must remember that the Jehovah of the Jews was also a God of storms, of thunder, and lightning.

In the Old Testament there is frequent mention of places that were hallowed by dreams or by singular events. The Israelites would mark these places by putting up a pillar. There was a similar custom among the Indians.

Indians conceived of the souls of the dead as gathering in the "fields" of their fathers; the Jews, too, believed that people were "gathered to their fathers" after death. Both Jewish and Indian belief was strongly opposed to suicide; those who had taken their own lives were not admitted into the realm of the fathers.

The religiously based ceremonies of daily life among the Indians bore an extraordinary resemblance to those of the Jews. This was particularly true of childbirth, naming, the first haircut, the ritual upon entering manhood, marriage, recovery from illnesses, plowing of the soil, and fishing. Similarities can also be observed in the Indian and Israelite priesthood. Both peoples emphasized the use of white at high festivals. The Indian shamans adorned themselves in white goatskins, pearls, and white moccasins. The robes of the ancient Hebrew priests were also white. Both the Jews and the Indians were highly concerned about pollution and purification. Thus the Indians had special tents to which their women were banished for those periods when they were considered unclean. After confinement a woman lived apart from her husband for three months. By the Levitic laws the mother of a female child was separated from her husband for

eighty days. If the child born had been male the period of separation was only forty days. Among both Jews and Indians, the room or tent of a deceased person was considered unclean for seven days.

The Jews offered their God the daily sacrifice of a lamb, which they burned to ashes. The Indians, too, brought a portion of every slaughtered animal to their god and this piece was burned. Like the Jews, the Indians had a Day of Atonement on which all insults were forgiven and all disputes buried. The Indian totem corresponded in significance with the Israelite Ark of the Covenant. The latter was a chest that must never be allowed to touch the ground and was therefore carried on poles. In wartime the Israelites carried their Ark, the Indians their totem, with their army. Among the Israelites the new moon was linked with the Sabbath, and the festival of the new moon was a religious feast. Among the Indians, too, ceremonies of the new moon were of great importance.

Indian legends bear a remarkable resemblance to the ancient Israelite myths—quite aside from the legends of the flood, which appear in some form in every religion. Scholars have found analogies between the account of the life of Moses and the Indian legends of Michab, Joseheka, and Manabosho. Indian traditions likewise tell of twelve brothers of whom the youngest was specially loved by the father. There is an Indian legend associated with a stone pillar standing on the shore of the Mississippi: A woman fleeing from a destroyed village was transformed into this pillar. The legend corresponds almost too neatly with the story of Lot's wife who was turned into a pillar of salt. In stories about the wanderings of the Indians there is recurrent mention of a pole,

which served as a guide, preceding the tribe and pausing where a halt was intended. This strange pole bears a curious resemblance to the pillar of fire that showed the Israelites the right path through the desert. According to an Indian tradition the sight of God cost one man his life. The Bible warns on pain of death against making any images of God. The tribes of Israel chose animals as their emblems. Among the Indians every clan was identified with a particular animal. No wonder, then, with all these points in common, that the Indians responded to the Bible as to something dimly familiar.

The social order of the Indians bore a great resemblance to that of the Israelites in the time of the Judges. The Indian penal code corresponded in many respects to the Israelite code, for example, in regard to feuds and compensation payments. Of particular interest was the institution of sanctuary provided for in both Indian and Israelite law. If a criminal succeeded in fleeing to a place outside the domain of the court—a sanctuary—he could no longer be punished. Both peoples recognized the right of asylum.

The practice of tattooing, common among the Indians, was not unknown to the ancient Israelites; we find a mention of it in Leviticus 19:28, where, to be sure, it is specifically prohibited. Among the Israelites as among the Indians, land belonged to the clan not to the individual. There were also food prohibitions among the Indians: They were, for example, forbidden to eat the flesh of animals that were related to the emblem of their clan.

The similarity in marriage customs is striking. A widow could not remarry without the express permission of her brother-in-law. This custom existed only among the Israelites and the Indians; it is not to be found in any

other religion in the world. This matter, along with many other points of kinship, is thoroughly discussed in Mallery Garrick's *Israeliten und Indianer—eine ethnographische Parallele* (Leipzig, 1892).

But aside from such parallels, no concrete proof has ever turned up of any direct link between the ancient Israelites and the peoples of the American continent. The possibility continued to tantalize a fair number of scholars over the centuries, but it was not until very recently that two separate discoveries, from two entirely different quarters, seemed to give fresh life to such speculations. In August 1970, Cyrus H. Gordon, Professor of Archeology at Brandeis University, made the startling announcement that he had found an American stone bearing a Hebrew inscription. To be sure, the stone had long been known, having been deposited in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington by a previous archeologist who had found it back in 1886 in a burial mound at Bar Creek, Tennessee. The inscription had been photographed upside down and identified as Cherokee Indian script. Gordon pronounced this a mistake and declared that the characters were Hebrew. The inscription reads "For the land of Judah." There are similar inscriptions on ancient Hebrew coins. Gordon argues that the inscription had probably been carved a thousand years before Columbus's voyage.

The excitement heightens as we trace the story farther. For the place in Tennessee where the stone was found was the territory of the Indian tribe of Melungeons. These Melungeons were light-skinned and were said to have the facial features of a Caucasoid race.

It would be rash to jump to any conclusions on the basis of these few facts. But perhaps the persistent legend of the lost tribes finding their way to the Americas will

be substantiated after all. In 1970, the Norwegian scholar and adventurer Thor Heyerdahl sailed across the Atlantic to the Caribbean Sea in a frail papyrus boat. His feat convincingly demonstrated that people of the Near East could have reached the American continent in their primitive vessels. And this gives an entirely new credibility to the dream of those who sent out the three caravels from the port of Seville.

VI
Epilogue





T HANKS TO COLUMBUS, Spain had acquired an empire whose vastness and wealth surpassed all previous conceptions. With such possessions Spain should have enjoyed centuries of prosperity, with her entire population sharing in the general welfare. Instead the Spanish economy stagnated. Her institutions rigidified, crushing all enterprise. Her rule of injustice produced a climate of fear, envy, and grinding oppression. The double motives of religious fanaticism and greed continued to hold sway.

After the expulsion of the Jews and the flight of the Marrano element, it was the turn of the Moriscos to serve as scapegoats for the ills of society. These people were a small harmless community, the last remnant of the great Moorish era in which Spain had been a thriving land. They, too, had been forced to undergo baptism; now their faith was being called into question. The same forces that had inspired the campaign against the Jews began to preach that the presence of Moriscos was a taint affecting the unity and purebloodedness of Spain. Moriscos repeatedly became victims of pogroms. They were accused, as

the Jews had been earlier, of outlandish crimes. The fall of a meteor or the appearance of a lion were regarded as bad omens for which the Moriscos were somehow responsible. The Inquisition offered to take the question in hand; the cardinal of Toledo requested papal permission to set up special agencies that would root out heresy from this portion of the population. By one means or another the Moriscos were forced at last to leave the country.

Spain was now to all intents and purposes purged of foreign, that is, non-Christian elements. Throughout the sixteenth century the movement of the Marranos to the New World had continued. All told, Spain had lost one and one-half million people. Many occupations were virtually abandoned. Trade, the crafts, and the sciences languished. Moreover, since these branches of endeavor had been the domain of Jews and Moriscos, they had become in themselves suspect. Spaniards had to be extremely careful about entering any of these fields. It became expedient for people to underline their pure Christian descent by displaying contempt for whatever might smack of "Jewishness."

Nor were these effects restricted to the economic fields alone. Spanish life as a whole was the worse for these injustices. As the Jewish historian Simon Dubnow comments: "A people accustomed to the spectacle of the cannibalistic *autos-da-fé* succumbed to savagery; manners grew steadily coarser; the healthy seed of religion was smothered in superstition and fanaticism. The flourishing land of the Arabic-Judaic renaissance was transformed into a lifeless desert of monks."

Long after the country had been officially purged, the lower nobility continued to go to great expense to purchase proofs of its ancestry. Meanwhile, Spain was

swamped with fortune hunters from all parts of Europe, eager to fill the missing places and enrich themselves. But they could not revive the Spanish economy. Just as the irrigation canals dug by the Moors in Andalusia were allowed to silt up, so the very channels on which the country's health depended fell into neglect. No longer was there any wealth to be had from extortion.

By the middle of the seventeenth century the situation had caused enough concern for Count Olivares, a minister of King Philip IV, to propose to the ruler that Jews from North Africa and the Levant be invited to settle in Spain again. An area in the vicinity of Madrid was set aside for this purpose. But the Church blocked these plans. The idea was revived in 1796, this time by Don Pedro Varela, the finance minister of King Charles IV. He urged the abrogation of the original edict of expulsion. The king was favorably inclined but put off the decision for several years, during which time the Church exerted its usual pressure. At last, in 1802, the king ordained that the ban on Jewish settlement must remain in force.

Some sixty years later the question was once more up for discussion. It arose in connection with the new Constitution, when some of the new delegates to the parliament took occasion to speak up against the ancient edict of expulsion, denouncing it as a disgrace and an injury to Spain. Sad to say, the Church was not yet prepared to modify its time-honored stand. Among the deputies were Catholic priests who rose up to defend the Inquisition and its practices. Their chief spokesman was the priest Manterola, who warned against tampering with the decisions of the past and delivered fiery diatribes against the Jews quite in the spirit of the fifteenth century. But this was 1869, when even in Spain the liberal

spirit was in the ascendancy. Thus another deputy took the floor—Emilio Castelar, professor of Spanish history at the University of Madrid and one of the country's leading intellectuals. He answered Manterola's rantings with a speech that was applauded by the majority. In a rather extensive historical analysis Castelar described what the Jews had done for Spain and for the world.

The speech caused a great sensation, for this was the first time such statements had ever been publicly made in Spain. Castelar's disquisition was reprinted in the newspapers and widely circulated in pamphlet form. It tipped the balance, for on June 5, 1869, the Spanish Constitution specifically rescinded the edict of expulsion. The way was thereby opened for the return of the Jews to Spain, and subsequent legislation offered them inducements. Jews did settle in the Spanish settlements in Africa, chiefly in Spanish Morocco. But few came back to the Spanish motherland. The problem was that Spain could not yet offer them freedom of worship: Article II of the Constitution specifically forbade the public observance of any but the Catholic religion.

By the beginning of the twentieth century this obstacle was removed. A massive campaign was mounted by intellectuals and politicians to press for a change in the Constitution. The leaders of the movement were the writers Benito Perez Galdos and Angel Palido Fernandez, through whose efforts the notorious Article II was finally declared null and void. In 1910 a new Jewish community was established in Madrid. Its founder, Ignazio Bauer, was the first Jew to become a member of the Spanish parliament.

Since that time, the Spanish government would seem to have set itself the task of expiating ancient wrongs. A

law was passed in 1927 offering Spanish citizenship to Sephardic Jews throughout the world. A certain number of Sephardim availed themselves of this offer.

The outbreak of the civil war in Spain put a halt to a number of projects on the part of the republican government that would have been favorable to the Jewish population. Even as the whole of Spanish society was divided between those who supported the government and those who supported the insurgent Franco forces, the Jewish communities were also split. The majority were committed to the republic and fought in the Loyalist army, but some Jews took the opposite stand and fought on the side of Franco. When the Loyalist troops had to surrender at last and those who managed not to be taken prisoner fled across the border into France, Spain again suffered a loss of Jewish citizens. Many Jews were also among those condemned to long imprisonment by the victors. Nevertheless, such sentences were on political grounds and entirely without religious overtones. If anything, they marked the full equality achieved by Spanish Jews in recent years, for the right to do battle in the political struggles within the nation, and even to take the consequences along with fellow fighters, is a sign of having emerged completely from the ghetto.

After the beginning of World War II, there was a reverse movement of Jews fleeing into Spain, particularly from occupied France. Strangely enough, Spain became a haven for these refugees in spite of the government's ties of friendship with Nazi Germany. There is documentary evidence that the German embassy in Madrid made strenuous attempts to lay hands on these people. The Germans reminded the Spanish authorities of the aid that had come from Germany during the Civil War,

and implied that the Nazis expected to be repaid by the extradition of the Jews. But they argued in vain, for Spain seemed determined to make up for the historic crimes against the Jewish people and continued to extend herself in their behalf.

Thus, the Spanish ambassadors in Rumania, Bulgaria, and Greece—countries that contained sizable groups of Sephardic Jews who had found their way there in the sixteenth century—intervened in their behalf as though they were actual Spanish citizens. Often such intervention came too late, especially where there was no way to repatriate the endangered Jews by ship. The Spanish government also attempted to help some 3,000 Sephardim living in France but was able to save only a fraction of these people.

After the Nazi occupation of Hungary, several foreign embassies gave the Hungarian Jews passports to save them from deportation. The Spanish embassy outdid the rest by providing papers for 2,750 Jews, who were thus snatched from the jaws of death.

When I was in Spain, I visited the Institute Arias Montagno, which possesses a priceless collection of material relating to the history of the Jews on the Iberian peninsula. The institute also issues many publications on the subject. Located in the heart of Madrid, it is an impressive memorial to the change of attitude on the part of Spain. I was somewhat surprised to learn that the institute had been opened in 1940, of all times, with the country's Civil War not far behind and the Nazis beginning their conquest of Europe. When I exclaimed at this, I received the calm explanation that the plans for the institute had been maturing for a long time and that by 1940 everything was simply ready. That is to say, the groundwork

for the Institute was laid during the years of the republic but the Franco regime saw no need to shelve the project. The institute represents a rare instance of bipartisanship. In fact, I also learned that it is much used by Spanish families conducting searches into their genealogies. After the centuries when it was tantamount to ruin to be exposed as having Jewish antecedents, such ancestry has now become a point of pride.

I was told that there is considerable good feeling toward Jews among present-day Spaniards. Yet the Jews now living in Spain do not behave as though they were aware of this sympathy. Their numbers are still not large, although they have been swelled by the return of some of the North African Jews, who came to settle in the Iberian peninsula rather than live in Arab lands. These highly Orthodox descendants of the Spanish Sephardim have formed several communities amounting to about 6,000 persons. As recently as December 1968, the Spanish government issued a license for the establishment of a Jewish community in Madrid. Other Jewish communities exist in Barcelona and Malaga, as well as in Palma de Mallorca. In Toledo, the city so intimately connected with the greatness and suffering of the Jewish people on Spanish soil, two ancient synagogues, converted into churches after the expulsion, have once more been returned to their original uses. These are the former churches of Santa Maria la Blanca and El Transito. The latter also houses a museum of the Sephardim. Yet despite these instances of official tolerance a good many Spanish Jews try to hide their identity. To this day they live under the shock of the events of almost 500 years ago.

Similar events, to be sure, have been repeated far more recently. A wise and good man, Pope John XXIII, saw

the position the Church must take after Auschwitz. He was aware of what had been done to the Jews for thousands of years in the name of Christ and in the sign of the Cross. And this great Pope endeavored to write an end to Christian antisemitism. John did not live long enough to fulfill this purpose, and his early death has probably delayed its completion for generations. The formula adopted by the Vatican Council he planned is only a halfway solution. It is a compromise restricted by political considerations and by resistance on the part of the clergy. But we may deduce his position from the text of the penitential prayer he composed shortly before his death.

We now acknowledge that many, many centuries of blindness have obscured our eyes so that we no longer see the beauty of Thy Chosen People and in his face no longer recognize the features of our firstborn brother. We acknowledge that the mark of Cain is upon our brows. For centuries Abel has lain in blood and tears because we forgot Thy love. Forgive us the curse which we unjustly pronounced upon the name of the Jews. Forgive us that we crucified Thee for the second time in cursing them. For we knew not what we did. . . .

History fulfills itself in ways that may surpass our understanding. Columbus, searching for Jewish lands, found none; yet nonetheless two whole continents were opened that have served over the centuries as a new home for the homeless and persecuted. The man of mystery, without antecedents or ascertainable birthplace, left a greater imprint on the world than many a pope and king.

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WAS COLUMBUS JEWISH?

"We herewith decree that all the Jews living in Our dominions, without distinction of sex and age, must leave Our royal possessions and seigneuries, together with their sons and daughters and their Jewish servants . . . and let them not presume to set foot again in the land for the purpose of settlement, or to pass through to some other land, or for any purpose whatsoever." —Royal Edict of Expulsion

By midnight, August 2, 1492, all Jews must leave Spanish soil.

That same night, the three sailing ships which are to carry Christopher Columbus on his voyage of discovery are anchored quietly in Palos harbor—and although they are not scheduled to embark until the following day, Columbus has ordered his crew to be on board by eleven o'clock that night. A Hebrew translator, Luis de Torres, will accompany the expedition, but strangely enough, not a single priest is included.

The auspicious coincidence of these two events—compounded with the intense mystery which has always surrounded the identity of Columbus—has led to a complete re-examination of all previously accepted theories about the true nature of his mission.

SAILS OF HOPE

A COMPLETELY FACTUAL, EXHAUSTIVELY
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