

From Masonic Author and “Righteous Gentile” to Catholic Evangelist: An Examination of the Protean Discourse of Dudley Wright

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This document contains the script for a paper I delivered at an international study day for European Freemasonry, held at the Belgian Museum of Freemasonry on 27 March 2013.

I would like to talk to you today about Dudley Wright. The main focus of this paper will be his shifting discourse about Judaism and Catholicism. My intention today is neither to prove, nor disprove, his various claims, which would require a much longer paper, but simply to examine his discourse as a Freemason, and how it changed after he abandoned Freemasonry.

I will begin with a little biographical information. Dudley Wright was born in Chelsea in 1868 and he died in 1949. His mother was from a Scottish family and his father was from East Anglia.¹ He was initiated to the Eccleston Lodge² in London on the 20th November 1912.³ He was elected as a member of the Fratres Calami Lodge,⁴ a lodge that was set up solely for the secretaries of other lodges, on the 30th September 1918.⁵ And he joined the Wellesley Lodge⁶ in March 1928.⁷

Dudley Wright is today a relatively unknown character. When his name is recognized, it is generally by those interested in the traditions, legends and history of Freemasonry. However, he was a prolific author who wrote on diverse subjects. For example, in addition to his works on Freemasonry, he also published many articles and books on comparative religion. Jews and Judaism featured prominently, but also Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Druidism, and various mystical traditions. He also published articles and books on myths and legends. These ranged from discussions about legends regarding King Solomon and the Great Temple,⁸ to a somewhat esoteric study on the history of the Vampire myth.⁹ According to a short biographical entry for him in 1919, his professed goal was to “trace the unvarying basis from the philosophic standpoint of all religious systems.”¹⁰ He published well over a dozen

books and hundreds of articles in several periodicals, including, to name but a few examples, the *Freemason*, the *Masonic News*, the *Jewish Guardian*, the *Jewish Chronicle*, the *Islamic Review*, the *Bible Review*, and *Our Lady of Sion*. He was also the editor of the *Freemason* and the *Masonic News*.¹¹

Whilst Dudley Wright admired Judaism, and wrote a number of positive articles about Jews, he was not Jewish. He described himself in a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1910 as, quote, “a Gentile (though not a Christian).”¹² Wright published a book and several articles which were critical of Roman Catholicism. Nevertheless, sometime between 1931 and 1933, he embraced Catholicism. It is difficult to pin down the exact date of his transition from Freemasonry to Catholicism. The periodical that he edited, the *Masonic News*, came to an abrupt end in July 1931.¹³ His membership to the Wellesley lodge ceased in the same year.¹⁴ His membership to the Eccleston Lodge was terminated automatically on the 1st November 1932 as a result of “non-payment of fees.”¹⁵ In 1932 and 1933, he started to write letters and articles for Catholic periodicals, such as the *Catholic Times* and the *New Blackfriars*.¹⁶ He published a booklet in February 1933, which provided a religious guide for pilgrims making the trip to Rome to celebrate a Holy jubilee.¹⁷ Though the exact date remains a matter of speculation, it therefore seems likely that Wright abandoned Freemasonry in the latter half of 1931, or 1932, and converted to Catholicism shortly thereafter.¹⁸ He joined the Catholic Guild of Israel, an organisation dedicated to the conversion of the Jews, on the 28th October 1933. It is interesting to note that even though he was not Jewish, he was listed in the Guild membership book as a “convert from Judaism.”¹⁹ This may not have been a mere careless slip, as it was not uncommon for Judaism and Freemasonry to be linked and equated in the English Catholic discourse at that time.²⁰

His discourse changed significantly after his conversion. In a letter sent on the 12th February 1934 to Sister Mary Pancratius, a member of the Catholic Guild of Israel and the head of the Sisters of Sion in London, Dudley Wright explained that when he was, quote, “reconciled to the Church,” his previous literary occupation was one that he “was unable, as a Catholic, to retain.” He expressed the necessity of finding acceptable new topics, as writing was his primary “means of existence.”²¹ The result was a series of publications that contained traditional stereotypes and myths about

Jews, and which staunchly defended the Church against accusations of anti-Judaism. The rest of this paper will examine the shifting nature of Dudley Wright's discourse.

Representations of Jews and Judaism (1923 – 1932)

Prior to his conversion, Wright published a number of articles about Jews, Judaism and Jewish Freemasons. The earliest was a short article published in October 1923 in the *Jewish Guardian*. This short article observed that it was astonishing that a Masonic Lodge in America had recently refused to initiate a Jewish candidate, not only because of the universalism of Freemasonry, but because of the “prominent part which Jewish lore and legend plays in Masonic history, ritual and tradition.” Wright argued that the legends, traditions and symbols of Freemasonry are Jewish in origin and interpretation, and have the Great Temple as their source.²² Wright also pointed out that, quote, “in England there has never been any bar against the admission of Jews, nor indeed, against any candidates professing a Theistic belief, with, or without the Trinitarian appendage.” It was, he suggested, only in a handful of countries that Jews struggled to gain admittance to Freemasonry, such as Germany.²³ In another short article in October 1925, this time in the *Jewish Chronicle*, he observed that whilst the Lodge of Tranquillity in London²⁴ was somewhat reserved when it came to blowing its own trumpet, it was one of the foremost lodges in terms of its good works. He pointed out that its members were mostly of the Jewish faith.²⁵

In April 1928, Wright published an article about “Jews and Freemasonry” in the *Masonic News*, and in 1930, he published a booklet entitled “The Jew and Freemasonry.” These repeated the content of his earlier article in the *Jewish Guardian*, but with lots of new information about Jewish members of Masonic lodges.²⁶ He argued that “there can be no action or attitude more illogical than for individual Freemasons or a Masonic Lodge, ... to attempt to bar the initiation of candidates adhering to the Jewish faith ... solely on account of the religion they profess.”²⁷ Wright argued that Jewish mysticism was “almost as old as the Jewish religion and some of the most learned Rabbis ... devoted their lives to the decipherment of the sacred treasures engraven in symbolical language on the tablets of the Law.” It was, he concluded, quote, “their love for learning, their fame for wisdom and their reputation for sanctity that acted as a vitalizing influence upon the whole of the Jewish race.”²⁸

In 1932, Wright published a book on the Talmud. His professed aim was to dispel, quote, “some of the ignorance that prevails in non-Jewish circles” about the Talmud, and to throw, quote, “some light upon the history and contents of that wonderful [text].”²⁹ The first twelve chapters provided an overview to the Talmud. His examination was full of praise. He used words such as “wonderful” and “mysterious” to describe the Talmud, and suggested that “above all, one of the values of the Talmud lies in the fact that it teaches that religion is not a thing merely of creed or dogma, or even faith, but of goodness in activity.”³⁰ “Judaism,” he observed, “is more than a religion *with* ideals; it is a religion *of* ideals.”³¹ He contended that no “quarrel” can be found with the claim that, quote, “the Talmud is an inexhaustible mine, embodying the purest gold and the most precious of stones; its maxims and its ethics instil the teachings of religion and morality of the very highest order.”³² End quote. The final and longest chapter of this volume examined the history of “the burnings of the Talmud.” Wright examined incident after incident of the confiscation, censorship, purging and mass destruction of the Talmud, from the thirteenth- to the eighteenth-century. He argued that in nearly every case the approval of the Pope, or the Inquisition, could be found.³³ These are just a selection of his most significant works about Jews and Judaism, but he wrote several other short articles about Jews and Jewish traditions prior to his conversion to Catholicism.³⁴

Wright received a mixed reception from Anglo-Jews. In 1921, the *Jewish Guardian* was highly dismissive about his attempts, in a book entitled *Masonic Legends and Traditions*, to, “parade a first-hand acquaintance with Rabbinic literature,” although it did acknowledge that despite his Talmudic “lapses,” the “author gives evidence of wide and patient reading in unfamiliar sources.” The review concluded with equivocal praise, observing that his study “at least stimulates the reader’s imaginative faculty.”³⁵ On the other hand, his examination of the Talmud in 1931 received significant and unequivocal praise. Herbert Loewe, Reader in Rabbinics and Hebrew at Cambridge University, praised Wright’s study of the Talmud and recommended it for undergraduate students and the general reading public.³⁶ Wright was described by Rabbi Dr Isidore Epstein, a prominent Anglo-Jewish communal leader and rabbinic scholar, as a *righteous gentile*.³⁷ “The general reader,” he explained, “will be greatly beholden to him for having spread out before

him a wealth of information on the literary and historical side of the Talmud; while Jewish readers will be particularly grateful for the author's admirable and moving survey of the burning of the Talmud."³⁸

Representations of Catholics and Catholicism (1908 – 1932)

The earliest reference to Catholicism in Wright's discourse can be found in a volume published in 1908, which argued that Jesus was an Essene.³⁹ According to Wright, there is some evidence that Jesus was influenced by Eastern religions such as Buddhism. In support of this, he observed that a recently discovered manuscript, "a copy of a chronicle of a life of Jesus," showed that Jesus spent a period of his life in India and Nepal. He observed that this chronicle was so contrary to Catholic belief, that a Cardinal tried to pressure the discoverer of the chronicle to bury his research. Wright concluded that Catholicism "bears little or no resemblance to the teaching of Jesus."⁴⁰

In 1921, Wright published no less than nine articles which were highly critical of Catholicism, and in 1922, he published a book based on these articles. These examined numerous incidents, publications and declarations of anti-Masonic hostility by Catholic laymen, priests, bishops, and cardinals. It quoted at length from encyclicals and pastoral letters by several popes,⁴¹ each of which condemned Freemasonry, and prohibited Catholics from being members of Masonic lodges under the threat of *ipso facto* excommunication.⁴² According to Wright, "for nearly two hundred years, the heads of the Roman Catholic Church have been launching their papal thunders against Freemasonry, alleging that it is not only anti-Christian, but Atheistic," and responsible for many of the wars and revolutions that have shook the nations.⁴³ Wright argued in a series of letters and articles throughout the 1920s, that the Catholic Church was engaged in bitter warfare against Freemasonry.⁴⁴

Representations of Jews and Judaism (1933 – 1938)

Wright converted to Roman Catholicism at some point between 1931 and 1933, and joined the Catholic Guild of Israel, an organisation dedicated to the conversion of the Jews, on the 28th October 1933. In February 1934, Wright wrote a letter to Sister Mary Pancratius to explain that he was working on a book which he proposed to call "Judaism v Rome: Pagan and Papal."⁴⁵ The book was never published, but he

enclosed with his letter a 36 page draft manuscript for a chapter on “the Spanish Inquisition and the Jews.”⁴⁶ Whilst Wright was by no means totally uncritical of persecutions of Jews in this draft chapter, and the corruption of the Spanish Inquisition, he was now inclined to find reasons to defend anti-Jewish measures.⁴⁷ He repeated traditional stereotypes about Jewish usury and power, observing that “the Jews had become rich, powerful and dominant, particularly in financial affairs.”⁴⁸ Wright also referred to Jewish conspiracies.⁴⁹ For example, he stated that in 1485, quote, “a conspiracy of the Jews was discovered at Toledo, the object of which was nothing less than the seizure of the city on Corpus Christi Day and the murder of all the Christians.” It has been proved, he asserted, “that the Jews of this period were guilty of the most abominable practices.”⁵⁰ “There is also little doubt,” he observed, “that the spirit of superiority and arrogance, which has always been, more or less, a characteristic of the Jew in power, was evidenced here.”⁵¹

In Spring 1934, Wright wrote an article entitled “Some Papal Edicts against Judaism.” In this article, Wright defended a number of edicts, such as those prohibiting Jews from employing Christians.⁵² Furthermore, whereas previously Wright fervently defended the Talmud at great length, he now expressed concerns about it. “There was,” he argued, quote, “abundant justification for the reiterated condemnations of the *Talmud*.” According to Wright, there were passages in the medieval Talmud which, quote, “contained the most abominable and scurrilous statements concerning Our Blessed Lord and overlaying His Mother with vile accusations.”⁵³

Most of the arguments that were first made in his unpublished draft chapter on the Spanish Inquisition and his article on papal edicts against Judaism, were repeated in a booklet entitled *The Catholic Church and the Jews*, which was published in 1935.⁵⁴ However, in addition to the Talmud, he now claimed that Jewish liturgy and literature in general contained passages demonstrating “venomous hatred” towards Jesus.⁵⁵ In this booklet, as he had previously, Wright repeatedly quoted prominent Jewish scholars, such as Cecil Roth⁵⁶ and Israel Abrahams,⁵⁷ sometimes distorting or taking their passages out of context, to lend credence to his claims. This was not always appreciated by the Jewish scholars. Whilst his earlier article on papal edicts, published as it was in the journal of the Catholic Guild of Israel, went unnoticed by

the *Jewish Chronicle*, a reviewer in the newspaper did notice the new booklet, and accused Wright of “distorting the statements of the Jewish authorities whom he quotes so extensively.”⁵⁸ This resulted in a heated exchange between the reviewer and Dudley Wright.⁵⁹ The controversy concluded with Cecil Roth writing a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, which criticised Dudley Wright for taking his observations out of context, and distorting their meaning.⁶⁰

Conclusion

It seems clear that Wright’s transition from Freemasonry to Roman Catholicism was accompanied by a significant shift in his discourse. I think it is very reasonable to categorise him during his time as a Freemason as a staunch and unequivocal admirer of Jews and Judaism. Conversely, his Catholic discourse contained hostile stereotypes and myths about Jews. It is however only fair to point out that he also said things in praise of Jews, though much less so than previously. For example, in a letter to Sister Pancratius, he observed that he had “always found among the Jews a great respect for the Catholic Faith and for Catholics in themselves.”⁶¹ And in an article about the conversion of a rabbi to Catholicism in the fourteenth century, he observed that “the Jews have always paid a high tribute to learning.”⁶² His main concern seems to have been to find a way to transform his writing into a form acceptable to the Catholic Guild of Israel, and in settling on defending the Church from accusations of anti-Judaism, he sometimes slipped into hostile caricatures. It would be more accurate to describe his discourse about Jews and Judaism during this phase as ambivalent rather than consistently hostile.⁶³

This brings me to the end of this paper, but I would be remiss if I didn’t say something, albeit in passing, about the final years of his life. Wright’s transition from Freemasonry to Catholicism was not the only significant change in his life and discourse. Sometime in the early 1940s, he abandoned Catholicism, embraced Islam, and took the name Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright.⁶⁴ From 1944 to 1948, he published approximately twenty articles in a periodical entitled the *Islamic Review*.⁶⁵ This was a journal that he had previously published in as a Freemason, and significantly, many of the ideas that he admired in Islam in the 1940s when he adopted the religion were exactly the things he had praised in Islam back in 1916.⁶⁶ Many of his articles in the *Islamic Review* were highly critical of Christianity. Prior to

converting to Catholicism, he was critical of the doctrine of the Trinity and referred to Jesus as a prophet.⁶⁷ He now returned to this practice. On the one hand he praised the teachings of the Prophet Jesus, but he suggested that Christianity had, unlike Islam, departed from Jesus' teachings. "The Word," he asserted, "is not lost but it has been smothered by the Christian Church." He stated that the Truth, as preached by Jesus, is not to be found in the Christian Church but it is to be found ... in Islam, in the Mosque."⁶⁸ He argued that the exponents of Christianity prefer to follow the will of man, expressed for example in "Papal decrees," rather than the expressed will of God." It is "small wonder," he concluded, "that Christianity has proved so ghastly a failure." He argued that "what is sorely needed in the Christian world is the undiluted teaching of Jesus," which is to be found "in Islam."⁶⁹ Whilst he praised Jesus' teachings, he argued that his mission was limited in scope compared to the more universal mission of the Prophet Muhammad. He portrayed Jesus' mission as being solely to the "Lost sheep of the House of Israel,"⁷⁰ and furthermore, he contended, his mission was a failure, as the Jews rejected him and cried out for his crucifixion.⁷¹ As he had as a Freemason, he argued in 1944 that many religious systems "have Truth for their base and that at base, ... are practically identical."⁷² In 1947, he concluded that Islam was the only religion that recognized the shared faith of "all the prophets of the world," and that recognized the "truth in all religions."⁷³ As I observed at the beginning of this paper, his personal goal as a Freemason seems to have been to trace the common philosophical and faith elements of all religious systems.⁷⁴ It would seem that he returned to this goal in the 1940s, but he now believed it was only achievable through Islam. Whilst he was willing to see the positive in all religions, he was very critical of Christianity, and he did place Islam on an irreproachable higher plane,⁷⁵ with other religions only gradually moving towards the perfection of Islam.⁷⁶ As he died in 1949, it is difficult to say whether he found in Islam, or would have found given more time, the answers he was looking for, or whether he would have yet again turned in frustration to another religious system.

Notes

¹ "Our Contributors," *The Masonic Secretaries' Journal* II, no. 6 (January 1919), 328.

² Lodge no. 1624.

³ My thanks to Peter Aitkenhead, assistant librarian of the *Library and Museum of Freemasonry*, for providing this information. Peter Aitkenhead, email message to author, 4 December 2012.

⁴ Lodge no. 3791.

⁵ His name appears on a list of brethren elected as members of the lodge on 30 September 1918. The list was published in the periodical of the Fratres Calami Lodge. See *The Masonic Secretaries' Journal* II, no. 6 (January 1919), 335. According to the entry for Dudley Wright, he was then assistant editor of the *Freemason*, Master Mason of the Eccleston Lodge (no. 1624), and assistant secretary of the Cray's Valley Lodge (no. 2147).

⁶ Lodge no. 1899.

⁷ My thanks to Peter Aitkenhead and Tony Parker (the present secretary of the Wellesley Lodge) for this information. Peter Aitkenhead, email message to author, 4 December 2012. Tony Parker, email message to author, 24 January 2013.

⁸ See for example, Dudley Wright, "Legends of Solomon, the King," *The Masonic Secretaries' Journal* II, no. 4 (May 1918), 44-48 and Dudley Wright, "The Temple in Legend and Tradition," *The Masonic Secretaries' Journal* III, no. 7 (May 1919), 36-40.

⁹ Dudley Wright, *Vampires and Vampirism* (London: William Rider and son, 1914).

¹⁰ "Our Contributors," *The Masonic Secretaries' Journal* II, no. 6 (January 1919), 328.

¹¹ Dudley Wright left the *Freemason* to take up the post of editor at the *Masonic News* in 1928. See *Masonic News*, 18 February 1928, 131.

¹² Letter from Dudley Wright to the *Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 June 1910, 14. He similarly referred to himself in his study of the Talmud as "a Gentile ... who has not the honour of claiming kinship with the Chosen People." Dudley Wright, *The Talmud* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1932), 13.

¹³ There is nothing in the final issue of the *Masonic News* to suggest anything but business as usual, which suggests that the termination of the periodical was unplanned. Whether there is any connection between the termination of the periodical and Wright's conversion remains a matter of speculation.

¹⁴ My thanks to Peter Aitkenhead for this information. Peter Aitkenhead, email message to author, 4 December 2012.

¹⁵ My thanks to Tom Carroll (the present secretary of the Eccleston Lodge) for this information. Tom Carroll, email message to author, 30 January 2013.

¹⁶ See for example: Letter from Dudley Wright to *Catholic Times*, *Catholic Times*: 23 September 1932, 12; 21 October 1932, 12; 28 October 1932, 12; Dudley Wright, "Charles Lamb and St. Thomas Aquinas," *New Blackfriars* 14, no. 155 (February 1933), 117.

¹⁷ Dudley Wright, *Holy Year: April 2, 1933, to April 2, 1934* (London: Washbourne and Bogan, 1933).

¹⁸ He rarely mentioned Freemasonry after his conversion, though one of his letters to the *Catholic Times* in October 1932 was critical of Continental Freemasonry, which he suggested was currently responsible for, quote, "the diffusion of so-called 'rationalistic' teaching." Letter from Dudley Wright to the *Catholic Times*, *Catholic Times*, 21 October 1932, 12.

¹⁹ Catholic Guild of Israel membership book, entry no. 844 (entry for Mr. Dudley Wright, 28 October 1933), Catholic Guild of Israel Archives, Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter, London, UK (henceforth, CGI Archives).

²⁰ For a discussion of constructions of "the Freemason" and the so-called "Masonic-Jewish camarilla" in the English Catholic discourse during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century, see Simon Mayers, "From 'the Pharisee' to 'the Zionist Menace': Myths, Stereotypes and Constructions of the Jew in English Catholic Discourse (1896-1929)," PhD thesis, *University of Manchester* (2012), ch.4.

²¹ Letter from Dudley Wright to Sr. Mary Pancratius, 12 February 1934, CGI Archives.

²² For example, he observed that "tradition has it that David, when unable to accomplish his design of building the Temple, bequeathed the cubical stone to Solomon, who used it as the corner-stone of that building." According to the tradition, the Tetragrammaton, the name of God, was to be found within that stone. Dudley Wright, "Jews and Freemasonry," *Jewish Guardian*, 5 October 1923, 10-11.

²³ Dudley Wright, "Jews and Freemasonry," *Jewish Guardian*, 5 October 1923, 10-11.

²⁴ Lodge no. 115.

- ²⁵ Dudley Wright, "Freemasonry," *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 October 1925, 25.
- ²⁶ Dudley Wright, "Jews and Freemasonry," *Masonic News*, 14 April 1928, 306-307; Dudley Wright, *The Jew and Freemasonry* (London: Masonic News, [1930]).
- ²⁷ Wright, *The Jew and Freemasonry*, 3.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, 18-19.
- ²⁹ Wright, *The Talmud*, 13.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, 13, 15.
- ³¹ *Ibid*, 133.
- ³² *Ibid*, 20.
- ³³ *Ibid*, 103-132. An earlier version of this chapter appeared in 1925. See Dudley Wright, "The Burnings of the Talmud," *Open Court* XXXIX, no. 4 (April 1925), 193-217.
- ³⁴ See for example: Dudley Wright, "Some Famous Jewish Proselytes," *Open Court* XXXVII, no. 5 (May 1923), 283-295 (subsequently republished with minor revisions in *Jewish Chronicle Supplement*, October 1933, i-iii); Dudley Wright, "Jews as Masonic Leaders," *Jewish Guardian*, 10 October 1924, 7; Dudley Wright, "Select Bibliography of the Works of Israel Abrahams," in *Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams* (New York: Press of the Jewish Institute of Religion, 1927), xix-xlvi; Dudley Wright, "Some Notes on the Jews in Oxford," *Jewish Chronicle Supplement*, October 1929, iii-iv; Dudley Wright, "The Book of Raziel: A Scarce Jewish Work," *Masonic News*, 27 July 1929, 76 (subsequently republished with minor revisions in *Jewish Chronicle Supplement*, October 1931, ii-iii).
- ³⁵ "Legends of Masonry," review of *Masonic Legends and Traditions*, by Dudley Wright, *Jewish Guardian*, 24 June 1921, 21.
- ³⁶ Herbert M. J. Loewe, "Foreword," in Wright, *The Talmud*, 9-12.
- ³⁷ The exact phrase he used was "*Chassidé Umot Haolam*."
- ³⁸ Isidore Epstein, "The Talmud for English Readers," Books and Bookmen, *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 October 1932, 16.
- ³⁹ Dudley Wright, *Was Jesus an Essene?* (Wimbledon: Power-Book, [1908]). Israel Abrahams, a prominent Anglo-Jewish scholar and a key member of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, referred to this study as "a clever and readable production," even though he personally doubted its conclusions. Israel Abrahams [I. A., pseud.], Books and Bookmen, *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 February 1908, 16.
- ⁴⁰ Wright, *Was Jesus an Essene?*, 12-14, 17-18.
- ⁴¹ Wright referred to Clement XII, Benedict XIV, Pius VII, Leo XII, Pius IX, Leo XIII and Pius X. The declaration by Clement XII, "In Eminente" (1738), preventing Catholics from entering Freemasonry, was followed by the following papal encyclicals condemning the society as secretive, revolutionary and anti-Christian: Benedict XIV, "Providus" (1751); Pius VII, "Ecclesiam" (1821); Leo XII, "Quo Graviora" (1825); Pius VIII, "Traditae Humilitati" (1829); Pius IX, "Qui Pluribus" (1846), "Singulari Quadam" (1864), "In Multiplicis" (1865); Leo XIII, "Humanum Genus" (1884) and Benedict XV, "Codex Juris Canonici" (1917). Extracts from these can be found in *The Condemnation of Freemasonry by the Church* (London: Coldwell, [1929]). A copy of this document can be found in the Freemasons Collection at the John Rylands University Library, Manchester.
- ⁴² Dudley Wright, "Secret Societies in the Roman Catholic Church," *Builder* VII, no. 4 (April 1921); Dudley Wright, "Roman Catholicism and Freemasonry," *Builder* VII, no. 5-12 (May – December 1921); Dudley Wright, *Roman Catholicism and Freemasonry* (London: William Rider, 1922).
- ⁴³ Wright, *Roman Catholicism and Freemasonry*, 1; Dudley Wright, "Roman Catholicism and Freemasonry," *Builder* VII, no. 5 (May 1921), 119.
- ⁴⁴ See Letter from Dudley Wright to the *Builder*, *Builder* VII, no. 11 (November 1921), 335-336; Dudley Wright, "The First Papal Anti-Masonic Bull," *Masonic News*, 5 May 1928, 367; Dudley Wright, "(Roman) Catholicism and Freemasonry," *Masonic News*, 10 August 1929, 112-113; Letter from Dudley Wright to the *Universe*, *Universe*, 19 October 1928, 8. In "The First Papal Anti-Masonic Bull," Wright suggested that Clement XII was in such a state of ill health when he issued the Bull that it is likely that the measure was drawn up by various cardinals in consultation with the Inquisitor of Florence, and that he appended his signature "blindly ignorant of the contents" (367).
- ⁴⁵ Letter from Dudley Wright to Sr. Mary Pancratius, 12 February 1934, CGI Archives.

⁴⁶ Dudley Wright, "The Spanish Inquisition and the Jews," unpublished manuscript, CGI Archives. A month later he sent Sister Pancratius a manuscript for another chapter of his book, this time on "St. Gregory the Great," one of the Church's early popes, from the year 590 to 604. See Letter from Dudley Wright to Sr. Mary Pancratius, 8 March 1934, CGI Archives and Dudley Wright, "St. Gregory the Great," unpublished manuscript, CGI Archives.

⁴⁷ For example, with regard to the Rome Inquisition, Wright observed that "in 1299, the Jews of Rome complained ... that the Inquisitors concealed from them the names of their accusers and witnesses." This was with regard to accusations of Host desecration. In defence of this measure, Wright pointed out that "the suppression of the names of witnesses may have been in the interest of the witnesses themselves, in order to protect them from persecution when the accused were rich and powerful." Wright, "The Spanish Inquisition and the Jews," 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 6-7.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 11, 24.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 24. It is worth noting that whilst Dudley Wright contended that Jews were guilty of the "most abominable practices," he did not support the blood libel accusation (unlike some English Catholics, who suggested that Jews had murdered innocent Christian children, not for ritual purposes, but out of *odium fidei*). On the other hand, he did criticise historians who blamed the Church for the blood libel. Wright argued that the Church was blameless for the blood libel, and stated that claims have been made "more than once by irresponsible writers, mis-named 'historians,' that the persecutions and murders which have resulted from this false accusation were fostered by the Church, which also fabricated the charge in the first place." Dudley Wright, "The Blood Accusation Libel," *Our Lady of Sion* LIII (Spring 1938), 5. For a discussion of the ritual murder accusation in English Catholic discourse during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century, see Mayers, "From 'the Pharisee' to 'the Zionist Menace', ch.2.

⁵¹ Wright, "The Spanish Inquisition and the Jews," 20.

⁵² "There was," he argued, "ample justification for this decree reiterated on many occasions." Wright argued that according to the Old Testament and the Talmud, Jewish law required "anyone who became a member of a Jewish household, whether as a slave, a servant or even a sojourning stranger, ... to undergo the rite of circumcision." This, he argued, was part of a ceremony that initiated the circumcised into the Jewish rather than the Christian faith. Dudley Wright, "Some Papal Edicts against Judaism," *Our Lady of Sion* XLI (Spring 1934), 9-11. From the Old Testament, Wright referred to Genesis xvii (verses 14, 23, 27). He referred to G. F. Moore's *Judaism* and Graetz's *History of the Jews* for his claims about the Talmud. He re-summarised this argument (though referring only to the Talmud and not the Old Testament) in Dudley Wright, *The Catholic Church and the Jews* [Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, 1935], 4-5; Dudley Wright, *The Catholic Church and the Jews* (Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, 1947), 3-4.

⁵³ Wright, "Some Papal Edicts against Judaism," 12.

⁵⁴ Dudley Wright, *The Catholic Church and the Jews* [Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, 1935]. The 1947 reissue of *The Catholic Church and the Jews* is a shorter version of the original booklet (sixteen pages rather than twenty four), with certain paragraphs removed. The only place I have managed to find a (microfilm) copy of the 1935 edition is the Wiener Library. The 1947 edition is available at the British Library.

⁵⁵ Wright, *The Catholic Church and the Jews* (1935), 13; Wright, *The Catholic Church and the Jews* (1947), 10.

⁵⁶ For example, he quoted Cecil Roth to support his claim that papal decrees prohibiting the employment of Jewish physicians were "justified", by making it look like Roth agreed with him. See Wright, "Some Papal Edicts against Judaism," 14-15; Wright, *The Catholic Church and the Jews* (1935), 17. The paragraph relating to Cecil Roth was removed from the 1947 reissue of the booklet (possibly because of the controversy they caused in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1936).

⁵⁷ For example, he quoted Israel Abrahams to support his claim that the Talmud contains violent polemics against Christianity. He did this by massaging not only the context of a passage but also the quote itself. He stated that Israel Abrahams, in *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (1896), "admits that the Talmud contained violent polemics against Christianity." According to Wright, Abrahams qualified "this statement by saying 'a few', but the number is of little account when placed against the violence." Wright, "Some Papal Edicts against Judaism," 12-13. He again cited Abrahams to support this

argument in Wright, *The Catholic Church and the Jews* (1935), 12-13; Wright, *The Catholic Church and the Jews* (1947), 9-10.. In fact, Israel Abrahams was arguing that Jews during the Middle Ages were very open-minded about Christianity, and that a “friendly intercourse between Jews and Christians [persisted] until the thirteenth century.” He was not acknowledging that there were “a few” violent polemics against Christianity, as Wright suggested. What he actually stated was: “In the Talmud there are few violent polemics against Christianity.” In other words, Abrahams was emphasising their absence. See Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (1896; repr., Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1958), 413-416.

⁵⁸ Reviewer, “Books and Bookmen,” *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 October 1936, 27.

⁵⁹ Letter from Dudley Wright to *Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 October 1936, 25; Reviewer, “The Catholic Church and the Jews,” *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 October 1936, 25; Letter from Dudley Wright to *Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 October 1936, 25.

⁶⁰ Cecil Roth stated that in his book, he had set out to “convey to the reader the reason for the ecclesiastical prohibition of the employment of Jewish physicians. This, however, is a different thing from stating that it was justified. Some Catholic apologist will now be informing me, I presume, that in my ‘History of the Marranos,’ in which I endeavoured to demonstrate that the Inquisition were not the monsters of inhumanity that is generally supposed, I ‘justified’ the burning of crypto-Jews by the Inquisition! Impartiality, I fear, is a double-edged weapon.” Letter from Cecil Roth to *Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 November 1936, 25.

⁶¹ Letter from Dudley Wright to Sr. Mary Pancratius, 23 February 1935, CGI Archives.

⁶² Dudley Wright, “From Rabbi to Archbishop,” *Our Lady of Zion* LIV (Summer 1938), 7. The “Smart Jew” is of course a stereotype, and one that is not without its own dangers. For example, William Barry, an English Catholic apologist in the early twentieth century, suggested that the “Catholic spirit” and the “Hebrew genius” were “deadly and changeless antagonists.” William Barry, “Sign of the Times II,” *Catholic Times*, 6 November 1920, 7. Hilaire Belloc, another English Catholic controversialist, stated that a man arguing with a Jew may know the Jew to be wrong, but his “iron logic” is “offered to him like a pistol presented at the head of his better judgement.” Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews* (London: Constable, 1922), 81. “The Jew” was often caricatured as smart, shrewd, cunning, manipulative and conspiratorial. As Sander Gilman has rightly argued, the stereotype of the Smart Jew emphasises Jewish distinctiveness no less than other stereotypes, and it turns an ostensible virtue into a vice. See Sander L. Gilman, *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

⁶³ In this respect, his discourse closely mirrored that of other members of the Catholic Guild of Israel, such as Father Day, who was at the time the vice-president of the Guild. For a discussion of constructions of “the Jew” by Father Day and other members of the Catholic Guild of Israel, see the section on “conversion” in Mayers, “From ‘the Pharisee’ to ‘the Zionist Menace’”, ch.6.

⁶⁴ The form of Islam he adopted was *Ahmadiyya*, a movement which originated in 1889. This movement believes in the peaceful propagation of Islam and condemns religious violence. The movement recognizes its founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, as a prophet. According to the Ahmadiyya movement, Jesus survived the crucifixion, and subsequently travelled in search of the lost tribes of Israel, who welcomed and embraced him. See “Why Ahmadi? Claims of the Promised Messiah,” Ahmadiyya Muslim Association Website, <http://whyahmadi.org/>

⁶⁵ He later published a book based upon these articles: Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, *Studies in Islam and Christianity* (Woking: Woking Muslim Mission & Literary Trust, [1948]). No date of publication is provided in this volume, but it was based on articles published in the *Islamic Review* from 1944 onwards, and it received an ambivalent review (see footnote 75) in James Robson, review of *Studies in Islam and Christianity*, by Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, *Muslim World* 38, no. 3 (July 1948), 224.

⁶⁶ See Dudley Wright, “Characteristics of True Religion,” *Islamic Review*, June 1916, 259-263; Dudley Wright, “Islam and Idolatry,” *Islamic Review*, July 1916, 305-308.

⁶⁷ See Dudley Wright, “Characteristics of True Religion,” *Islamic Review*, June 1916, 260; Dudley Wright, “Islam and Idolatry,” *Islamic Review*, July 1916, 305-306.

⁶⁸ Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, “The Decline of Christianity,” *Islamic Review*, June 1946, 223.

⁶⁹ Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, "Desperate Christians," *Islamic Review*, September 1946, 311. According to Wright, "Muslims are more faithful followers of Jesus than Christians." Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, "Muslims Arise! A Call to Action!," *Islamic Review*, May 1946, 164.

⁷⁰ Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, "The Missions of Jesus and Muhammad," *Islamic Review*, February 1945, 58-60; Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, "Prophethood in Judaism and Islam," *Islamic Review*, December 1947, 447.

⁷¹ Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, "The Missions of Jesus and Muhammad," *Islamic Review*, February 1945, 60. According to Wright, "Jesus himself lamented that his mission was a failure" and "it was 'the lost sheep of the House of Israel' who, according to the New Testament, cried out with increasing fervour 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' in the final scene of his life" (60). Wright also returned to speculations about the origins of Jesus, and once again suggested that Jesus may have been an Essene, and may have been influenced by ideas found in Eastern religions such as Buddhism. See Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, "Who Were the Essenes? Was Jesus an Essene?," *Islamic Review*: July 1948, 257-263 and August-September 1948, 325-338.

⁷² Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, "The Futility of Christian Missions," *Islamic Review*, June 1944, 200.

⁷³ Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, "Prophethood in Judaism and Islam," *Islamic Review*, December 1947, 447.

⁷⁴ See "Our Contributors," *The Masonic Secretaries' Journal* II, no. 6 (January 1919), 328.

⁷⁵ According to James Robson, Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright "shows wide scholarship and a highly developed critical faculty when dealing with Jesus and Christianity; but when he deals with Islam his scholarship is not so apparent, and his critical faculty seems to be in abeyance." The reviewer criticised Wright's dismissal of the Gospels as unreliable sources on the one hand, but use of them to discredit the mission of Jesus on the other, and his eagerness to find defects with Christianity, whilst placing Islam on an irreproachable higher plane. See Robson, review of *Studies in Islam and Christianity*, 224.

⁷⁶ Wright concluded in January 1948 that "the Faith of Islam is governed only by essentials at its centre," and that it is "that centre towards which all outside religions seem gradually to be moving by the shedding of superfluities and reaching out to the basic fact." Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, "Is One Religion As Good As Another?," *Islamic Review*, January 1948, 14.