

THE CASE OF LEO M. FRANK IN THE CONTINUUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY:

An Assessment of Christian Responses

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A scholar's activities should have relevance to the immediate future of our civilization.

James Bryant Conant,

American educator and
chemist

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PREFACE

In March of 1986, Leo Max Frank was formally granted posthumous pardon by the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles for the crime of murder. Frank had been convicted of the crime in August of 1913 and sentenced to die by the State of Georgia. His sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment by the governor of Georgia, but was abruptly ended when a group calling itself the Knights of Mary Phagan abducted Frank from the Georgia state penitentiary and hanged him in a stand of trees near Marietta, Georgia on the night of August 16, 1915. Frank is the only Jew ever to have been lynched in the United States.

Consideration of Christian-Jewish relations in the early twentieth century based upon and following from the Frank case will comprise a primary theme in this work. Positive [from a Jewish standpoint] as well as negative Christian attitudes and actions vi-a-vis the Frank issue will be assessed. Discussion of specifically Christian responses to the trial and lynching of Leo Frank will hopefully contribute to the corpus of extant literature on the case which includes treatments focusing upon anti-Semitism, Jewish responses, press reaction, racial issues, and socio-historical themes.

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CHAPTER 1

"The Case, the Man, and the Community"

Details of Leo Frank's indictment, trial, commutation of sentence, imprisonment, wounding, and lynching are significant for this discussion because they provide a matrix upon which to understand certain responses and reactions of Atlanta clergymen to the case. Specific information about the case also will clarify the identity and positions of the primary persons involved therein.

Leo Max Frank, a Jew, was factory superintendent and part owner of the National Pencil Factory located at 37-39 South Forsyth Street in Atlanta, Georgia.¹ On Saturday, April 26, 1913, the same day on which the South commemorated the War Between the States, a thirteen year old white girl named Mary Phagan was murdered and allegedly raped in Frank's establishment. Mary Phagan was an employee of Frank's and had been in the building on a Saturday-holiday to collect her wages.² The Phagan girl was the daughter of Mrs. J. W. Coleman.³ She was a member of Pastor L. O. Bricker's Bible School at First Christian

¹ Leonard Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," American Jewish Archives 20(1968): 107 and Clement Charlton Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," Georgia Historical Quarterly 51(1967): 42.

² Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 108 and Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 42.

³ "Frank Case Damage Suit," New York Times, 21 January 1915.

Church near Atlanta.⁴

After preliminary police investigation, three suspects emerged in the case: Leo Frank, Jim Conley, and Newt Lee. All three were placed under arrest.⁵ Conley was employed as a floorsweeper at the pencil factory; Lee worked there as a night watchman. Both Conley and Lee were black men.⁶

Leo Frank was formally indicted for the Phagan murder on May 24, 1913 and the trial, under the direction of Judge Leonard S. Roan, began July 26, 1913 in Fulton Superior Court in Atlanta.⁷ Solicitor General Hugh M. Dorsey of the Atlanta circuit⁸ prosecuted the case for the state; attorneys Reuben R. Arnold and Luther Z. Rosser argued in Frank's defense.⁹ The State of Georgia premised its case against Frank on the testimony of Jim Conley.¹⁰

⁴ L. O. Bricker, "A Great American Tragedy," Shane Quarterly 4(1943): 89.

⁵ Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 42.

⁶ "The Case of Leo M. Frank," Outlook 110(1915): 166-67.

⁷ Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 45. The Fulton Superior Court location was taken from Nathaniel Edwin Harris, Autobiography: The Story of an Old Man's Life with Reminiscences of Seventy-Five Years (Macon, Ga.: J. W. Burke Co., 1925).

⁸ David Davis, "The Leo Frank Case," Jewish Digest, December 1978, p. 62.

⁹ "Frank's Lawyers Amend Their Plea," New York Times, 29 April 1914 and Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 107.

¹⁰ Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 45; Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 107; and "The Case of Leo M. Frank," p. 167.

After a trial of thirty days duration, Leo Frank was found guilty of murder by an all male jury on August 25, 1913. The verdict had been reached on the first ballot.¹¹ Of note is a passage from the Atlanta Constitution on August 27, 1913 regarding the jurors:

Friendships that will last through life and that are expected to result in reunions from time to time sprang up in the course of the case. The jurors learned to call each other not by surname or given name, but by nickname, and the list of these nicknames would cause laughter anywhere. ... [Some of the jurors were called as follows:] J. F. Higdon, 'Luther Rosser,' from the redoubtable attorney in the case;...Frederick Van L. Smith, 'Rabbi,' after Dr. David Marx, character witness and staunch friend to the defendant.¹²

This report stands in sharp contrast to the mood created by the words "terrorized jury" employed by the journal Outlook in a discussion of the Frank case in 1915.¹³

Permeating much of the literature on the Frank case is an emphasis upon the anti-Jewish "mob spirit" present directly outside the courtroom and throughout the Atlanta area. Though the causes of such spirit may be contested, it nevertheless has been shown to have existed.¹⁴ Historian Clement Moseley argues

¹¹ "Frank Jurors Did Not Even Know General Assembly Had Adjourned," Atlanta Constitution, 27 August 1913. Clark Howell was editor and general manager of the Constitution at this time.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "The Case of Leo M. Frank," p. 167.

¹⁴ Davis, "The Leo Frank Case," p. 62 [Davis was a Jew who lived in Atlanta at the time of Frank's trial]; Comer Vann Woodward, Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel 2d ed. (Savannah, Ga.: Beehive Press, 1973), p. 435; Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 110; Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," pp. 46-47; and "The Case of Leo M. Frank," p.

that

there can be little doubt that the public sentiment which slowly took shape against Frank was the result of the news reporting policies of two of the leading Atlanta daily papers, the Atlanta Georgian, recently acquired by the enterprises of William Randolph Hearst, and the Atlanta Constitution.¹⁵

Only the Atlanta Journal charted a course of restraint vis-a-vis the Frank case.

In stating the dissenting viewpoint in the Frank appeal case to the United States Supreme Court, Justices Oliver Wendell Holmes and Charles Evans Hughes clearly recognized and deplored the influence of the mob during Frank's trial. Mr. Justice Holmes wrote in part that " 'we think the presumption overwhelming that the jury responded to the passions of the mob....'"¹⁶

On August 26, 1913, Judge Roan sentenced Frank to death by hanging; the scheduled date of execution was June 22, 1915.¹⁷ At the request of Judge Roan, Frank and his attorneys were not present in the courtroom at the time when the jury rendered its verdict. This measure was for their own safety.¹⁸

During the following two years as national attention

167.

¹⁵ Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 43.

¹⁶ "The Case of Leo M. Frank," p. 168.

¹⁷ Moseley, "The Case of Leo Frank, 1913-1915," pp. 46,48.

¹⁸ Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 110; Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 46; and Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 435.

towards the case mounted¹⁹, higher courts were petitioned on Frank's behalf, efforts were undertaken to secure a new trial, and the governor of Georgia was besieged with requests nationwide to spare Frank's life. Comer Vann Woodward observes that

doubt as to Frank's guilt was expressed by every tribunal before which the case was reviewed: the state Supreme Court, the federal District Court, the United States Supreme Court, and the Georgia prison commission were all divided. Even the judge who presided at the trial expressed doubt, but at the same time refused to grant a motion for a new trial.²⁰

Frank's attorneys hired the internationally renowned detective William J. Burns to conduct an independent inquiry of the case.²¹ In building legal grounds for a new hearing, the attorneys representing Leo Frank had accepted the affidavits of Baptist pastor C. B. Ragsdale and his parishioner R. L. Barber. Both Reverend Ragsdale and Mr. Barber had sworn to having overheard Jim Conley confess that he murdered Mary Phagan. Frank's lawyers elected to have these affidavits stricken from the record when the veracity of the testimony was repudiated by the affiants.²² According to the Outlook in 1915,

¹⁹ Eugene Levy notes that "though there had been random comments on the Frank case in papers outside the South in 1913, Frank's conviction did not become a national issue until the spring of 1914." Eugene Levy, " 'Is the Jew a White Man?': Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913-1915," Phylon 35(1974): 213. Phylon is the Atlanta University review of race and religion, founded by W. E. B. DuBois.

²⁰ Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 436.

²¹ Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 113.

²² "Frank's Lawyers Amend Their Plea," New York Times, 29 April 1914.

"during the whole process of appealing the case the mob kept up its threats."²³

When the counsel for Frank did not succeed in gaining redress through the courts, appeals were made to the Georgia Prison Commission.²⁴ The Prison Commission declined to recommend commutation of the sentence from hanging to life imprisonment. The case therefore went before Governor John M. Slaton for final decision. Governor Slaton's term of office ended one day [June 21, 1915] before Frank was scheduled to be executed by the state. Slaton commuted Frank's sentence from death to life imprisonment one day before his term ended.²⁵ Parenthetically, Governor Slaton was formerly in partnership with Luther Z. Rosser, attorney for Leo Frank.²⁶ In addition, Slaton had solicited and received the support of Thomas E. Watson in the gubernatorial race of 1912.²⁷ Watson was the "undisputed leader of Populism in Georgia"²⁸ and publisher of the Jeffersonian weekly and monthly. According to Professor Moseley, perhaps no man in Georgia in the early twentieth century was more in accord with Ku Klux Klan principles, particularly anti-Catholicism, than

23 "An Outlaw State," Outlook 110(1915): 946.

24 "An Outlaw State," p. 946 and "A Courageous Governor," Outlook 110(1915): 492.

25 Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 440.

26 Harris, Autobiography, p. 350.

27 Woodward, Tom Watson, pp. 439-40.

28 Charlton Moseley, "Latent Klanism in Georgia, 1890-1915," Georgia Historical Quarterly 56(1972): 369.

Thomas E. Watson.²⁹

Appeals on Frank's behalf had flooded the governor's office from all parts of the country and from all levels of private citizenry and the government. "Slaton had received requests from more than 10,000 Georgians, including a recommendation from the presiding judge at Frank's trial, that he commute sentence."³⁰ The legislatures of Texas and Tennessee also passed resolutions to that effect.³¹ The May 12, 1915 issue of the New York Times records that 15,000 petitions which were collected in Ohio were delivered to the governor's office in Atlanta.³² A mass meeting was held in Chicago in May, 1915 as part of a Leo M. Frank day. Among the speakers in attendance were three Christian clergymen: Bishop Samuel Fallows, Father P. J. O'Callaghan, and Father S. J. Siedenber.³³ In addition, once national interest in the case had ignited, "Frank had the explicit support of almost all of America's major newspapers", even within the South.³⁴ For a time, coverage of the Frank case challenged the

²⁹ Ibid., p. 373.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 440.

³¹ Ibid., p. 436.

³² "Petitions for Frank Signed by 15,000," New York Times, 12 May 1915.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Levy, " 'Is the Jew a White Man?': Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913-1915," p. 213. Levy points out that the Frank case "provides the first well-focused incident of national interest in which the needs of blacks and of Jews seemed to have been in direct conflict." [p. 212] Efforts were made to discredit the character of Jim Conley. [p. 213]

war in Europe for American national attention.³⁵

Concomitant with requests to spare Frank's life were the "palpable menace of mob violence", anonymous threats to let Frank die, and political rewards promised by Thomas Watson if Frank's sentence were carried out.³⁶ These points notwithstanding, Governor Slaton elected to commute Frank's sentence. Frank was moved out of Atlanta to the penitentiary at Milledgeville, Georgia prior to the announcement of the governor's decision.³⁷

In the aftermath of this decision, martial law had to be declared in Georgia and was in effect the day Nathaniel E. Harris assumed the office of governor of the state.³⁸ The National Guard was stationed at Slaton's home,³⁹ and the Outlook reported that the marching cry of the demonstrators was 'We want John M. Slaton, King of the Jews and traitor Governor of Georgia.'⁴⁰ Slaton was induced to leave Atlanta until hostilities and tensions abated.⁴¹

Following Frank's transfer to the prison farm at Milledgeville, he was attacked while he slept by a fellow inmate named

³⁵ Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 436 and Milton L. Ready, Georgia' Entry Into World War I," 52(1968): 259.

³⁶ Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 51 and Woodward, Tom Watson, pp. 439-40.

³⁷ Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 52.

³⁸ Harris, Autobiography, p. 355.

³⁹ Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 53.

⁴⁰ "A Courageous Governor," p. 493.

⁴¹ Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 52.

J. William Creen. His throat was very badly cut and it was thought he would die.⁴² Frank had nearly recovered from the attack by mid-August of 1915. During the summer of 1915, Thomas Watson continued a "verbal barrage against Leo Frank and ex-Governor Slaton",⁴³ going so far as to openly advocate lynching for Frank.⁴⁴

Shortly before midnight on the night of August 16, 1915, a band of twenty-five armed men calling itself the Knights of Mary Phagan⁴⁵ carried out a well-planned and efficiently executed abduction of Leo Frank from the prison at Milledgeville.⁴⁶ Frank was driven 175 miles across the state and hanged to a tree in the woods of former sheriff William J. Frey near Marietta, Georgia, the hometown of the Phagan girl.⁴⁷ Frank's body was returned to Rabbi David Marx of Atlanta and was buried in the Cypress Hill

⁴² "Leo Frank Taken from Prison by Armed Men; Vow to Put His Body on Mary Phagan's Grave," The Washington Post, 17 August 1915, p. 1.

⁴³ Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 53.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁴⁵ Gerald Snyder, "Leo Frank: 'An Innocent Man Was Lynched'," Jewish Monthly, October 1982, p. 24.

⁴⁶ "Leo Frank Taken from Prison by Armed Men; Vow to Put His Body on Mary Phagan's Grave," p. 1 and Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 443.

⁴⁷ The Washington Post, 18 August 1915 and Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 443.

On the very day that Frank was lynched, a 63 year old black man named J. Riggins was lynched in Bainbridge, Georgia by a mob of farmers. The Washington Post, 18 August 1915 and Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 55.

District of Queens borough in New York on August 20, 1915.⁴⁸

Governor Harris offered a reward of \$1500 for the "first three convictions of participants in the lynching."⁴⁹ The grand jury investigating the lynching reported to the court that they

⁴⁸ Aaron Ostash, "The Leo Frank Case: 1982 Update," Jewish Digest, October 1982, p. 57 and Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 55.

⁴⁹ "Leo Frank Hanged by Mob," Christian Observer, 25 August 1915, p. 839.

STATE OF GEORGIA

[Map adopted from the Encyclopaedia Britannica World Atlas]



Atlanta: Site of Frank trial [Fulton County]

Marietta: Hometown of Mary Phagan; site of Frank lynching [Cobb County]

Milledgeville: Location of penitentiary from which Frank was abducted, 175 miles from Marietta

Lambert Conformal Conic Projection
SCALE 1:1,462,000 1 inch = 31 Statute Miles
Statute Miles 0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometers 0 8 16 32 48 64

were unable to find evidence against anyone.⁵⁰ Historian Gerald S. Henig notes that several of the conspirators had offered interviews to reporters.⁵¹ The Knights of Mary Phagan included "a clergyman, an ex-sheriff, and two former Superior Court judges."⁵² The Congregationalist and Christian World describes the band who murdered Frank as a "mob of prominent citizens".⁵³

Concrete political results accrued for several of the prominent figures who were linked with the Frank case. Governor John M. Slaton was an immediate "political casualty".⁵⁴ Only three years before in 1912, Slaton had won the governorship by one of the largest margins ever.⁵⁵ Because of his successful prosecution of the Frank case and his political alliance with Thomas E. Watson, Solicitor General Hugh M. Dorsey won the Georgia gubernatorial election over Governor Harris in 1916.⁵⁶

50 "Frank Murderers to Go Unpunished," The Herald and Presbyter, 8 September 1915, p. 28.

51 Gerald S. Henig, "California Progressives React to the Leo Frank Case," California History 58(1979): 175. California History is the magazine of the California Historical Society.

52 Snyder, "Leo Frank: 'An Innocent Man Was Lynched'," p. 24.

53 "The Frank Case," The Congregationalist and Christian World C(1915): 314.

54 Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," pp. 57-58.

55 Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 440.

56 Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 59 and Davis, "The Leo Frank Case," p. 62.

Thomas Watson rode the tide of state public support to a seat in the United States Senate in 1920. His victory by a margin of nearly 40,000 popular votes was over his former ally Hugh M. Dorsey.⁵⁷

In addition to the political repercussions, the lynching of Frank in August of 1915 impacted upon Georgia's sentiment toward America's intervention in the war in Europe. "Thus in an effort to rid themselves of recently embarrassing associations with Tom Watson and his anti-Wilson stand, most Georgians tended to embrace the most nationalistic cause of all, preparedness."⁵⁸ At a time when the honor of the state was blemished by the Frank case, patriotism emerged as a significant statement of pride and closeness to the Union.⁵⁹

It is the view of certain scholars that historians have generally failed to analyze the relationship of the Frank case to broader concerns in America at that time. The Progressive Movement and its spirit of reform is a specific case in point.⁶⁰ Gerald Henig observes that

during the early years of World War I, California was still involved in airing and debating reform issues, many of which were brought more clearly and dramatically to the surface by the Leo Frank case. Such matters as capital punishment, child labor, the role of women

⁵⁷ Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 473 and Moseley, "The Case of Leo M. Frank, 1913-1915," p. 59.

⁵⁸ Ready, "Georgia's Entry Into World War I," p. 260.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 263.

⁶⁰ Henig, "California Progressives React to the Leo Frank Case," p. 166.

in society, law and order, and anti-Semitism were just several of the key problems given new impetus by the trial in Atlanta.⁶¹

California Progressives argued that if Georgia had enacted legislation protecting the rights of children involved in factory work, the murder itself might have been prevented.⁶² As in the case of many industries in the South in that era, the National Pencil Factory employed young girls at very low wages.⁶³ Additionally, it was argued that if there had been regulations mandating inspections of factories and factory conditions, the crime might have been less possible.

As a group, however, California Progressives did not frame their arguments vis-a-vis the Frank case in terms of capital punishment and anti-Semitism.⁶⁴ This observation finds resonance in the contention of historian John Higham that the Progressives in general conceived of equality only in political and economic terms; there was no "vigorous ideological offensive against the barriers of race and nationality."⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 166.

⁶² Ibid., p. 169.

⁶³ L. O. Bricker states that Mary Phagan had gone to collect her pay totalling \$3.75 on the day she was murdered. Bricker, "A Great American Tragedy," p. 89.

⁶⁴ Henig, "California Progressives React to the Leo Frank Case," p. 176.

⁶⁵ John Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 47(1957): 32.

As recently as December 22, 1983, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles in Georgia denied a posthumous pardon to Leo Frank.⁶⁶ The five-member board chaired by Mobley Howell ruled that "the Jewish organizations that had sought the exoneration of Mr. Frank failed to show beyond any doubt that he was innocent."⁶⁷ Those organizations were the Atlanta Jewish Federation, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Committee. This decision was reached despite new testimony provided by Alonzo Mann, who at the time of the murder was a 14 year old office worker at the National Pencil Factory.⁶⁸

In March of 1986, the same Board of Pardons and Paroles formally granted Leo Max Frank pardon for the murder of Mary Phagan.⁶⁹ The Board also concluded that the State of Georgia failed to protect Frank adequately, and then failed to prosecute the members of the lynching mob.⁷⁰ Parenthetically, Alonzo Mann died in 1985, thus never witness to the official pardon.⁷¹

The case of Leo M. Frank in the United States has been

⁶⁶ Fay S. Joyce, "Pardon Denied for Leo Frank in 1913 Slaying," New York Times, 23 December 1983, p. A10.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. A10.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. A10.

⁶⁹ "Leo Frank Pardoned," ADL Bulletin, April 1986, p. 3; "Leo Frank Pardoned," The National Jewish Post & Opinion, 19 March 1986, p. 2; and "Leon [sic] Frank Pardoned by Georgia Board," Baltimore Jewish Times, 21 March 1986, p. 5.

⁷⁰ "Leon [sic] Frank Pardoned by Georgia Board," p. 5 and "Leo Frank Pardoned," p. 3.

⁷¹ "Leo Frank Pardoned," p. 3.

compared with the Dreyfus Affair in France and the Mendel Beilis blood libel trial in Russia.⁷² Similarities in terms of anti-Semitism, national attention, Jewish responses, and factual contours of the cases are drawn. On the basis of circumstantial evidence, Menahem Mendel Beilis was accused of murdering a twelve year old Russian boy near Kiev in order to use his blood to make matzah. Beilis was arrested in July of 1911, spent two years in prison before being brought to trial, and was finally acquitted in 1913. His case evoked international protest.⁷³

⁷² "The Case of Leo M. Frank," p. 166; Davis, "The Leo Frank Case," p. 63; Boris Goldberg, "Mendel Beilis: A Russian Counterpart," Jewish Monthly, October 1982, p. 23; and Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 107.

⁷³ Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 333 and Goldberg, "Mendel Beilis: A Russian Counterpart," p. 23.

In his work The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for Emancipation, Louis Greenberg states that the government of Czar Nicholas II attempted to use Mendel Beilis to implicate the entire Jewish people in the charge of ritual murder. According to Greenberg, the monarchist press charged that the murdered Gentile boy was the victim of a Jewish ritual murder. Parenthetically, the charge of ritual murder had been leveled against the Jews of Europe throughout the Middle Ages. An early example of this charge was the Blois affair in France in 1171.

The period of 1881-1917 in Russia, which spanned the reigns of Alexander III and Nicholas II, saw a dramatic shift in czarist Jewish policy from amalgamation to a program of physical violence [pogromization] and severe economic restrictions. The May Laws of 1882, the expulsion of the Jews of Moscow in 1891, the Kishinev [Bessarabia] pogroms of 1903-05, and the Beilis affair stand within the broad sweep of governmentally sanctioned anti-Jewish action of these 36 years.

The nature of the charge against Beilis and the direct involvement of the czarist regime in his case stand in sharp contrast to the Leo Frank affair. With the exception of the two appeals heard before the United States Supreme Court on Frank's behalf, the United States government was not involved in the Frank case either juridically or propagandistically.

The Dreyfus Affair in France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries involved a Jewish army officer named Alfred Dreyfus. Dreyfus was arrested on charges of treason in 1894, and only officially found innocent of all charges in 1906. Anti-Semitic journalists launched a systematic campaign against the Jews which focused on Captain Dreyfus.⁷⁴ Common to Jews on all sides of the Dreyfus issue was a strong identification with France, an assertion of patriotism.⁷⁵

Leo Frank was born in Cuero, Texas [within 100 miles of San Antonio] in 1884.⁷⁶ He was the son of Rudolph M. Frank. The Frank family moved to Brooklyn, New York when Leo was one year

⁷⁴ Michael R. Marrus, The Politics of Assimilation: The French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 206.

Jacob Katz in his work entitled From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933 marks the years 1897-1901 as the zenith of French anti-Semitism. The anti-Semitic movement in France had little mass following until the 1880s. The crash of L'Union Generale bank in 1882 was linked to Jewish fiscal machinations. In 1886, Edouard Drumont's two volume work La France Juive was published. Drumont's thesis was that the Jews, who were members of an inferior race, had made themselves masters of modern France. Drumont blended the traditional Christian anti-Semitism with racial discrimination against Jews and Judaism. He was a leader in the French anti-Semitic movement.

Captain Alfred Dreyfus was charged with selling French military secrets to Germany. For this crime he was court martialed and sent to the penal colony at Devil's Island. The political machinations of the French military and Ministry of War in this case [as with czarist involvement in the Beilis case] distinguish it from the Frank affair.

⁷⁵ Marrus, The Politics of Assimilation, p. 231.

⁷⁶ Ostash, "The Leo Frank Case: 1982 Update," pp. 55-56.

old.⁷⁷ Frank graduated from Cornell University with a degree in engineering in 1907.⁷⁸ After serving a period of apprenticeship in Europe under the renowned Eberhard Faber, he returned to America to learn and later supervise the Frank family's pencil factory in Atlanta. His uncle Moses Frank was a majority stockholder in the pencil manufacturing company.⁷⁹ Professor Mark Bauman of Atlanta Junior College notes that Frank's uncle was a long time respected citizen of Atlanta.⁸⁰

Frank married the daughter of an Atlanta Jewish family in 1911. His wife's name was Lucille Zelig.⁸¹ Frank became active in local Atlanta Jewish affairs and served as president of the B'nai B'rith lodge there.⁸² The couple never had any children.

The discussion which follows of the Atlanta Jewish community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries centers about communal development, the influx of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, the leadership of the Atlanta community, and Jewish responses to the Frank case.

The first Jews came to Marthasville [later renamed Atlanta]

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 56.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 56.

⁸⁰ Mark Bauman, "Role Theory and History: The Illustration of Ethnic Brokerage in the Atlanta Jewish Community in an Era of Transition and Conflict," American Jewish History 73(1983).

⁸¹ Ostash, "The Leo Frank Case: 1982 Update," p. 56.

⁸² Ibid., p. 56.

in the mid-1840s. The community grew to 600 Jews by 1875, and was the largest Jewish community in the South by 1913.⁸³ Jews started to enter the South in significant numbers only after the Civil War⁸⁴; the State of Georgia was then actively seeking foreign settlers to bolster its labor supply perceived to be depleted by the emancipation of blacks.⁸⁵ Given that ethnic differences have always been accentuated in the South, most native Georgians were never reconciled to immigration despite the official recruitment program.⁸⁶ Historian Leonard Dinnerstein points out that

the South had fewer immigrants than other regions, contained a more homogenous population than existed elsewhere in the United States, and regarded conformity as a more important trait than the polyglot cities of the North or the continually changing frontiers in the West where differences were commonplace.⁸⁷

Salient among these undesirable immigrants were the 1,283 East European Jews of Atlanta who comprised the largest foreign-born group in the city in 1910.⁸⁸ The Russian Jews ghettoized themselves near the center of Atlanta, thus fostering a high

⁸³ Steven Hertzberg, "The Jewish Community of Atlanta From the End of the Civil War Until the Eve of the Frank Case," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 62(1973): 250-51.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 250.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 252.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 252.

⁸⁷ Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 61(1971): 58.

⁸⁸ Herzberg, "The Jewish Community of Atlanta From the End of the Civil War Until the Eve of the Frank Case," p. 253.

social visibility.⁸⁹ Mass Jewish emigration from Russia and Eastern Europe had begun in the wake of the pogroms of 1881-1884 in Russia.

According to historian Steven Herzberg,

social discrimination in Atlanta coincided with the arrival of the Russian Jews. Although the public originally distinguished between the newcomers and the established West European community to the latter's advantage, 'after 1900 the differentiation lessened in actuality and almost vanished in popular thought.'⁹⁰

The effects of American nativism had been blunted in the case of the earlier arrivals of German Jews because of "their small numbers, cultural orientation and assimilative patterns."⁹¹ Led by Reform rabbi David Marx, the established German Jewish community of Atlanta maintained relations which were frequently strained with the Russian Jewish immigrants who threatened to undermine what the older community had laboriously sought to create.⁹² As point of fact in the structure established by the older community, professional partnerships had frequently included both Jews and gentiles, as in the case of Governor John M. Slaton and Jewish attorney Benjamin Z. Phillips.⁹³ In addition, approximately twelve Jews were elected or appointed to

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 254, 272.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 272.

This point of attitudinal generalization is also made by John Higham, "Social Discriminations Against Jews in America," p. 15.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 266.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 273-74.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 262-63.

office between 1874 and 1911; this was significant representation for a group which never was more than 3% of the total population [which numbered 175,000 in 1913].⁹⁴ John Higham advances the following generalization: there exists "a direct correlation between discrimination and the degree to which the growth of the local Jewish community disturbed the existing social structure."⁹⁵

The election of Rabbi Marx by the Reform German Jewish community of Atlanta to serve as an effective ambassador to the general Christian community reflects the Jewish community's image consciousness.⁹⁶ Marx was a Southern-born assimilationist.⁹⁷ He was a graduate of Hebrew Union College and held the post of rabbi of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation [later called Temple] for more than 50 years after his election in 1895.⁹⁸ As a further comment on image awareness, Leonard Dinnerstein concludes that "Jews are not very anxious to stand out from everyone else" in the twentieth century South for fear of anti-Semitism.⁹⁹ "In the South it is rare for a Jew to

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 250,267.

⁹⁵ Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America," p. 26.

⁹⁶ Hertzberg, "The Jewish Community of Atlanta From the End of the Civil War Until the Eve of the Frank Case," p. 274.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 274.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 256.

⁹⁹ Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," p. 63.

support publicly controversial issues."¹⁰⁰

Shortly after Frank's trial in the summer of 1913, Rabbi Marx went to New York to consult with Louis Marshall, the president of the American Jewish Committee [AJC].¹⁰¹ According to Professor Dinnerstein, Marx felt that Leo Frank's conviction was the result of an anti-Semitic outburst.¹⁰² The executive committee of the AJC considered the Frank issue for the first time on November 8, 1913: it resolved that no official action be taken. The AJC did not want to be perceived as championing the cause of a Jew convicted of a crime.¹⁰³

Although Marshall counseled caution in terms of direct Jewish organizational involvement on Frank's behalf, he did not object to "unpublicized assistance".¹⁰⁴ Marshall's plan was to use the influence of important people to get southern newspapers to change public opinion in favor of Frank.¹⁰⁵ In January of 1914, Louis Marshall brought the Frank case to the attention of New York Times publisher Adolph Ochs, who in turn rose to

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁰¹ Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 111.

The AJC had been established in 1906 to "aid Jews 'in all countries where their civil or religious rights were endangered or denied.'" [p. 111]

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 112-13.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 113.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

Frank's defense.¹⁰⁶ Marshall also provided much assistance in the way of legal and public relations advice to Frank's attorneys.¹⁰⁷ The AJC president prepared and delivered the second appeal of Frank's case to the United States Supreme Court.¹⁰⁸

By 1914, many prominent Jews including Albert D. Lasker, Julius Rosenwald, and Jacob H. Schiff were providing much in the way of financial support, time, and talent to support Frank.¹⁰⁹ The allegation that Frank's defense counsel used Jewish money to purchase influence circulated throughout Georgia.¹¹⁰ Georgia's patrician historian Lucian Lamar Knight wrote in 1917 that " 'the entire Hebrew population of America was believed to be an organized unit directing and financing a systematic campaign to mold public sentiment and to snatch Frank from the clutches of the law.' "¹¹¹ In contradistinction, Dinnerstein asserts that for

¹⁰⁶ Levy, " 'Is the Jew a White Man?': Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913-1915," p. 213.

¹⁰⁷ Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 113.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 120.

Marshall argued that Frank had been deprived of his constitutional rights under the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment because he was not present at all stages of the trial. Frank had not been in the courtroom when the verdict was rendered. [p. 120]

¹⁰⁹ Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," pp. 114-15 and Levy, " 'Is the Jew a White Man?': Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913-1915," p. 218.

¹¹⁰ Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," p. 114.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 125.

the American Jewish community to ignore Frank might have suggested "to other American communities that Jews can be attacked with impunity."¹¹²

Unlike the American Jewish Committee, the Jewish community in California [which numbered 2% of the state's population in 1915] believed that Frank was a victim of blatant anti-Semitism and that only "massive popular campaign" would aid his cause.¹¹³ Other Jewish individuals and communities, both intentionally and unintentionally, pursued responses to the Frank case that were at variance with Marshall and the AJC.

To return briefly to the Atlanta Jewish community at the time of the Frank case, there were concrete demographic and economic repercussions to the lynching of Frank in August of 1915. Many hundreds of Jews fled the state, and Jewish businesses were subject to boycott.¹¹⁴

The above discussion has provided a framework within which Christian responses to the trial and lynching of Leo Frank can be assessed in depth. Prior thereto, however, historical conceptualizations of the origins of American anti-Semitic attitudes will be explored.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 108.

¹¹³ Henig, "California Progressives React to the Leo Frank Case," pp.171-72.

¹¹⁴ Joyce, "Pardon Denied for Leo Frank in 1913 Slaying," p. A10 and "Leon [sic] Frank Pardoned by Georgia Board," p. 5.

The population statistics cited in these articles seem to be inaccurate based on Hertzberg and Bauman.

CHAPTER 2

"Ideological and Economic Paradigms of Anti-Semitism"

It would be well if definitive historical discussion and analysis of the case of Leo M. Frank in the context of anti-Semitism were tempered by the observations of historians John Higham and Leonard Dinnerstein. Professor Higham points to the paucity of historical research on American anti-Semitism, noting a particular lack of analytical works. Most of the historical studies from the 1930s [when serious scholarly attention to American anti-Semitism developed] to the late 1950s [when Higham made these observations] bore a descriptive, what-led-to-what motif.¹ Not only is historical analysis of anti-Semitism in the United States wanting as compared with social assessments thereof, but Professor Dinnerstein relates that less historical attention has been given to the Jews in the South than in other sections of America. Knowledge of Southern Jewish life is thus less than thorough. Dinnerstein cites the works of historians Jacob Marcus and Bertram Korn as salient exceptions to the general neglect of Jewish experience in the South.² Despite the above impediments to complete analysis of anti-Semitism in America in general and its Southern expression in particular, we are nevertheless confronted with attempting to interpret why Leo

¹ John Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 43(1957): 559.

² Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 61(1971): 52.

Frank was the first Jew to be lynched in America, why that lynching occurred in the South, and why this event occurred in the early twentieth century and not before or after that time period.

Leonard Dinnerstein, Richard Hofstadter, and John Higham concur that a discernible pattern of anti-Jewish discrimination began to develop in America in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century. Higham asserts that "a pattern of discrimination began to take root only in the 1870s"³, whereas Dinnerstein and Hofstadter⁴ mark the 1890s as the watershed period of pronounced "increase in virulent remarks about Jews"⁵. In contention with the aforementioned viewpoints is that of Oscar Handlin. Handlin posits that the period from 1890 to 1900 was characterized not by anti-Semitism but was "actually marked by distinct philo-Semitism."⁶ For Handlin, the American stereotype of the Jew in the 1890s "involved no hostility, no negative judgment"⁷;

³ John Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 47(1957): 7. In Higham's periodization of American history, the era spanning the years 1870 to 1890 are referred to as the "Gilded Age".

⁴ Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), pp. 77-78.

⁵ Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," p. 59.

⁶ Oscar Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 40(1951): 325.

⁷ Ibid., p. 328.

only in the period between 1913 and 1920 did American anti-Semitism present itself as a factor of considerable importance.⁸ John Higham takes issue with Handlin's denial of nineteenth-century anti-Semitism in the United States, arguing that Handlin's thesis is inconsistent with other points presented in that scholar's line of reasoning.⁹ Higham also cites Handlin's viewpoint as participating in the broader tendency in historical research on American anti-Semitism to "re-emphasize the harmony and unity in American society."¹⁰

A finer grained examination of the thought of Oscar Handlin is appropriate at this juncture. Handlin contends that the American obsession with fear of the Jew, made manifest in economic and social discrimination and even in political action, was essentially a new phenomenon.¹¹ The general socio-historical contour of the Jewish experience in America through the end of the nineteenth century had been marked by tolerance, though to be sure there had been the occasional exception: General Grant's Order Number 11¹², the denial of accommodations to Joseph

⁸ Ibid., p. 323.

⁹ Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," p. 561.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 561.

¹¹ Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," p. 323.

¹² Grant's General Order Number 11, which was issued in December of 1862, is a rare instance in American Jewish history of "official anti-Semitism sponsored by an arm of the government." The order called for the evacuation of all Jews living in the Tennessee Department. The background of the order involved

Seligman at the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, and the pamphlet entitled The Jew at Home written by Joseph Pennell.¹³ Handlin concludes, however, that these examples are qualitatively different from the anti-Semitism which emerged after 1913. Parenthetically, as late as 1899, Thomas E. Watson "was still vigorously condemning medieval prejudices against the Jews."¹⁴

The most significant factor which produced anti-Semitism in the twentieth century was, according to Handlin, the xenophobia of the war years [1914-1918] which prompted "many Americans to reject every kind of tie with Europe."¹⁵ Though he does not explicitly make the connection, it might be supposed that this xenophobia obtained to the Jews of Eastern Europe who emigrated to the United States in large numbers beginning in the 1880s and continuing through the First World War. In addition to the point of xenophobia, Handlin adds "the disappointment of many radicals and reformers who somehow came to blame the Jews for

a severe cotton shortage in the North and a critical lack of certain medical goods combined with a surplus of raw cotton in the South. Jews were viewed as reaping the benefit of trading between both the North and the South. [Henry Feingold, Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present rev. ed. (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1981), p. 93]

¹³ Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the opening of the Twentieth Century," pp. 323-24.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 324.

Tom Watson actually had defended a Jew accused of murder in an earlier case. An article which discusses this earlier case and written by Louis Schmier of Valdosta State College in Valdosta, Georgia will appear in the Fall, 1986 issue of the Georgia Historical Quarterly.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 324.

their failure after 1900" as contributing to the rise of anti-Semitism.¹⁶

Though Handlin argues that the anti-Jewish hostilities of 1913-1920 were new, he nonetheless points out that these twentieth-century prejudices were "not inscribed upon a tabula rasa."¹⁷ In effect, there were pre-existent stereotypes of the Jews which took shape over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ By 1900, there was a clearly defined stereotype of the Jew in the collective American consciousness. The most important element of this mental distortion was the Jew's pervasive interest in money.¹⁹ Indeed, the Jews were perceived to control the great fortunes of the world.²⁰ However, in the 1890s, the impact of this stereotype was blunted by virtue

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 324.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 325.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 325-27.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 327.

An interesting example of the "preoccupation with money" component of the Jewish stereotype comes from the writing of Edward Alsworth Ross, former professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin. In his article "The Hebrews of Eastern Europe in America" which appeared in 1914, Professor Ross comments that "none can beat the Hebrew at a bargain, for through all the intricacies of commerce he can scent his profit." [Edward Alsworth Ross, "The Hebrews of Eastern Europe in America," The Century Magazine, 1914, p. 787.]

According to Richard Hofstadter, Edward Ross was a former Populist turned Progressive and a radical who gave learned support to anti-immigration sentiment in the United States. [Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R., p. 178.]

²⁰ Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," p. 329.

of the fact that it constituted but one stereotype among many ethnic prejudices extant during that period.²¹

The Jewish link with finance was strengthened by the growing preoccupation of the American public with money, particularly in the wake of the depression of 1893.²² Monetary reform in terms of bimetallism²³ was advocated increasingly by those elements who agitated for a change in currency. The bimetallist supporters sought to explain their defeats throughout the 1890s by looking to an external power, often focusing upon the international Jewish banker.²⁴

The suspicions of the currency radicals regarding a Jewish financial oligarchy were augmented by the cloak of mystery within which Americans had enveloped the Jew. Handlin notes, however, that the conviction of the strange and mysterious Jew in the United States did not assume the demonic character transmitted from the medieval period to nineteenth century Europe.²⁵ Rather, the "emphasis in this country was upon interpretations of the mission of Israel which went back at

²¹ Ibid., p. 328.

²² Ibid., p. 332.

²³ Bimetallism refers to the use of both gold and silver as the monetary standard of value and currency.

²⁴ Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," pp. 332-33.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 334.

least two hundred years to the reflections of Cotton Mather".²⁶

To account for the sense of fear from which the idea of Jewish conspiracy grew, Handlin points to the city as an object of dread and fascination. "To the city, and particularly to New York, whole regions of the South and West felt themselves in bondage."²⁷ In the United States, the Jews in particular were associated with the city through commerce.²⁸ "If all trade was treachery and Babylon the city, then the Jew--stereotyped, involved in finance, and mysterious--stood ready to be assigned the role of arch-conspirator."²⁹

The paradigm of development of American anti-Semitism as advanced by Oscar Handlin seems to suggest that an essentially positive public attitude towards Jews in America underwent a fundamental shift in the second decade of the twentieth century. Handlin's schema contains no element of genuine ambivalent attitudes towards the Jews on the part of non-Jewish Americans. The thought of Leonard Dinnerstein and Steven Hertzberg stands in contradistinction to Handlin's viewpoint. Both Dinnerstein

²⁶ Ibid., p. 334.

Cotton Mather [1663-1728] was a Puritan clergyman and writer, best remembered for his part in the Salem witch trials of 1692.

Mather composed a history of the Jews in 1714 as part of his Biblia Americanum; the work contains misinformation about the Jews and expresses the urgent need to convert them. [Feingold, Zion in America, p. 27]

²⁷ Ibid., p. 341.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 343.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 344.

and Hertzberg assert that the general American conception of the Jew contained both positive and negative elements. For Dinnerstein, anti-Judaic religious prejudice existed but counterpoise was provided by other American ideas which "stressed the essential equality of all white men and the abundance of opportunities for those who worked hard."³⁰

Hertzberg contends that the Southern image of the Jew had "always been ambivalent: half biblical patriarch and half Christ-killer, half legitimate entrepreneur and half Shylock."³¹ John Higham also supports this ambivalence motif: "American conceptions of Jews in the abstract at no time lacked the unfavorable elements embedded in the European tradition."³² Higham makes the important observation that

A distinction should be drawn, however, between actual social relations and stereotypes or ideas; the prevalence of good relations does not mean that American attitudes toward Jews were ever wholly favorable. Behavior and belief do not necessarily coincide in any area of life. Unfavorable attitudes about a whole ethnic group do not necessarily compromise our practic-

³⁰ Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," p. 55.

³¹ Steven Hertzberg, "The Jewish Community of Atlanta From the End of the Civil War to the Eve of the Frank Case," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 62(1973): 283.

³² Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930," p. 3.

According to Higham, Jews played two entirely different roles in the imagination of nineteenth-century America: one religious and the other economic. [p. 3] Jews were both the "instruments and unwilling witnesses of a divine purpose; and they represented the virtues and vices of modern business." [p. 4]

al response to individuals.³³

As point of fact, Dinnerstein notes that in the South [as well as other section of the country], "non-Jews who resented Jews and desired to restrict their political influence accepted the usefulness of Jewish merchants and artisans."³⁴

Thus, prejudice and discrimination are not qualitatively equal, nor does the latter follow from the former in knee-jerk fashion. The pathway from prejudice to discrimination is multi-causational in the thinking of Dinnerstein and Higham.

In discussing nineteenth-century Atlanta, Steven Hertzberg identifies several factors which mitigated the expression of negative elements in the general conception of the Jew. The relatively small numbers of West European Jews in Atlanta, the assimilationist orientation of the Jewish community, and the involvement of Jews in community life facilitated acceptance by the general Atlanta populace. Additionally, the Jews benefited from the doctrine of white supremacy, and "in Atlanta more than any other Southern community, entrepreneurial ability was considered a special virtue."³⁵ Hertzberg isolates the change in

³³ Ibid., p. 3.

Leonard Dinnerstein writes in a similar vein: "Conflicting attitudes and feelings frequently exist side by side and for opportunistic or other practical concerns deep prejudices are not always acted upon." [Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," p. 55]

³⁴ Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," p. 55.

³⁵ Hertzberg, "The Jewish Community of Atlanta From the End of the Civil War Until the Eve of the Frank Case," pp. 283-84.

character of the Jewish community of Atlanta occasioned by the influx of Russian immigrants as the salient cause for the rise of discrimination.³⁶

Leonard Dinnerstein suggests that regional attitudes have had more impact on Jews in the South than in other sections of the United States.³⁷ Parenthetically, the first group of Jews to arrive in the Southern colonies landed in Georgia in 1733. They met immediate opposition, though Governor James Oglethorpe granted them privilege to stay.³⁸ In the last third of the nineteenth century, many Jews in the South "served as scapegoats for a society unable to cope with--or recognize--the major sources of its grievances."³⁹ A case in point was the rural population which held Jews responsible for economic turmoil as a result of feeling held in bondage by the merchant or peddler.⁴⁰ A negative image of the Jew was given sanction from leading

³⁶ Ibid., p. 284. "The exclusion of the West European leadership from the elite clubs was the first significant instance of discrimination" in Atlanta. [p. 284]

Hertzberg's viewpoint meshes with that of John Higham who concludes that there is "a direct correlation between discrimination and the degree to which the growth of the local Jewish community disturbed the existing social structure." [Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930," p. 26.

³⁷ Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," p. 52.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 53.

It should be pointed out, however, that the original group of Jews to enter North America in 1654 met opposition from the authorities of Dutch New Amsterdam.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 57.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

personalities in Southern communities.⁴¹ Dinnerstein also notes the strong element of conformity extant within the Southern social psychology.⁴²

Within Dinnerstein's concept of anti-Semitism in the South, there is explicit rejection of the thesis that this was a Populist phenomenon.⁴³ This stands in sharp relief against the paradigm offered by Richard Hofstadter, namely the 'conspiracy theory' of the Southern Populist tradition.⁴⁴ Rather, Dinnerstein postulates an economic causation thesis for the rise of anti-Semitism. "In times of economic crises, or when the poor felt particularly victimized, the predatory Jew reappeared in public discussions."⁴⁵ Similar conditions which heightened antagonisms with blacks in Atlanta [marked by the racial riot of 1906] worsened relations between Jews and non-Jews: "a discontented urban working class forced to endure meager wages, crowded and uncomfortable tenements, and little hope for eventual improvement."⁴⁶ The fear of racial pollution exacerbated the conditions created by economic upheaval. By the 1890s, the Jews were considered racially and religiously different and

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 58.

⁴² Ibid., p. 58.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁴ Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, pp. 77-81.

⁴⁵ Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," p. 61.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

inferior.⁴⁷

Like Steven Hertzberg, Leonard Dinnerstein points to the influx of East European Jewish immigrants into America in the 1880s and 1890s as the catalyst necessary to ignite anti-Semitic outbursts in the United States and to threaten the established, Americanized Jews.⁴⁸ Before 1913 and the Frank incident, anti-Jewish animosity in Atlanta in particular had been manifest primarily in social restrictions.⁴⁹

In his discussion of anti-Semitism in the United States, historian Richard Hofstadter concludes that "it is not too much to say that the Greenback-Populist tradition activated most of what we have of modern popular anti-Semitism in the United States."⁵⁰

From Thaddeus Stevens and Coin Harvey to Father Coughlin, and from Brooks and Henry Adams to Ezra Pound, there has been a curiously persistent linkage between anti-Semitism and money and credit obsessions.⁵¹

To place several of the above terms in context, Hofstadter defines Populism not in the narrow sense of the People's or Populist Party of the 1890s, but rather as a

larger trend of thought, stemming from the time of

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

⁴⁸ Leonard Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the American Jewish Community," American Jewish Archives 20(1968): 108.

⁴⁹ Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," p. 61.

⁵⁰ Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, p. 80.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 81.

Andrew Jackson, and crystallizing after the Civil War in the Greenback, Granger, and anti-monopoly movements, that expressed the discontents of a great many farmers and businessmen with the economic changes of the late nineteenth century.⁵²...Populist thinking has survived in our own time, partly as an undercurrent of provincial resentments, popular and 'democratic' rebelliousness and suspiciousness, and nativism.⁵³

Professor Hofstadter delineates between popular and upper-class anti-Semitism: popular anti-Semitism is "linked with political issues" whereas upper-class anti-Semitism is a "variety of snobbery".⁵⁴

In Populist ideology, the entire flow of American history since the Civil War was to be understood as a conspiracy of international money power.⁵⁵ A case in point is the farmer:

the farmer is not a speculating businessman, victimized by the risk economy of which he is a part, but rather a wounded yeoman, preyed upon by those who are alien to the life of folkish virtue.⁵⁶ ... It was not enough to say that a conspiracy of the money power against the common people was going on. It had been going on ever since the Civil War. ... It was international....⁵⁷

⁵² Ibid., p. 4.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 5.

In a very positive vein, Hofstadter asserts that "Populism was the first modern political movement of practical importance in the United States to insist that the federal government has some responsibility for the common weal; indeed, it was the first such movement to attack seriously the problems created by industrialism." [p. 60]

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 70. Hofstadter does point out that it would be misleading to imply that the Populists alone conceived of events of their day in the context of a conspiracy. [p. 71]

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 73.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 74.

The conspiracy motif was developed, for example, in a novel written by Populist leader Ignatius Donnelly entitled Caesar's Column.⁵⁸ "It was chiefly Populist writers who expressed that identification of the Jew with the usurer and the 'international gold ring' which was the central theme of American anti-Semitism of the age."⁵⁹ Hofstadter points out that Populist anti-Semitism was "entirely verbal", a "mode of expression, a rhetorical style, not a tactic or a program. It did not lead to exclusion laws, much less to riots or pogroms."⁶⁰ The Populists did exhibit--in particularly virulent form--a fear and suspicion of the stranger--"everyone remote and alien was distrusted and hated."⁶¹ With regard to the Frank issue, Hofstadter asserts that the conduct of Populist leader Thomas E. Watson was not "altogether fortuitous".⁶²

Though historian Charlton Moseley does not explicitly accept or reject Hofstadter's thesis, Moseley suggests that the Jew was suspect in the South given the established regional nativist philosophy regarding other minority groups. For Moseley,

the Jew usually personified all the fears of the rural masses concerning dissent from orthodox religious Protestantism. The Jew was a stranger....In addition,

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 78.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 82.

⁶² Ibid., p. 81.

he was usually successful in business, a fact no doubt quickly noted in depressed agrarian regions.⁶³

A point supporting Hofstadter's link between Populism and anti-Semitism is that the "masses most adamant in their demand for the death of Frank were the avid followers of Tom Watson."⁶⁴ Counterbalance to the Hofstadter proposal is found in the thought of a group of historians which includes Norman Pollack, Comer Vann Woodward, Walter Nugent, and Frederic C. Jaber. These scholars "find little evidence that the Populists were more anti-Semitic than other groups in American society."⁶⁵

Moseley offers the following framework in which to understand the violence against Leo Frank:

Leo Frank was a Jew, a northerner, and the employer of cheap female labor. The barbarous treatment of the Jew was apparently the venting of pent-up hatreds against his race and position. ... It is very likely that the absence of similar cases in the South was due entirely to the fact that the aloofness and disjointed social position of the Jew provided an absence of opportunities.⁶⁶

Historian John Higham also suggests an historiographical matrix within which to interpret the events of 1913 to 1915 in

⁶³ Charlton Moseley, "Latent Klanism in Georgia, 1890-1915," Georgia Historical Quarterly 56(1972): 376.

Professor Moseley notes that the majority of the native whites of the South during the early decades of the twentieth century were of Scotch-Irish descent who came to America in two great waves in the eighteenth century. [p. 378]

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 377.

⁶⁵ Feingold, Zion in America, p. 146.

⁶⁶ Moseley, "Latent Klanism in Georgia, 1890-1915," p. 377. It should be noted that although Frank may have been viewed as a northerner in the popular mind, he was nonetheless a native of Texas.

Atlanta relevant to our topic:

A rising crime rate and anxiety over law and order, an increasing rigidity and punitiveness in racial discipline, an embattled defense of sexual purity, a baffled rage at industrial oppression--these were some of the emotions that swirled around the courtroom in Atlanta. Above all, Leo Frank was hated as an outsider, who focused the multiple fears the new prejudice brought together. Frank was not a southerner. He was a northern Jew....In the most fundamental sense he was seen as a deviant...who incarnated all the alien forces that threatened the traditional culture.⁶⁷

To continue with the theories of anti-Semitism advanced by John Higham, it is suggested that the type of anti-Semitism which most closely affected American Jewry from 1830 to 1930 owed very little to stereotypic thinking or ideological sources.⁶⁸ Stereotypes made discrimination possible, but did not create it.⁶⁹ "Discrimination issued not from primarily irrational, subjective impulses but rather from a very real competition for status and prestige."⁷⁰ Higham states that it was during the years 1870 to 1900, the Gilded Age, that the

⁶⁷ Gerald S. Henig, "California Progressives React to the Leo Frank Case," California History 58(1979): 167.

The mention of law and order in the first line of the quotation might refer to the fact that in the few years preceding the Frank case, thirteen black women had been murdered in Atlanta and all of the cases remained unsolved. [Daniel K. Oxman, "California Reactions to the Leo Frank Case," Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly 10(1978): 218.] An article in The Literary Digest notes that a "'crime wave' had been sweeping over the city" of Atlanta. ["Anti-Semitism and the Frank Case," The Literary Digest 50(1915): 85.]

⁶⁸ Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930," p. 2.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

established pattern of urban life was disrupted by the general struggle for rank, status, and privilege.⁷¹ Anti-Semitic discriminations provided a tool by which the social ladder could become more stabilized.⁷² Unlike Carey McWilliams and Oscar Handlin, who according to Higham posit that discrimination began at the top levels of American society and spread downward, John Higham asserts that

discrimination can arise more or less simultaneously at every social level where a crush of applicants poses an acute problem of admission. Discrimination is probably much less a game of follow-the-leader than one of limiting the followers.⁷³

John Higham identifies three periods of intense anti-Semitism in America which correspond with three like periods in Europe: [1] the 1880s and 1890s with the Dreyfus Affair in France and the writings of Edouard-Adolphe Drumont and Karl Eugen Duehring in France and Germany respectively; [2] the first years after the First World War with the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, immigration restrictions in the United States, Henry Ford's Dearborn Independent, widespread distribution of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Europe, and the formation of the National Socialist (Nazi) party in Germany; and [3] the 1930s with the rise of Nazism in Germany and anti-Semitic regimes in

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁷² Ibid., p. 11.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 11.

Higham notes that the Jews in America met with little economic discrimination before c. 1910 because they did not enter labor markets filled with other applicants. Social discrimination came much earlier, however. [p. 29]

Poland and Hungary.⁷⁴ The factors in common in America and Europe during these time periods included economic hardships, with concomitant social dislocation and loss of confidence in society, and a nationalistic spirit which included anti-foreign feelings.⁷⁵

Focusing upon the 1880s and 1890s, Higham identifies three groups in American society which harbored and manifested significant anti-Jewish feelings: some agrarian rebels in the Populist movement, certain eastern patrician intellectuals such as Henry and Brooks Adams and Henry Cabot Lodge, and urban immigrant poor people.⁷⁶ The commonality among these seemingly disparate groups includes a pervasive "social discontent and nationalistic aggression"; each group discovered itself to be at a particular disadvantage in the dislocations of the industrialization process in America--"the poor because it exploited them, the patricians because it displaced them."⁷⁷

There has always existed diverse and conflicting attitudes towards the Jew in the collective American mind; the Jewish stereotype had religious and economic components, each with its positive and negative sides.⁷⁸ Even the Populists and other

⁷⁴ Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," p. 570.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 570-71.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 572.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 572.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 563.

currency reformers who envisioned the 'Shylocks of Europe' arrayed against the working farmers and businessmen of America were precisely those groups which were most deeply imbued with and influenced by the best traditions of American democracy and Christianity.⁷⁹

Higham delineates two contrasting interpretive frameworks for anti-Semitism which developed within American historical scholarship. One such viewpoint, which was given fullest expression in the writing of Carey McWilliams [A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America, 1948], first emerged in the 1930s. The second theory, labeled neo-liberal or revisionist, coalesced about 1950 in the writing of Oscar Handlin.⁸⁰ The former view "included a worried and aroused sensitivity to ethnic conflict, an interest in its conservative or reactionary manifestations, and an economic interpretation of its origins."⁸¹ "Anti-Semitism in America was traced to the industrial revolution of the 1870's and was attributed to the assault of big business upon our democratic heritage."⁸²

The revisionist approach to anti-Semitism in America minimizes rather than maximizes the impact and pervasiveness of this phenomenon. More attention is given to the role of ideas overagainst economic forces in explaining the rise of anti-Jewish

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 564.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 559.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 560.

⁸² Ibid., p. 560.

discrimination.⁸³ The harmony and unity of American society are emphasized within the revisionist schema. Inherent in both historical frameworks is the tendency to concentrate on the need of the anti-Semite for a scapegoat. Neither viewpoint is prepared to accept the "role that the minority group itself plays in the conflict situation."⁸⁴ Despite his critical evaluation of each of these historical theories, Higham does accept the validity of the economic thesis, though with certain and definite qualifications.⁸⁵

Leo M. Frank was the only Jew ever to have been lynched in the United States. That he was lynched in the South is statistically unremarkable, for 87.9 per cent of the 3,224 lynchings in America from 1889 to 1918 occurred in that section of the country.⁸⁶ However, the phenomenon of lynching in America was not confined to any particular section; only five states had no lynchings from 1889 to 1918.⁸⁷ Discussions of the lynching evil in America appeared in many different types of magazines, both

⁸³ Ibid., p. 561.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 566.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 571.

⁸⁶ Robert R. Moton, "The South and the Lynching Evil," South Atlantic Quarterly 18(1919): 191. Robert Moton was principal of the Tuskegee Institute.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 191.

in this country and in England.⁸⁸

Nonetheless, the South, which had "about one-half the population of the North and West, had more than seven times as many lynchings as these two sections combined. ... The decrease of lynchings in other sections of the country has been more rapid than it has in the South."⁸⁹

Blacks living in the South were by far the most frequent targets for lynching during this time period. Seventy-eight per cent of those murdered by mobs were black people, and that propensity was noted as being on the rise.⁹⁰ As point of fact, 51 blacks and one white were put to death by mobs in 1913.⁹¹ The state of Georgia headed the list with 10 lynchings in 1913 out of the 52 crimes committed nationwide. Mississippi ranked second with nine lynchings in 1913.⁹²

Some of the victims were innocent of any crime⁹³; the majority had been guilty of minor offenses only.⁹⁴ Evidently

⁸⁸ See W. O. Shewmaker, "A Kentucky Lynching That Didn't Occur," Continent, 19 August 1915, p. 106 and "Lynching in the Southern States," Spectator, 5 February 1921, pp. 166-67.

⁸⁹ Moton, "The South and the Lynching Evil," p. 191.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

⁹¹ Survey, 14 February 1914, p. 625.

⁹² Ibid., p. 625.

⁹³ Winthrop D. Sheldon, "Shall Lynching Be Supressed?," Outlook 111(1915): 152 and Survey, 14 February 1914, p. 625.

⁹⁴ Sheldon, "Shall Lynching Be Supressed?," p. 152.

many of the lynch mob members went unpunished.⁹⁵

Several points seem peculiar about the Frank lynching given the above statistical information. First, Frank was lynched at a time in which the total number of lynchings in the United States was on the decline. More significantly, Leo Frank, a white man, was lynched during a time when that form of murder was being increasingly restricted to blacks.

The case of Leo Frank was instrumental in the creation of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.⁹⁶ It also sparked the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan.⁹⁷ The Klan, which had been officially disbanded in 1869, was revived as an organization in November of 1915 by William Joseph Simmons.⁹⁸ "The passions and prejudices of the modern Ku Klux Klan had been widely accepted dogmas in the South for generations before the secret, terroristic society was revitalized."⁹⁹ The inauguration ceremony for the new KKK took place on Stone Mountain, ten miles from Atlanta. No record indicates that Tom Watson was involved in

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 152.

⁹⁶ "The Leo Frank Case," ADL Bulletin, February 1984, p. 7 and Gerald Snyder, "Leo Frank: 'An Innocent Man Was Lynched'," Jewish Monthly, October 1982, p. 24.

⁹⁷ Snyder, "Leo Frank: 'An Innocent Man Was Lynched'," p. 24.

⁹⁸ Moseley, "Latent Klanism in Georgia, 1890-1915," p. 365.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 366.

launching the new organization.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Comer Vann Woodward, Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel. 2d ed. (Savannah, Ga.: Beehive Press, 1973), pp. 449-50.

CHAPTER 3

"Christian Responses to the Trial and Lynching of Leo Frank"

Responses to the Frank case which are contained within Christian denominational periodicals and within Christian periodicals with no denominational affiliation will be discussed. No reference to the location of publication will be considered at this point. All Christian responses were drawn from the time period contemporary with the Frank issue.

The publication format of Christian periodical responses to the Frank case included editorials, news synopses, brief articles which were frequently anonymous, excerpts of sermons, articles several columns long with a personal author noted, and poems. Responses of the editorial and news synopsis form were most prevalent.

The overwhelming majority of Christian periodical sources provided coverage and discussion of the Frank case only from the time of Frank's lynching in August of 1915. The Mennonite, a religious weekly journal of the Mennonite General Conference of North America, did contain two articles which referenced events in the Frank case prior to the lynching. Frank's sentencing in August of 1913¹ and the commutation of his death sentence by

¹ "Sentenced to Death for Killing Employee," The Mennonite XXVIII(1913): 7.

The footnotes in Chapter 3 will contain full bibliographic reference for most citations in order to avoid ambiguity. Many of the articles have similar or identical titles, thus to omit the name of the periodical after the first occurrence of same could be confusing.

Governor Slayton in June of 1915² were noted. However, The Mennonite contained no mention of the lynching or its aftermath, at least during 1915.

In order to discern a general tone of the various Christian responses it will be necessary to consider the following points: Was the issue of Frank's Jewishness raised? Were specific statements made which denigrated Frank's character? Was there direct mention of the possibility of Frank being innocent of the murder? Was there a call for prosecution of the members of the lynch mob?

Five articles refer, either directly or obliquely, to Frank's Jewishness or to anti-Jewish public sentiment. The United Presbyterian employed "young Hebrew" in lieu of Frank's name.³ The same United Presbyterian along with The Epworth Herald and Northern Christian Advocate drew a direct correlation between Frank being Jewish and the frenzied public emotions that developed around the Phagan murder. The United Presbyterian stated that "there enters into the emotions which have been inflamed by local discussion not only sympathy with the girl but hatred of the man because he was a Jew."⁴ Similarly, The Epworth Herald, a magazine published by The Methodist Book Concern, noted that "because of his Jewish extraction, the mob

² "Frank Goes to Prison for Life," The Mennonite XXX (1915): 7.

³ "Leo Frank Lynched," The United Presbyterian, 26 August 1915, p. 7.

⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

spirit, which is easily aroused in Georgia, was swung against him, and his trial and conviction will remain a lasting disgrace to that state."⁵ The Northern Christian Advocate asserted that "much race feeling developed during the trial as Frank was a Jew."⁶

The Wesleyan Christian Advocate; the principal news medium of the North Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; categorically rejected any causational link between Frank's Jewishness and the outcome of his trial.

It was a most serious blunder from any and every standpoint for the counsel of Leo Frank in the trial to inject into the case the idea of racial prejudice. That Frank was a Jew had no more to do with the verdict of sworn jurors than it had to do with the tides of the sea. The Jews of this state have had every advantage accorded anybody else within the limits of the state. Our courts have been open to them for redress of their wrongs and the securing of their rights. They have been prominent in the industrial and commercial life of the commonwealth, and when they have chosen, they have had access to the best social circles of the state. They have come among us and a number of them have amassed fortunes. Their rights of person and property have been respected. That one of that race should have been charged with a crime and haled before the courts to establish his innocence or meet a verdict of guilt was no more than has been done time and again to Gentiles within the state. Most unfortunate is that the race sentiment has ever been brought into the case. And most regrettable will it be if this racial prejudice is to be fanned into flame now that Frank has gone to the bar of God.⁷

⁵ "The Lynching of Leo Frank," The Epworth Herald, 4 September 1915, p. 862.

⁶ "Editor's Outlook," Northern Christian Advocate, 19 August 1915, p. 5.

⁷ "A Matter to Be Seriously Pondered," Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 27 August 1915, pp. 3-4.

Finally, the Northern Christian Advocate offered a brief report which was intended to demonstrate the influence of Jesus on the Jew, Leo Frank. When the mother of Frank was asked whether she could ever forgive her son's murderers, she is said to have replied that perhaps someday " 'I will be able to quote Leo's favorite passage from the Scriptures. It was: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. ' "8 To this quotation, the editor of the Northern Christian Advocate added that "if this be as reported, it beautifully illustrates the influence of Jesus upon his brethren after the flesh."9

Insofar as specific references against Frank in the Christian periodical literature, The Methodist, a journal of the Methodist Episcopal Church, issued the most derogatory comment. For The Methodist, a frenzied mob is "a worse menace to the state than such men as Frank, bad as their kind are."10 Most Christian journals referred to Frank in neutral terms, though The Herald and Presbyter, a Presbyterian weekly journal, applied "convicted murderer" to describe Frank.11

An article which appeared, with only stylistic variations,

8 "Editor's Outlook," Northern Christian Advocate, 26 August 1915, p. 5. The biblical passage is taken from Luke 23: 26 in the Christian canon.

9 Ibid., p. 5. "Brethren after the flesh" would refer to Jews; Christians would most likely be referred to as Jesus' brethren after the Spirit.

10 "A Ghastly Crime," The Methodist, 19 August 1915, p. 3.

11 The Herald and Presbyter, 25 August 1915, p. 28.

in both The Reformed Church Messenger and Lutheran Church Work raised the issue of the possibility of Frank's innocence: "the people of the State [of Georgia] look on the lynching as criminal in the highest degree, especially in the face of the fact that there was and is much doubt as to Frank's guilt."¹² The Universalist Leader, in a brief outline of the primary events in the Frank case, mentioned that "there was a reasonable doubt of his innocence, and on this doubt the Governor commuted his sentence"¹³ The Northern Christian Advocate in its issue of August 19, 1915 also briefly mentioned the "question of doubt" as to Frank's guilt for the murder of Mary Phagan.¹⁴ In a strongly worded statement, The Continent asserted that in the case of Leo Frank, "the question whether the man was guilty at all or not was too large for honest men to say that the crime had been fastened on him beyond reasonable doubt."¹⁵ Finally, The Epworth Herald stated that "the doubt of Frank's guilt was so strong in the minds of unprejudiced persons who reviewed the case that a national effort was made to save the condemned man."

Three different Christian periodicals wrote in support of

¹² "The Lynching of Frank," The Reformed Church Messenger LXXXIV(1915): 22 and "The Lynching of Frank," Lutheran Church Work, 2 September 1915, p. 2.

¹³ "The Shame of It," The Universalist Leader, 28 August 1915, p. 819.

¹⁴ "Editor's Outlook," Northern Christian Advocate, 19 August 1915, p. 5.

¹⁵ "Georgia Stamped with Shame," The Continent, 26 August 1915, p. 1137.

prosecution of the lynching mob, the Knights of Mary Phagan. The editorial staff of The Watchman-Examiner, which was a national Baptist paper, urged that "the mob must be individualized, and its individual members must be arrested and tried as murderers."¹⁶ The Reformed Church Messenger and Lutheran Church Work both expressed the hope that "the good name of Georgia and of the American public as a whole will be vindicated by a vigorous prosecution of the case until all that can be done will be done."¹⁷

Of those Christian periodicals which devoted attention to the Frank case, not one contained any overtly anti-Jewish commentary, such as denigrating religious or racial remarks. The evidence seems to support the statement that the general tone of the articles appearing in Christian periodicals was neutral to favorable vis-a-vis Leo Frank the man and sympathetic with regard to his fate. On the other hand, no Christian journal devoted ongoing coverage to the case from 1913 through 1915. The Wesleyan Christian Advocate did, however, contain ten different articles in 1915 relating to the case and its repercussions for the State of Georgia. The Christian Century, which is characterized by Theodore Peterson as probably the most influential

¹⁶ "Editorial Comment on Current Events," The Watchman-Examiner, 26 August 1915, p. 1903.

¹⁷ "The Lynching of Leo Frank," The Reformed Church Messenger LXXXIV(1915): 22 and "The Lynching of Leo Frank," Lutheran Church Work, 2 September 1915, p. 2.

Protestant weekly of that time¹⁸, provided no news coverage or discussion of the case at all. The only print space in the Christian Century given to the case during its two year course was a poem by Mary White Ovington entitled "Mary Phagan Speaks".¹⁹ This had been reprinted from the New Republic.

It must be noted that there were many Christian sectarian and non-denominational publications extant in the period 1913 to 1915 which made no mention whatsoever of the Frank issue. Some of this lack of response might be explained by the following points. Many denominational periodicals of the time under consideration were limited in the scope of their content to ecclesiastical/administrative matters only (for example, the appointment of pastors, church conferences, and missionary activities). Others focused upon devotional and liturgical concerns; often the periodical served as a weekly guide to personal worship, with biblical references and short lessons included. It was also noticed that scholarly Christian periodicals did not, in general, deal with topical issues of that day.

There was frequently a section contained near the beginning of the periodical entitled "News of the Week" or some variation thereupon. When reference to the Frank case was made, it was contained most often in this section or in the editorials.

From 1916 to 1986, this author is aware of only two articles

¹⁸ Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), pp. 396-97.

¹⁹ "Mary Phagan Speaks," Christian Century, 2 September 1915, p. 8.

relating to the Frank case which have appeared in Christian periodicals: one was published in the Shane Quarterly in 1943²⁰ and the other in the Christian Century in 1985.²¹

To return to the Christian periodicals of Frank's time, the overwhelming majority of responses seemed to employ the case as a forum through which to discuss law and order, lynching, mob law, states' rights, sectional tensions and issues, the State of Georgia, and the South in general. It will be most appropriate to compare Christian periodical responses which originated inside Georgia with those from outside that state within this context.

Within the scope of the above broad observation was the discussion of the Frank case in the influential Roman Catholic weekly entitled America. The mob members who were involved in the lynching were described as "armed cowards [who] flouted the law, trampled upon justice, [and] destroyed as far as they could the very foundations of civilization."²² In addition to decrying the actions of the mob, America alleged that Thomas E. Watson was the "leader" of that same group. Though it was noted

²⁰ L. O. Bricker, "A Great American Tragedy," Shane Quarterly 4(1943): 89-95. The Shane Quarterly was renamed Encounter in 1956. Encounter is associated with the School of Religion at Butler University and published in Indianapolis.

²¹ Stanley N. Rosenbaum, "'Our Willie' and the Leo Frank Case," Christian Century, 9 October 1985, pp. 887-88.

This author also found reference to an article which supposedly appeared in the periodical The Evangelist c. 1941-42. Its author was a certain Dr. Kershner. The journal article itself was not located.

²² "Leo Frank and the Liberty of the Press," America XIII(1915): p. 494. The bracketed words were added by this author.

that Watson was not present in person at the hanging, it was nonetheless implied that because of the calumny disseminated in Watson's "abominable publication" [the Jeffersonian] during the summer of 1915, he was therefore the ideological force behind the lynch mob.

The major emphasis of the article in America was an attack on Tom Watson premised upon his anti-Catholicism. Watson, referred to as a 'Georgia Pole-cat', was indicted for stirring up "blind and unreasoning hatred of everything Catholic" and for launching a "campaign of hatred against the Catholic Church, decency and against civilization".²³ The suffering of American Catholic men, women, and children at the hands of non-Catholic mobs, along with the destruction of convents and churches, was noted.

America did mention that Watson issued "threats of violence against any who might wish to show the innocence of this condemned and hated Jew."²⁴ American public concern about Jew-baiting in Russia was referenced. It was argued that the United States itself had internal issues involving anti-Jewish sentiment worthy of national attention. In effect, Americans did not have to look outside of this country's borders to find anti-Jewish feelings being expressed publicly.

The majority of Christian periodicals containing responses to the Frank case, and located in the course of this study, were

²³ Ibid., p. 494.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 494.

published outside of Georgia, including New York; Chicago; Boston; Syracuse; Pittsburgh; Philadelphia; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and the Pacific Coast. Prevalent among those periodicals published outside of Georgia was indictment of that state for its lawlessness, lack of justice, and the defense of the Frank lynching mob issued by some of its prominent citizens.

An editorial note which appeared in The Presbyterian Banner [Pittsburgh] in August of 1915 asserts that "law and life are not regarded in Georgia as they are in Northern States".²⁵ The editorial continues by stating that for all of the talk in Georgia of 'chivalry' and 'woman's honor', Georgia does not afford protection to its women and children with industrial legislation as most other states do.

The state of mind which permits and encourages lynchings was considered by the Banner's editor to be an "inheritance of slavery, in which a black man had no rights a white man was bound to respect, and the same spirit infected the whole social and political atmosphere and has poisoned the roots of justice and of civilization." By way of correction for the condition then existing in Georgia, The Presbyterian Banner concludes that "only a change of mind, wrought by Christian education" will effect a cure.

²⁵ "The Shame of Georgia," The Presbyterian Banner, 26 August 1915, p. 8.

The Christian Register made a similiar remark: "The truth about our country is that in many parts, notably at the South, the masses of people, white as well as black, do not come up to the ordinary world-standards of civilization." ["The Remedy for Lynching," The Christian Register, 19 August 1915, p. 771.

This editorial also charged the State of Georgia with responsibility for Frank's safekeeping at the penitentiary in Milledgeville. In addition, it argued that the high standing of the members of the lynch mob added to the gravity of the entire Frank affair. It was noted that the members of the mob included "solid business men and prominent church members"; criminals and "baser elements of the community" were purposely excluded.

Another article on the Frank lynching was featured in the same issue of The Presbyterian Banner. The Atlanta Constitution was quoted as saying that "it is Georgia law and justice that was hanged upon that Cobb county tree."²⁶ Mayor Woodward of Atlanta is reported to have justified the action of the mob, and issued a warning to former Governor Slaton not to return to Georgia. The article also notes that despite rumors of a prison abduction attempt, the Milledgeville prison adopted no special precautions. According to the Banner, large sums of money were then being collected in the North to discover and punish the members of the lynch mob.

The Universalist Leader [Boston and New York] was scathing in its discussion of the State of Georgia vis-a-vis the lynching of Leo Frank:

Georgia has made open confession that she can not, or will not, which is worse, command obedience to her own laws. She has disgraced not only herself but every state in the Union, and shamed our human nature. This latest crime of this nature startlingly illustrates how

²⁶ "The Lynching of Leo Frank," The Presbyterian Banner, 26 August 1915, p. 6. Cobb County is the county in which Marietta is located; Marietta was the site of Frank's lynching.

futile are laws which are not sustained by a public sentiment....²⁷

The Leader also contended that state or county officials in Georgia "apparently all propose to remain in ignorance" regarding the perpetrators of the crime. The "shadow of shame" shall be lifted from Georgia only when those people who consent to lynching "come to realize that crime can never cure crime".

In an editorial entitled "Georgia Again", The Congregationalist and Christian World [Boston] defended comment on the Frank case issued from sources outside of Georgia.²⁸ In the editor's opinion, the "murder of Frank has lowered the moral authority of the United States all over the world." Therefore, despite the resentment of many citizens of Georgia, the lynching of Leo Frank should be open to public national scrutiny. Of primary concern was an improvement in the laws of Georgia.

The issue of women and children was raised in this article as it was in The Presbyterian Banner. In Georgia at that time, children from ages eight to thirteen could work in factories and the age of consent was set at ten years. The Congregationalist also expressed the hope that closer review of the evidence in the Frank case might definitively resolve the question of Frank's guilt or innocence.

The "Editor's Outlook" section of the Northern Christian

²⁷ "The Shame of It," The Universalist Leader, 28 August 1915, p. 819.

²⁸ "Georgia Again," The Congregationalist and Christian World C(1915): 305.

Advocate [Syracuse, New York] contained the conclusion that the lynching of Leo Frank was "but a culmination of open defiance of the law which has been tolerated in the South."²⁹ This lynching was viewed as "one of the most law defying outrages ever committed and heaps more shame upon the state that has already been the scene of barbarous lynchings." It was noted, however, that this deed did not have the approval and sanction of "the best South". The attention of government officials to the condition of lawlessness was urged by the editorial.

The September 4, 1915 issue of The Epworth Herald [Chicago and New York] deemed that the talk emanating from Georgia as to the dignity of womanhood "has a strange sound" given that state's notoriously low standards in child and woman labor laws.³⁰ The Herald did credit the newspapers of Atlanta with expressing outrage at the Frank lynching. The magazine also noted the apologetics of such people as the mayor of Atlanta, who was reported to have argued that the lynchers were "merely refusing to let justice be cheated by the governor's action in commuting Frank's sentence." In addition, it was stated that "censure of the act of the mob comes from every point save that in which the lynching occurred."

Urging contriteness and penance, The Continent [New York] wrote that

²⁹ "Editor's Outlook," Northern Christian Advocate, 19 August 1915, p. 5.

³⁰ "The Lynching of Leo Frank," The Epworth Herald, 4 September 1915, p. 862.

Georgia must perform many an honest deed of expiation and many a bold and faithful act of justice before it can atone in its record for the superlative shame which attaches to the lynching of Leo M. Frank. ... And Georgia can only confess with penitence the double dye of disgrace upon it for having been neither strong enough nor watchful enough to suppress the outbreak of such barbarism among its people.³¹

The argument was made that Frank, by being condemned to life imprisonment by the judicial system of the State of Georgia, was already subjected to much suffering. The lynching was thus barbaric in the view of The Continent.

W. W. Ferrin, editor of The Pacific which served as the spokes-vehicle for the Congregational churches of the Pacific Coast, maintained that in the wake of Frank's lynching, " 'It begins to look as if the State of Georgia would have to alter her seal.' " ³² As point of reference, the obverse side of the seal of Georgia has the words "wisdom", "justice", and "moderation" adorning the banner which is draped about the columns. The motto of Georgia is "wisdom, justice, and moderation".³³

Finally, The Reformed Church Messenger [Pennsylvania] and Lutheran Church Work [Harrisburg and Philadelphia] contended that "the good name of Georgia will swing in the balance until

³¹ "Georgia Stamped with Shame," The Continent, 26 August 1915, p. 1137.

³² Daniel K. Oxman, "California Reactions to the Leo Frank Case," Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly 10(1978): 222-23.

³³ Information Please Almanac Atlas & Yearbook 1985. 38th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985), p. 668.

it is seen what will be done to punish the lawbreakers."³⁴

Two Christian periodicals published outside of Georgia, rather than call that state's reputation into question, steered a course of support and sympathy toward Georgia. The Christian Advocate [Nashville] wrote that

Governor Harris announces that no effort will be spared in the attempt to bring the guilty to justice, and a thorough investigation will be had to see whether any official failed in the discharge of his sworn duty. That this would be his attitude and his course of action, none who know Governor Harris have doubted. In this time of his State's humiliation and shame he and other officials can do much to prove to the world that the good citizenship of Georgia does not, in any measure, condone lawlessness. Georgia is on trial before the world, and those who believe in her and her people look with confidence to the day of the State's vindication.³⁵

In addition, the Advocate overtly supported as true an article which appeared in the Atlanta Journal that referred to Georgia as a " 'law-abiding State' ".

The Watchman-Examiner [Worcester, Massachusetts; Boston, and New York] issued the caveat: "Let not venomous things be said about Georgia. Let the people everywhere sympathize with the State authorities as they strive to bring the evildoers to justice, and thus to maintain the dignity of the law."³⁶ Of note is that this periodical urged that the lynch mob be "in-

³⁴ "The Lynching of Frank," The Reformed Church Messenger LXXXIV(1915): 22 and "The Lynching of Frank," Lutheran Church Work, 2 September 1915, p. 2.

³⁵ "The Georgia Mob," Christian Advocate, 27 August 1915, p. 1124.

³⁶ "Editorial Comments on Current Events," The Watchman-Examiner, 26 August 1915, p. 1903.

dividualized" instead of submerging the lynch mob, the citizens of Cobb County, Georgians in general, and the Georgian authorities under the rubric of lawlessness and anarchy.

The only Christian journal published in Georgia³⁷ and commenting upon the Frank case and its aftermath was the Wesleyan Christian Advocate, the principal news medium of the North Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This periodical did not offer defense or apology for the lynching of Leo Frank, indeed the Advocate wrote of the crime that "it was awful, horrible".³⁸ A central message found in the Advocate's articles was that some people outside the State of Georgia "have been too forward in their interference with the affairs of this state and far too bitter in their denunciation of our people as barbarians and our courts as swayed by the clamor of mobs."³⁹ In the face of such external interference and meddling, "the people of Georgia have shown surprising self control".⁴⁰ The sovereignty of Georgia's laws and that state's ability to administer justice according to duly enacted legislation are affirmed.⁴¹

Another theme developed by the Wesleyan Christian Advocate

³⁷ The Wesleyan Christian Advocate was published in Atlanta.

³⁸ "A Matter to Be Seriously Pondered," Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 27 August 1915, p. 4.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 3. See also " 'An Outlaw State,' " Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 3 September 1915, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 4.

was that "the lawless are everywhere and even the most shocking crimes are committed in all sections of the country."⁴² This theme was advanced in response to what the Advocate felt was unusual detraction of the people of Georgia by such sources as The Chicago Tribune, Outlook [New York], and the Northwestern Christian Advocate [Illinois]. The Wesleyan Christian Advocate was firm in its contention that "mobocracy cannot be tolerated in this state [Georgia]."⁴³ It was also suggested that the capture of "men who lynch other men" is a difficult task.⁴⁴

A third major issue discussed by the Wesleyan Christian Advocate centered about race prejudice and sectional animosities. The following commentary was offered in the September 17, 1915 issue of this Methodist periodical:

The sensible people of this state condemn the horrible lynching of this prisoner, and it does no good but great harm to send out bitter denunciations that stir sectional and race hatred among the people of this country. Great harm will come of that, and the most harm will come to the people who foster and scatter such things....⁴⁵

In another article entitled "A Matter to Be Seriously Pondered", the Advocate issued this somber warning:

Since the lynching of Frank there has been an effort,

⁴² Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 10 September 1915, p. 9.

⁴³ Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 27 August 1915, p. 6. See also "A Warning to Be Heeded," Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 15 October 1915, p. 4.

⁴⁴ "Georgia Tested and Found Wanting," Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 24 September 1915, p. 3. See also "A Warning to Be Heeded," Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 15 October 1915, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 17 September 1915, p. 6.

whether planned deliberately, or the result of intense and sudden passion, to keep alive racial animosity that can mean nothing but evil alike for the Jews and the Gentiles. That way lie troubles not easily cured. Along that path is anarchy of the most awful sort. To blow on the embers of that heat is to kindle an unquenchable conflagration that will take in its consuming flames all the institutions we hold dear and count as worth while. That will not do. Those beyond the borders of this state who have made the impression that there is here at the base of this lynching of Leo Frank race prejudice are sowing the wind and they will sooner or later reap the whirlwind. Nor is that the way for the prosperity of those within the state--for the Gentiles.⁴⁶

W. C. Lovett, editor of the Advocate, discussed several points of the Frank case in a comment called " 'An Outlaw State' ".⁴⁷ He argued that no mob kept Leo Frank from facing the jury at the time the verdict was rendered, and concluded that "after all this mob business in this trial has been decidedly overdone."⁴⁸ Indeed, "if one is disposed to make much of the 'mob spirit' during the trial, it should be remembered that the Supreme Court of this state and the Supreme Court of the United States were not under the remotest intimidation by a mob."⁴⁹

The Wesleyan Christian Advocate, in contradistinction to

⁴⁶ "A Matter to Be Seriously Pondered," Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 27 August 1915, p. 4. The reference to reaping the whirlwind is drawn from Proverbs 11. This passage seems to contain a veiled threat to the Jews of Georgia.

⁴⁷ " 'An Outlaw State' ," Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 3 September 1915, pp. 1-2. This article responded to a piece written in Outlook entitled "An Outlaw State". ["An Outlaw State," Outlook 110(1915): 945-47]

⁴⁸ " 'An Outlaw State' ," Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 3 September 1915, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

the majority of Christian periodicals published outside of Georgia, strongly defended the juridical processes of the State of Georgia and the right of that state to manage its own affairs. The journal did recognize a propensity within Georgia that, left unchecked, might result in "mobocracy", but argued that crime per se was not a problem only in Georgia.

Having examined the responses to the Frank case contained in Christian periodicals of that period, attention will now be focused upon the responses of various Christian clergymen in Atlanta to the same issue.

On June 14, 1915, at a session of the hearing before Governor John Slaton on the issue of commutation of Leo Frank's death sentence, Reverend Dr. C. B. Wilmer delivered a "brief but strong appeal for commutation."⁵⁰ Rev. Wilmer was the rector of St. Luke's Protestant Episcopal Church in Atlanta.⁵¹ He spoke at the hearing in the capacity of representative of a committee of ministers. "The appeal, he said, was not based on mercy."⁵² " 'Such an appeal [that is, one premised upon a plea for mercy] would be based on a confession of guilt. The appeal which I make is based on moral grounds and on a sense of justice.' "⁵³ " 'We appeal against the provincial prejudice which has been evident

⁵⁰ "Both Sides Heard on Frank Appeal," New York Times, 15 June 1915, p. 1.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 1.

⁵² Ibid., p. 1.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 8. The bracketed words are those of this author to serve as explanation of the word appeal.

against outside interference and against the prejudice of Gentiles against Jews.' "54

The petition which Rev. Wilmer read

appealed for clemency on the grounds that commutation would not change the jury's verdict or reflect on the Solicitor or the courts; that a life sentence would vindicate the severity of the law; that time might disclose new facts about the crime, and that commutation would be an act both of justice and humanity.⁵⁵

Owing to the differences in viewpoint among the ministers who signed this petition, "they had not deemed it advisable to include appeals additional to those stated."⁵⁶

Reverend Dr. Wilmer continued with the following statements evidently not part of the petition itself:

Several matters have been injected into this case which tend to befog it, and it is with reluctance that I discuss them in public. A prejudice has been engendered between Jews and Gentiles. Even if it were true, as charged by some, that the friends of Frank have done anything of a wrongful character in his behalf, it would not be something for you to consider in an appeal for commutation. ... class prejudice has been brought into this case--a prejudice between employee and employer. This was obvious before, during, and since the trial. Then, politics has been injected into this case; it also should be eliminated.⁵⁷

I wish briefly to refer to the atmosphere of this community before and during Frank's trial. ... Even should we admit that there was no suggestion of violence whatever on the part of the spectators at the trial, it should be remembered that psychological influence is far more subtle and far more calculated to

54 Ibid., p. 1.

55 Ibid., p. 8.

56 Ibid., p. 8.

57 Ibid., p. 8.

affect the mind of a brave man than mob violence.⁵⁸

The methods of the Atlanta city detectives in gathering evidence in the Frank case were called into question by Rev. Wilmer. "This caused Solicitor Dorsey to reply that the detectives were as 'good men as Dr. Wilmer or any other wearer of the cloth in Atlanta.'"⁵⁹

The New York Times also noted that "Dr. Wilmer has shown unusual interest in the case. The wife of Governor Slaton is a communicant of his church."⁶⁰

Attesting to Dr. Wilmer's strong interest in the Frank case was a letter to the editor of the Atlanta Journal he wrote dated March 12, 1914.⁶¹ Wilmer wrote to congratulate the Journal's editor for his commentary urging that Frank should have a new trial. Rev. Wilmer did not question the jury's decision in the case, but the conditions extant in Atlanta at the time of the trial. In view of the fact that Judge Roan, the trial judge, was not convinced of Frank's guilt or innocence, Dr. Wilmer suggested that a new trial be conducted "in what one might call a more judicial atmosphere".⁶²

The same petition signed by the group of Atlanta ministers

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

⁶¹ "Frank Case Yields New Bribe Charge," New York Times, 13 March 1914.

⁶² Ibid.

and read by Rev. Wilmer at the commutation hearing was also delivered to the Georgia Prison Commission by Reverend Dr. John E. White.⁶³ Rev. White was the pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Atlanta. According to the New York Times, in January of 1915 Dr. White asked James Conley, the primary witness for the prosecution in the Frank case, if he would like to see Mr. Frank hang.⁶⁴ The question evidently was posed to Conley during a formal session conducted at the courthouse in Atlanta that included detective Lillian Schuzel of Grand Rapids, Michigan.⁶⁵

The greatest amount of primary and secondary source material involving Atlanta pastoral response to the Frank case pertains to L. O. Bricker, D. D., pastor of the First Christian Church. The March 14, 1914 issue of the New York Times noted that Dr. Bricker was planning to discuss the Frank case that following Sunday, and stated that Bricker was prompted to speak on the case "by a sense of public duty and responsibility for conditions that made a 'square deal impossible in the original trial.'"⁶⁶ Bricker did not claim that Frank was innocent, but that "innocent or guilty, the atmosphere surrounding the trial was such as to

⁶³ "Both Sides Heard on Frank Appeal," New York Times, 15 June 1915, pp. 1,8.

⁶⁴ "Frank Case Damage Suit," New York Times, 21 January 1915.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "Evidence for Frank Ignored, She Says," New York Times, 14 March 1914.

preclude an unbiased hearing."⁶⁷

The Times quotes Rev. Bricker as saying that

I assume my full share of responsibility for this condition ... I admit freely that I was wrought up to a pitch that prevented the proper exercise of judgment and decision. I believe that most of us--practically all of us--were in the same state of mind during the trial.

This state of affairs reached a point that charged the very atmosphere of the courtroom with prejudice. An unbiased trial was impossible. I am prompted now to do my best to square my part of this grave responsibility by opening the problem to discussion in my pulpit....⁶⁸

In his sermon delivered on March 15, 1914, L. O. Bricker called for a new trial for Leo Frank on the basis " 'of the apparent insufficiency of evidence under which he was convicted.' "⁶⁹

Under ordinary circumstances, we in the South do not take the word of a colored man against the word of a white man, but we were willing to believe the unsupported story of a colored man, even [though he]... was a self-confessed liar and perjurer.⁷⁰

Writing to the Shane Quarterly in May, 1942 shortly before his death, Dr. Bricker gave his personal reactions in retrospect to the Frank case.

My own feelings, upon the arrest of the old negro night-watchman, were to the effect that this one old negro would be poor atonement for the life of this

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ "Pulpit for Frank," Washington Post, 16 March 1914, p. 3; "Ministers Ask for New Trial," Florida Times-Union, 16 March 1914; and "Ministers in Pulpits Urge New Trial for Frank," Louisville Courier-Journal, 16 March 1914.

⁷⁰ "Pulpit for Frank," Washington Post, 16 March 1914, p. 3.

little girl.

But, when on the next day, the police arrested a Jew, and a Yankee Jew at that, all of the inborn prejudice against the Jews rose up in a feeling of satisfaction, that here would be a victim worthy to pay for the crime.⁷¹

I went to see Leo M. Frank in jail many times thereafter. ... I saw in his eyes all the long story of the sufferings of his race. He had no bitterness in his heart against anyone.⁷²

Reverend Bricker asserted in 1942 that "I was the only minister in Atlanta who dared to go into his pulpit and demand that Mr. Frank be given a new trial. It nearly cost me my life. I was shot at twice, my home was set on fire...."⁷³ Whether his life was threatened cannot be demonstrated through independent evidence, but the veracity of his statement regarding he being the only Atlanta pastor to demand a new trial for Frank is called into question by reports appearing in the New York Times, Washington Post, Louisville Courier-Journal, and Florida Times-Union. Also questionable in light of the national outcry on Frank's behalf is Bricker's contention that "perhaps I alone am responsible for the act of Governor John M. Slaton's commuting his sentence to life imprisonment."⁷⁴

⁷¹ L. O. Bricker, "A Great American Tragedy," Shane Quarterly 4(1943): 90.

See also Gerald S. Henig, "California Progressives React to the Leo Frank Case," California History 58(1979): 167 and Rosenbaum, " 'Our Willie' and the Leo Frank Case," p. 887 for reference to and discussion of this quotation.

⁷² Ibid., p. 92.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 92.

⁷⁴ Bricker, "A Great American Tragedy," p. 93.

Parenthetically, Rev. Bricker claimed to have helped defend the home of Governor John Slaton against the angry mob that had gathered there following the announcement of commutation. According to his letter in the Shane Quarterly, it was he who verbally challenged the mob to stay away from the governor's home.⁷⁵

Rev. F. A. Lines, pastor of the First Universalist Church in Atlanta, devoted his entire sermon on Sunday, March 22, 1914, to a discussion of the Frank case.⁷⁶ Rev. Lines charged that mob conditions surrounded Frank's trial and that the jury responded to the mob spirit.⁷⁷ The text of his sermon contained the following assessment, and plea:

A vast amount of new evidence which has a direct bearing upon this most remarkable case is daily coming to light.

In the face of all this shall we allow a human being, a brother man, to hang without a fair and impartial trial? Surely the heart and mind of man should answer 'No.' The State of Georgia is on trial, not Leo Frank. The Church, the Christian people of this city and State are on trial. ...

I plead for a new trial for Leo M. Frank in the name of that justice which demands for every man the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;....⁷⁸

The New York Times on March 23, 1914 reported that Rev. G. L. Hickman, who is identified as "a leading minister", also

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

⁷⁶ "More Pastors Urge Retrial for Frank." New York Times, 23 March 1914.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

called for a new trial for Leo Frank. The context of Rev. Hickman's statement was the prelude to a sermon delivered on March 22, 1914.⁷⁹

Dr. Rembert G. Smith, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Marietta, Georgia, "read a strong and positive denunciation of the crime which had been committed" on the Sunday after Leo Frank had been lynched.⁸⁰ However, according to the Wesleyan Christian Advocate, Dr. Smith's prepared statement was denied publication in New York by some of the big daily newspapers due to anti-Georgia sentiment.⁸¹ His congregation, the largest in Marietta, endorsed the denunciation issued by their pastor.⁸²

The minister of the Moore Memorial Church in Atlanta, Dr. A. R. Holderly, stated in his sermon on March 15, 1914 that he believed that Frank had not had a fair trial.⁸³ He therefore felt that a new trial was warranted. Reverend Julian S. Rodgers of the East Atlanta Baptist Church also issued a call for a new

⁷⁹ "More Pastors Urge Retrial for Frank," New York Times, 23 March 1914.

⁸⁰ "Contemptible Unfairness," Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 24 September 1915, p. 9.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁸² Ibid., p. 9.

⁸³ "Pulpit for Frank," Washington Post, 16 March 1914, p. 3; "Ministers Ask for New Trial," Florida Times-Union, 16 March 1914; and "Ministers in Pulpits Urge New Trial for Frank," Louisville Courier-Journal, 16 March 1914.

trial for Leo Frank.⁸⁴ " 'Leo M. Frank has never been fairly convicted of the crime...I wouldn't hang a yellow dog on James Conley's testimony, much less a white man who comes into court with a character heretofore unchallenged.' "⁸⁵

The above material indicates that at least an element of Atlanta's Christian leadership spoke publicly in favor of a retrial for Leo Frank. The Christian clergy represented in this study seemed to believe that a mob spirit had indeed influenced the trial and its outcome. Most ministers urged retrial on the basis of justice and humanity.

Individual Christian responses to the trial and lynching of Leo Frank will be evaluated at this juncture, beginning with the writing of Rev. H. H. Proctor, D. D. This author concludes that Rev. Proctor was a black Congregationalist minister in Atlanta.⁸⁶

H. H. Proctor, in the course of discussing the Frank case and the lynching problem in the South, found reason for some positive comment.

⁸⁴ "Pulpit for Frank," Washington Post, 16 March 1914, p. 3; "Ministers in Pulpits Urge New Trial for Frank," Louisville Courier-Journal, 16 March 1914; and "Ministers Ask for New Trial," Florida Times-Union, 16 March 1914.

⁸⁵ "Pulpit for Frank," Washington Post, 16 March 1914, p. 3. See also Eugene Levy, " 'Is the Jew a White Man?': Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913-1915," Phylon 35(1974): 214.

⁸⁶ This conclusion is based on a passage in Grapho, "Just from Georgia: The Atlanta Spirit and the Upward Movement," The Congregationalist and Christian World CI(1916): 642. In a section entitled "A Congregational Push", Grapho speaks of "Dr. Proctor's church" and that "Dr. Proctor has done great things for his race in Atlanta and the South."

But dark as this case is, rays of light are seen bursting over the abyss. The very uniqueness of Atlanta vouchsafes a peculiar moral resiliency. Atlanta arose from the burning by Sherman's troops to face a new destiny. With the well-known Atlanta spirit, the city came out of the riot of 1906 a better city,.....

If this whole deplorable case shall result in the strengthening of public sentiment against this iniquity [lynching], in the enactment of a state law that will be effective as far as a state law can be, and, above all, in making lynching a Federal crime, our faith will be strengthened in the great truth that God causes the wrath of men to praise him.⁸⁷

Rev. Proctor notes that Jim Conley, after having served a year-long prison term for being an accomplice to the murder of Mary Phagan, "walked about in Atlanta and was not even threatened with violence."⁸⁸

Following a five-month visit to the South during 1915, the Reverend William Lindsay delivered a sermon entitled "Self-Expression" at the First Congregational Church in Milton, Massachusetts.⁸⁹ For Rev. Lindsay, the lynching of Leo Frank reminds us of "the dangers attending an outbreak of emotional egotism, and at the same time of the priceless worth of mental balance,

⁸⁷ H. H. Proctor, "An Uncovering of the South: Local Sidelights on the Frank Case," The Congregationalist and Christian World C(1915): 364. The bracketed word in the quotation was added by this author.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 364.

The New York Times also mentioned that Conley was convicted of being an accessory after the fact to the murder. ["Pulpit for Frank," New York Times, 16 March 1914, p. 3]

⁸⁹ "The Lynching of Leo Frank," The Christian Register, 9 September 1915, p. 861.

correct thinking, and sound judgment."⁹⁰ About one-quarter of Lindsay's sermon text as recorded in The Christian Register dealt with the State of Georgia. The tone of one passage is noteworthy: "Surely there must be, we believe there are, law-abiding citizens in Georgia who resent and condemn the murder of Leo Frank, and lynching in general."⁹¹

Writing in America in September of 1915, Henry Woods of the Society of Jesus did not in any way excuse the crime against Leo Frank perpetrated by the mob.⁹² However, Woods argued that the courts and executive office of Georgia had been browbeaten by external public pressure during the course of the Frank affair. Indeed, the fact that Governor Slaton had commuted Frank's sentence to life imprisonment actually gave occasion to the lynching. This "outraging [of] all our processes of justice is almost beyond expression."⁹³

Commenting on the widespread public reaction to the Frank case, H. Woods offered the following observations:

From New York to San Francisco the newspapers retried and acquitted him. From San Francisco to New York

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 861.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 861.

⁹² Henry Woods, "The Crime at Marietta," America XIII(1915): 537.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 537.

Implied in this statement is that if the judicial decision to hang Frank on June 22, 1915 had been carried out and not altered by executive decision, then the lynching would never have happened. The public outcry on Frank's behalf seems to have been viewed by Henry Woods to constitute an act of greater moral reprehensibility than the lynching per se.

ministers neglected the Gospel they are supposed to preach, to do the same in their pulpits;....

Such proceedings are a grievous injury to the courts of law.

The editors, the ministers, the female agitators, the petitioners, the personal visitors, making up no small part of the people of the United States, unless they were moved by some hidden power, were convinced that the Courts of the State of Georgia, the Supreme Court of the United States, were resolved on a judicial murder, that the Governor of Georgia was consenting to it, and that the fact was so clear, as to justify an interference that otherwise would have to be judged as absolutely lawless. No worse insult can be imagined.⁹⁴

It is noteworthy that Henry Woods made no mention of the pressure applied on Governor Slaton by Thomas Watson in the Jeffersonian. Watson agitated vehemently against sparing Frank's life. Woods concluded that the "authority without which no body politic can maintain itself is being brought into grave peril"⁹⁵, not by the actions of lynch mobs but by the actions of an outraged citizenry.

On Sunday, April 25, 1915, Rev. Dr. S. Edward Young delivered a sermon at the Bedford Presbyterian Church at Nostrand Avenue and Dean Street in Brooklyn, New York.⁹⁶ During the course of his preaching, Rev. Young proposed a nationwide appeal on behalf of Leo M. Frank. He used Deuteronomy 19:10⁹⁷ as the

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 536.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 537.

⁹⁶ "Pulpit Appeal for Frank," New York Times, 26 April 1915.

⁹⁷ Lest innocent blood be shed in your land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, and so the guilt of bloodshed be upon you.--Deut. 19:10.

basis for his talk. According to Dr. Young, the issues involved in the Frank case " 'affect the whole country and the vital teachings of religion.' "98 He continued by saying that

the element of incalculable seriousness is the convicting of any American citizen on account of his race or religion.

All the facts make it undeniable that prejudice against the Jew was Frank's real accuser and jury. Such a state of affairs must not be tolerated. Against it cry out the Old and New Testaments, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and every sentiment of world-wide brotherhood cherished by humanity today. ...

Race prejudice is an outlaw in the twentieth century. It is the worst possible indictment, wherever it exists, of the Christian religion.⁹⁹

Evangelist William Ashley "Billy" Sunday also commented on the Frank case. In his sermon at the Tabernacle in Paterson, New Jersey on the night of May 11, 1915, he is reported to have said " 'If I were Governor of Georgia Frank would go free tomorrow.' "100 His comment evoked loud applause.

William Sunday [1862-1935], ordained by the Chicago Presbytery in 1903, was a former major league baseball player. He proclaimed a crude version of ultra-conservative evangelical theology, preaching divine wrath rather than divine love.¹⁰¹

98 "Pulpit Appeal for Frank," New York Times, 26 April 1915.

99 Ibid. The last line of this quotation is highly significant in that it seems to imply that Christianity bears some of the responsibility for anti-Jewish prejudice, if only for the continued presence of that evil.

100 "Billy Sunday for Frank," New York Times, 12 May 1915.

101 Concise Dictionary of American Biography 3d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), p. 1011.

The final response of an individual Christian to be examined herein is that of Rev. Alvan F. Sherrill, Dean of the Atlanta Theological Seminary.¹⁰² The September 15, 1915 issue of Outlook, which was published in New York, carried an excerpt from a letter written by Dr. Sherrill to that journal:

At some risk of your misunderstanding me, I will add, the men who hung Frank were not a 'mob' by any true sense of that word--they were a sifted band of men, sober, intelligent, of established good name and character--good American citizens. In all essentials of manhood and citizenship, they were your equals or mine. They believed it was a very exceptional exigency that demanded and justified the very exceptional act. Now, are you sure that your judgment one thousand miles away is better than theirs on the ground?¹⁰³

The Outlook commented that Dr. Sherrill's words supported the un-American doctrine of mob law.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² This author has attempted to locate a reference to or history of the Atlanta Theological Seminary. These efforts have met with no success.

¹⁰³ "The End of the Frank Case," Outlook 111(1915): 115.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 114.

CHAPTER 4

"American Christian Religious Life and Periodical Literature"

Historian Winthrop S. Hudson identifies three major currents within post-Civil War society which impacted upon American churches during the latter quarter of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. First among these social currents was a sharp increase in the percentage of the population which was of foreign birth. The predominance of British [England, Scotland, and Wales] elements in the population of the United States around 1800 was displaced by 1900, when "out of a population of 75 million, one-third were either of foreign birth or children of foreign-born parents."¹ The majority of these New Americans were German, Irish, Central and Southern European, and Scandinavian.²

A second significant change within American life after 1865 was the "radical shift in the intellectual climate", marked by the application of "evolutionary theories to the understanding of the past."³ Charles Darwin and English philosopher Herbert Spencer were instrumental in this intellectual metamorphosis.

The third salient feature noted by Professor Hudson was the transition in the center of power in America from the rural countryside, in which the "agrarian democracy envisaged by

¹ Winthrop S. Hudson, Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life 2d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), pp. 207-08.

² Ibid., p. 208.

³ Ibid., p. 208.

Jefferson" dominated, to the developing urban centers.⁴ Efforts by the Populists, Grangers, and Greenbackers to "dislodge the commercial and industrial interests from the centers of power simply confirmed the fact that they were fighting a lost cause, for they never were able to win more than regional victories."⁵

The Civil War stands as a monumental ridge of demarcation in American religious experience. From the beginning of colonial life in America, "religion had served as a bond of unity which helped to overcome the divisive effects of competing local interests and regional concerns."⁶ The Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century is a significant case in point.⁷ The question of slavery produced such all-encompassing dislocations that many of the churches were not able to stay united on the issue.⁸

Relatively few Southern denominations were able or found it desirable to reunite with their Northern counterparts after

⁴ Ibid., pp. 208-09.

⁵ Ibid., p. 209.

The Granger movement, which took its name from the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, was an agrarian movement that expanded rapidly after the economic Panic of 1873.

The Greenback party was a political organization formed over the years 1874-76 to promote currency expansion in the wake of the 1873 depression. Its membership was primarily Western and Southern farmers. The party largely dissolved after the 1884 national election.

⁶ Ibid., p. 209.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 59-82.

⁸ Ibid., p. 210.

Appomattox.⁹ The Protestant Episcopal Church is an example of one denomination which did successfully merge Northern and Southern churches after 1865.¹⁰ Rev. Dr. C. B. Wilmer, one of the Christian leaders who spoke out regarding the Frank case, was pastor of a Protestant Episcopal Church in Atlanta.

The three largest denominations in the South in the post-Civil War period were the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians.¹¹ The Methodist Episcopal Church, South [of which the Wesleyan Christian Advocate was one spokes-vehicle in 1915] and the Southern Baptist Conference had emerged following the ecclesiastical split in their respective national churches in 1845.¹² The Presbyterians, as of 1870, were also split between North and South.¹³

The growing shift after the Civil War in the make-up of the population of the United States in terms of national origin and ethnicity was reflected in the proportionate strength of various religious groups.¹⁴ By 1900, the Methodists and the Baptists were the largest American denominations [at a national level],

⁹ Appomattox is the town in central Virginia where General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865, bringing to a close the American Civil War.

¹⁰ Hudson, Religion in America, p. 216.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 217.

¹² Ibid., p. 217.

¹³ Ibid., p. 217.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 236.

followed by the Lutherans and Presbyterians.¹⁵ Dr. Hudson points to the growth of the Roman Catholic Church as "the most spectacular feature of the post-Civil War years".¹⁶ Roman Catholicism encountered both secular and religious nativism in this country.¹⁷ Though the Mennonites benefited as a result of successive immigration from Switzerland, Prussia, and Russia, they only had a membership of 54,000 in 1910, which was split among 11 groups.¹⁸ The Mennonite General Conference of North America had published two articles dealing with the Leo Frank issue.

Parenthetically, with the great influx of Eastern European Jewish immigrants from 1880-1914, the American Jewish community grew substantially also.¹⁹ In addition, Buddhism became established on the West Coast with the arrival of Chinese and Japanese immigrants.²⁰

With respect to the nature of religion in Atlanta in the years preceding the Frank case, Harvey K. Newman concludes that there existed the "belief that the well-being of the city depended upon establishing order in the community. The white

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 239-40.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 261.

¹⁹ See Henry L. Feingold, Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present rev. ed. (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1981), pp. 113-157.

²⁰ Hudson, Religion in America, p. 259.

Protestant churches joined with other social, economic, and political forces to promote this goal of orderliness."²¹ Revivalism succeeded in bringing in new members for the churches, but this addition in membership "was accomplished at the expense of their idea of order for Atlanta."²²

Attention will now be given to a discussion of Christian periodical histories, including editorial leadership, publishers and/or proprietors, and denominational affiliation and/or general point of view. The scope of this treatment will be limited to those sectarian and non-denominational Christian periodicals which included articles relating to the Frank case and its aftermath that were located during the course of this study.

America: A Catholic Review of the Week was published by the America Press in New York. The president of the America Press in 1915 was Richard H. Tierney. America, started in 1909, was an influential weekly of intellectual substance.²³

The Christian Advocate was the general organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and published in Nashville, Tennessee. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had become an

²¹ Harvey Knupp Newman, "The Vision of Order: White Protestant Christianity in Atlanta, 1865-1906" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1977), p. abstract - 1.

²² Ibid., p. abstract - 3.

²³ Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 398.

all-white religious body by 1870, though it had a black membership of 207,766 in 1860.²⁴ The majority of black Methodists in the South became part of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.²⁵

The Christian Century, published in Chicago, was perhaps the most influential Protestant weekly of the time.²⁶ This journal, which was free from denominational ties by the time of the Frank case, had begun life under that name early in 1900 as an organ of the Disciples of Christ.²⁷ The magazine itself accepted the date of its real beginning as 1908 when Charles Clayton Morrison purchased it.²⁸ From the start, Morrison was guided by his conviction that the church was responsible for the character of society and tried to apply Christian principles to a broad range of contemporary concerns. He made the magazine a vigorous independent journal of intellectual stature and liberal outlook.²⁹ Morrison was the editor during the period 1913 to 1915.

The Christian Century continued the Christian Century of the

²⁴ Hudson, Religion in America, pp. 224-25.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 225.

²⁶ Peterson, Magazines, p. 396-97.

²⁷ The Disciples of Christ or "Christians" combined a Presbyterian heritage with Methodist doctrines and Baptist polity and practice. [Hudson, Religion in America, p. 179] Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) and his son Alexander (1788-1866) were instrumental in the founding and leadership of the Disciples of Christ. [Hudson, Religion in America, p. 125]

²⁸ Peterson, Magazines, pp. 396-97.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 396-97.

Disciples of Christ which began in 1884.. It absorbed the Christian Tribune on June 7, 1900 and the Christian Work on April 1, 1926. Currently, the Christian Century is published by the Christian Century Foundation in Chicago.

The Christian Observer, founded in 1813, was a Presbyterian³⁰ family newspaper. The journal was published by Converse & Co. in Louisville, Kentucky. Rev. David M. Sweets, D. D. was editor during the time of the Frank issue.

The Christian Register was published by the Christian Register Association in Boston. The periodical was established in 1821.

The Congregationalist and Christian World succeeded The Recorder [founded in 1816] and The Congregationalist [founded in 1849]. It was published by the Pilgrim Press which was incorporated as The Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, Boston and Chicago.

The United Church of Christ was formed on June 25, 1957, a merger of the Congregational-Christian Church and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.³¹ The Congregational-Christian Church was the result of the uniting of the Congregational Church

³⁰ The classic form of Presbyterianism took shape in Scotland. Francis Makemie (1658?-1708) was the major figure associated with the growth of American Presbyterianism. The Westminster Confession (1729) serves as the doctrinal standard of American Presbyterianism. [Hudson, Religion in America, pp. 41-43]

³¹ Hudson, Religion in America, p. 390 and Joy K. Floden to Robert Seitz Frey, 12 February 1986. Ms Floden is an administrative assistant for the Central Congregational Church in Atlanta.

with the Christian Church in 1931.³²

The Continent was definitely a Christian religious periodical, despite its non-theological name. It continued The Interior [established 1870] and The Westminster [established 1904]. Nolan R. Best was editor and Oliver R. Williamson was the publisher during the Frank period. The McCormick Publishing Company in New York was the proprietor.

The Epworth Herald was published by The Methodist Book Concern in Chicago and New York. The editor was Dan B. Brummitt during the time of the Frank case.

Herald and Presbyter: A Presbyterian Weekly Paper was published by Monfort and Co., Cincinnati and Saint Louis.

Lutheran Church Work was the official weekly paper of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of America. It continued The Lutheran Missionary Journal [1880-1908], Lutheran Church Work [1908-1912], and The Lutheran World [1908-1912]. It was published in Harrisburg and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Reverend Frederick G. Gotwald, D. D. of York, Pennsylvania was the editor during the Frank period.

The Mennonite: A religious weekly journal was the English organ of the Mennonite General Conference of North America.³³ It was devoted to the interests of the Mennonite Church and to the cause of Christ in general. The journal was published by the

³² Joy K. Floden to Robert Seitz Frey, 12 February 1986.

³³ See also Charles Henry Smith, The Story of the Mennonites 3d ed., rev. (Newton, Kan.: Mennonite Publication Office, 1950), pp. 776-78.

Mennonite Book Concern in Berne, Indiana and edited during the Frank period by Rev. C. Van der Smitten.

The Methodist was an inter-conference journal under the patronage of the Baltimore, Central Pennsylvania and Wilmington Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This magazine was published in Baltimore. The publisher was W. V. Guthrie during the period 1913-1915.

The Northern Christian Advocate was founded in 1841 and published in Syracuse, New York. H. E. Woolever was the editor during Frank period.

After several changes in ownership, the Christian Union appeared in July, 1893 under the name of Outlook. By the time of the Frank case, Outlook had become a regular journal of opinion rather than a family publication with religious emphasis.³⁴ Outlook merged with the Independent in 1922 to form the Outlook and Independent.

The Pacific was the spokes-vehicle for the Congregational Churches on the Pacific Coast. It was edited by W. W. Ferrin in 1915.³⁵

The Presbyterian Banner: An Illustrated Paper for the American Home was founded on July 5, 1814. The periodical was published by the Presbyterian Banner Publishing Co. in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. James H. Snowden was the editor during the

³⁴ Peterson, 'Magazines, pp. 144-45.

³⁵ Daniel K. Oxman, "California Reactions to the Leo Frank Case," Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly 10(1978): 222-23.

Frank period.

Reformed Church Messenger was founded in November, 1827 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It was the official organ of the Eastern, Potomac, and Pittsburgh Synods.

The United Presbyterian had as managing editor David Reed Miller, D. D. during the Frank period. The proprietors were Murdoch, Kerr & Co. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The Universalist Leader: Our National Church Paper was edited by Frederick A. Bisbee, D. D. during the Frank period. This journal continued The Christian Leader, The Universalist, and The Gospel Banner. It was published by the Universalist Publishing House, a religious corporation organized in April, 1852, in Boston and Chicago.

Universalism was the counterpart "among less urbane rural folk" of Unitarianism.³⁶ The Universalist Profession of Faith and Conditions of Fellowship, which was adopted at Winchester, New Hampshire [hence the Winchester Profession], has as two of its essential principles that there is "just retribution for sin" and "the final harmony of all souls with God."³⁷ Universalism had been brought to America in 1770 by John Murray, and advanced under the leadership of Elhanan Winchester (1751-97).³⁸

The Watchman-Examiner: A National Baptist Paper continued

³⁶ Hudson, Religion in America, p. 161.

³⁷ This information was taken from the masthead of the August 28, 1915 issue of The Universalist Leader.

³⁸ Hudson, Religion in America, p. 162.

The Watchman [established 1819], The Examiner [established 1823], and The Morning Star [established 1826], in addition to The National Baptist, The Christian Inquirer, and The Christian Secretary. It was published in Worcester, Massachusetts; Boston; and New York.

The Wesleyan Christian Advocate was the principal news medium of the North Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and later, as a result of denominational mergers, of the Methodist Church (U.S.) and the present United Methodist Church.³⁹ It was published in Atlanta, Georgia and edited by W. C. Lovett during the Frank period.

The Evangelical United Brethren [German Methodist] and Methodist Churches merged in 1968 to form the United Methodist Church.⁴⁰

To conclude this discussion of American Christian religious life and periodical literature, two articles will be introduced which convey a sample of Christian attitudes towards Jews and Judaism during the Frank period. Both pieces were found in the Christian Century, the influential Protestant weekly published in Chicago. Of note is the fact that from 1913-1915 the Christian Century published only one brief reference, in the form of a ballad, to the Frank case. It nonetheless saw fit to print two

³⁹ Gary S. Hauk to Robert Seitz Frey, 19 February 1986. Mr. Hauk is a reference librarian at Pitts Theology Library of Emory University in Atlanta.

⁴⁰ Hudson, Religion in America, p. 390.

articles which call into question the legitimacy and necessity of Jewish religious expression and collective identity in the twentieth century.

In his contribution entitled "Inadequate Religions: How the Religion of Jesus Christ Fares Amid the Wreckage of Ancient Faiths", Robert Elliott Speer wrote that

Nineteen hundred years ago, to the best of all the non-Christian religions--the religion between which and all the other non-Christian religions a great gulf is fixed, Judaism--Jesus Christ came, and that, the best of all religions, He declared to be outworn and inadequate. The time had at last come, He taught, to supplant it with the full and perfect truth that was in Him.⁴¹

Following his discussion and assessment of Israel Abraham's book on Judaism, W. J. Lhamon concluded his article "Why Does the Jew Remain?" with a section entitled "The Modern Jew":

How shall we understand the age-long abiding of this strange people? Have they still a message to the world, and is that why they stay? Or have they delivered their message? Have they given their best to the world? And are they ready to melt into the greater group, the brotherhood of the world in process of redemption? Is it not pride of race that holds them now, and the habit of separateness? And will not these inferior forces give way under the disintegrating rationalism indicated above? Their message of monotheism--Christianity has received it, and improved it, and is bearing it on to the world with a speed and power never dreamed of by the Jews. Their message of monogamy--that too has been accepted by Christianity, and rendered more secure in her hands than ever it was in the hands of Moses and David. Their message of atonement--that has become priceless with Christians, and by them has been winnowed of sacramentalism, and sweetened by the love and blood and prayers of Israel's greatest Son, and is being proclaimed to the world

⁴¹ Robert Elliott Speer, "Inadequate Religions: How the Religion of Jesus Christ Fares Amid the Wreckage of Ancient Faiths," Christian Century, 29 October 1914, n.p.

by fifty times as many millions as the Jews can boast.
Why do they linger?⁴²

⁴² W. J. Lhamon, "Why Does the Jew Remain?," Christian Century, 2 October 1913, p. 8.

CHAPTER 5

"The Evidence Suggests..."

The findings of this study indicate that there was no widespread response within Christian periodical literature to the trial and lynching of Leo Max Frank. Given the large number of Christian periodicals extant during the period 1913 to 1915, the recorded responses to the Frank case were indeed few in terms of percentage. This observation, however, is in no way intended to minimize the import of each Christian response that was entered into print.

Much of the formal Christian response to the case may have taken the form of sermons and homilies. Many pastors' sermons were never recorded and collected in any form, much less actually published. A review of collections of sermons from that era delivered by well-known American theologians and clergymen did not reveal any discussion of the Frank issue.

The majority of recorded responses were positively, or at least neutrally, inclined toward Frank and sympathetic regarding his fate. There were several references to the genuine possibility that he was innocent of the murder of Mary Phagan. A call for the prosecution of the members of the lynching mob was also issued. Many journals explicitly deplored the lynching. Yet none of the Christian periodicals of that era discussed Leo Frank the man in any detail beyond cursory mention of his position at the National Pencil Factory and several other pallid facts.

With one exception, all of the Christian magazines gave

attention to the Frank issue only after the lynching in August of 1915. Thus there was no ongoing commentary on the case, the judicial appeal process, or the widespread petitioning for commutation of Frank's sentence to life imprisonment.

In the case of those periodicals published outside the State of Georgia, the Frank case seemed to be employed as a forum upon which to chastise and indict Georgia and the South in general for the evil of lynching and for the failure and lack of desire to enforce the laws of civilization. Two journals outside of Georgia, one Baptist and the other Universalist, did urge restraint in calling the reputation of Georgia into question. The Wesleyan Christian Advocate, which was published in Atlanta, strongly defended the juridical processes of the State of Georgia and the right of that state to manage its own affairs without external interference.

The defense of Leo Frank offered by Atlanta clergymen in their appeal for a retrial of the case was premised in large part upon moral grounds, justice, and humanity. Mercy as a basis for retrial was explicitly played down. The pastoral response within Atlanta in favor of Frank seems to have been significant in that eight ministers from various denominations spoke publicly on the case.

The most negative Christian commentary on the Frank case were found in The Methodist [19 August 1915] and in the words of Father Henry Woods, S. J. and Reverend Alvan F. Sherrill. Father Woods concluded that the many people who petitioned Governor

Slaton to commute Frank's sentence and who appealed to the courts to favorably review Frank's case acted in a manner which was of greater moral reprehensibility than that of the Knights of Mary Phagan. Reverend Sherrill defended the good character of the mob members, and The Methodist stated that a frenzied mob is "a worse menace to the state than such men as Frank, bad as their kind are."

The presence and influence of anti-Jewish racial and religious prejudice during and after Frank's trial were condemned by Christian journals published outside of Georgia and denied by the Wesleyan Christian Advocate. The sensitivity of the Advocate to the allegations of anti-Jewish sentiment suggests that anti-Jewish prejudice was not generally acceptable by American society at that time.

The Christian responses of which we have record seem to support the psycho-social hypotheses which posit that American attitudes towards the Jew combined both positive and negative elements. The very lack of widespread Christian response to the case might be said to follow from the negative elements, along with ideologically unencumbered apathy. Christian support of Frank and disgust over the anti-Jewish sentiment in Atlanta during and after the trial certainly represent positive attitudes vis-a-vis Jews.

In bringing this discussion to a close, several suggestions for further research on this particular topic will be advanced.

Firstly, the Christian periodicals at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC have yet to be exhaustively checked for references to the Frank case. Newspapers from larger cities within Georgia might also be examined further for articles on ministers' responses to the trial and lynching.

The archives of the Atlanta Historical Society contain an entire Frank collection of papers and letters which has not been indexed for any Christian responses. This could prove to be a rich source of relevant material, especially in terms of letters written by individual pastors or groups of clergy in support of commutation of Frank's sentence. Governor John Slaton's papers and letters might also reveal similar documents.

Any research on this topic will be made difficult by the fact that there exists no indices of specifically religious periodicals during the entire period 1900 to c. 1935. An index of Roman Catholic periodicals of the early 1900s is the one exception. Reader's Guide and Poole's International Index do not have the necessary specificity. In addition, the overwhelming majority of Christian periodical literature of that era contains no internal indexing or annual listings of published articles. The Christian Century publication headquarters in Chicago does not even possess an index of the articles contained in that journal during the early part of this century. Searching for any relevant published material in any Christian journal [1913-1915] is a page by page, issue by issue undertaking.

Another possible source of Christian response to the Frank

case might be in collections of sermons located in various denominational or parish archives. The Atlanta area would certainly be the first place to begin that effort.

Finally, a critical comparison of the issues surrounding the trial and lynching of Leo Frank with those attitudes and events associated with the lynching of another non-black individual during the early twentieth century could yield much in the way of historical insight. Perhaps an atheist was lynched for non-conformity or a Buddhist immigrant killed by a mob because of religious or racial/ethnic reasons. The motivations involved in lynching Leo Frank were probably not the same as those in lynching the many black victims. Sounder basis for assessment and understanding of the Frank murder may follow from considering it in light of other mob actions against people who were not black.

Appendix 1

"Information Concerning Non-Religious Periodicals"

Century Magazine: The name of the earlier Scribner's was changed to the Century in 1881.¹

Everybody's: Theodore Peterson groups this magazine with Collier's as being engaged in muckraking [reporting unhappy conditions without advancing a program for correcting them]. This assessment is avowedly a generalization on the part of Peterson.²

Forum: This was a review founded in the hope that it would become a major influence in art, literature, politics, and science. The purpose of the Forum, according to Walter Hines Page [its editor until 1895], was " 'to provide discussions about subjects of contemporary interest, in which the magazine is not partisan, but merely the instrument.' "3

The Literary Digest: This magazine was close to being a news magazine, but it was also close to being a digest; actually, as historian Calvin Ellsworth Chunn aptly described it in his doctoral dissertation "History of News Magazines" [The University

¹ Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), pp. 149-50.

² Ibid., p. 16.

³ Ibid., p. 151.

of Missouri, 1950], Literary Digest was more " 'a clipping service for public opinion' " than a true news magazine.⁴

The Literary Digest was founded in 1890 by Dr. Isaac K. Funk and Adam W. Wagnalls, both former Lutheran ministers. These men were partners in the Funk and Wagnalls Company, the New York book publishing firm. In 1890, the Literary Digest came out intended to be especially helpful to educators and ministers. It was to be " 'a repository of contemporaneous thought and research as presented in the periodical literature of the world.' " The magazine extended its editorial scope in 1905 to cover general news and comment. The same year, William Seaver Woods, a minister's son, became editor, a post he held until 1933. The man who probably did most to guide the Literary Digest into becoming a national institution was Robert J. Cuddihy, its publisher from 1905 to 1937.⁵

The masthead of the 1915 Literary Digest noted that Public Opinion [New York] was combined with The Literary Digest.

Nation: This magazine was born just after the Civil War ended and was the elder statesman among the journals of opinion in the twentieth century. Its founder was E. L. Godkin, a young journalist who had come to America from Ireland in 1856 to write about conditions in the South. Godkin's Nation decried the

⁴ Ibid., p. 324.

⁵ Ibid., p. 154.

Populists, railroad barons, Tammany, and currency inflation.⁶

New Republic: This magazine was launched in the atmosphere of pre-World War I revolt and optimism. It stood alongside the Nation as an organ of liberalism, although the New Republic was younger by nearly half a century. In 1909, Herbert Croley was given money from Mr. and Mrs. Willard D. Straight for a magazine which would reflect Croley's liberal viewpoint. Croley was the author of The Promise of American Life, a book which became the creed of many liberals.⁷

Outlook: This periodical first appeared in 1867 as a Baptist paper called the Church Union. Its name was changed to the Christian Union, which it held until 1893. In July, 1893, the Outlook appeared. The magazine attracted important contributors with important works. Theodore Roosevelt, after leaving the Presidency, became a contributing editor for a time.⁸ There is discrepancy in the sources as to the origin of Outlook.

South Atlantic Quarterly: This journal was founded in 1902 in order to afford better opportunity in the South for discussion of literary, historical, economic, and social questions. It was

⁶ Ibid., pp. 417-20.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 423-24.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 423-24.

published by the South Atlantic Publishing Co. at Trinity College
in Durham, North Carolina.

Spectator: This magazine was published in London.

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