
Structural Analysis of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

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Abstract: This paper explores one of the most influential conspiracy theories of all time, as described in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, by employing the method of structural analysis. The “master myth” of the *Protocols* represents a basic structure of the conspiracy narrative, whose motifs were subsequently modified throughout the 20th and 21st centuries according to current events and moods. However, to understand the pamphlet as a whole, it is also important to shed a little light on its specific historical context and the religious, political, and social fervour of the time, which eventually gave rise to this text. The text is one we can still consider a blueprint of contemporary conspiracy narratives about the global cabal that occupies a prominent place within the modern conspiracy culture.

Keywords: conspiracy theory; conspiracism; Jews; antisemitism; structuralism; myth

Abstrakt: Tento text představuje návrh na strukturální analýzu jedné z doposud nejvlivnějších konspiračních teorií, kterou nám předkládají nechvalně proslulé *Protokoly sionských mudrců*. „Základní rámcový mýtus“ *Protokolů* představuje základní očištěnou strukturu konspiračního narativu, jehož konkrétní motivy byly v průběhu 20. a později 21. století modifikovány na základně aktuálního dění. Pro hlubší pochopení pamfletu je důležité přiblížit i konkrétní historický kontext, především náboženské, politické a společenské naladění tehdejší doby, který dal nakonec vzniknout textu *Protokolů*, jež dodnes můžeme považovat za stále vitální předlohu současných konspiračních teorií o globálním spiknutí, které zaujímají významné místo v rámci soudobé konspirační kultury.

Klíčová slova: konspirační teorie; konspiračismus; Židé; antisemitismus; strukturalismus; mýtus

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1.1 The (in)famous case of the Protocols

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion tells of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy with a secret infrastructure whose imaginary tendrils reach the world's farthest corners. The vast network of secret agents, spies, and allies helps conspirators control the political elites of many countries or international organizations, including religious movements and denominations. The ultimate goal of this Jewish conspiracy is to destroy and transform all currently existing governmental and social structures and dominate all goyim.¹ This will be the result of a centuries-old secret plan that is getting close to its finish line.²

The infamous pamphlet, which emerged in the early 20th century in the crisis-ridden Russian Empire, soon spread to almost every corner of the world. Shortly after its publication, it was translated into several languages, which allowed the text and its ideas to spread beyond Russia to Europe and the United States and find readers even as far as Japan. The idea of a global Jewish conspiracy also significantly influenced the formation of German Nazism.³

After World War II, the *Protocols* were doomed (though not entirely) in most Western countries. The same cannot be said of the Soviet Union or the Middle East. There, it still plays an essential role in deploying anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli rhetorics

¹ The word *goy* comes from Hebrew גוי (plural גוים *goyim*), which means “nation”. In nowadays Judaism, it refers to all non-Jews in the sense of belonging to a different religious tradition, and the word often has derogatory connotations of inferiority. HELENA PAVLINCOVÁ and BŘETISLAV HORYNA (eds.), *Judaismus, křesťanství, islám*, Olomouc: Nakladatelství Olomouc 2003, p. 167.; However, in the Old Testament, the word *goy* or *goyim* is used in different contexts and with flexibility, referring to non-Israelites and Israelites alike. According to Roshay Rozen Zvi and Adi Ophir, the “Jew/goy binary opposition” as a category of distinction is a later development that occurred during the first two centuries CE in rabbinic literature. ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI, „What if We Got Rid of the Goy? Rereading Ancient Jewish Distinctions“, *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 47 (2, 2016): p. 149–150, 181.

² *Protokoly ze shromáždění sionských mudrců*, František Komrška (trans.), Praha: Alois Koniček 1927, p. 16.; NORMAN COHN, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, London: Serif 2005, p. 27.

³ RICHARD LANDES and STEVEN T. KATZ, “Introduction – The Protocols at the Dawn of the 21st Century”, in RICHARD LANDES and STEVEN T. KATZ (eds.), *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred-Year Retrospective on The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, New York and London: New York University Press 2012, p. 1.; DAVID G. GOODMAN, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Japan”, in ESTHER WEBMAN (ed.), *The Global Impact of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Century-Old Myth*, London, New York: Routledge 2011, p. 161–174. It is well known that Hitler was intrigued by the *Protocols*, but the pamphlet had circulated among leaders of DAP (the precursor of NSDAP) before he became a party member. However, there was also a high degree of doubt regarding the authenticity of the *Protocols* among Nazi leaders. WOLFRAM MEYER ZÜ UPTRUP, “Why the Jews? The impact of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion on Nazi ideology and policy”, in ESTHER WEBMAN (ed.), *The Global Impact of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Century-Old Myth*, London and New York: Routledge 2011, p. 69; GIRARD PASCAL, “Conspiracy Theories in Europe During the Twentieth Century”, in MICHAEL BUTTER and PETER KNIGHT (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, London, New York: Routledge 2022, p. 571.; JOVAN BYFORD, *Conspiracy Theories A Critical Introduction*, London: Palgrave Macmillan 2011, p. 55.

within official political discourse and outside of it.⁴ Despite the undeniable influence of the *Protocols* on one of the most tragic moments in the history of the Jewish nation, its conspiratorial narrative is still very much alive in European and American countries, not to mention the attention they receive in some far-right movements or neo-Nazi groups.⁵ Although the *Protocols* have been officially disqualified from political or public discussion, many are still convinced that a massive international Jewish plot controls the mainstream media, the economy, and international affairs.⁶ With the new wave of interest in conspiracy theories after 2000, the fascination with long-debunked *Protocols* has been revived, as they still maintain a mysterious charm for some conspiracists.⁷

Because of the unfortunate role this pamphlet played in Nazi German propaganda, it has been the subject of study for many scholars from the second half of the twentieth century to the present. Previous studies approached the *Protocols* from various angles: the political-religious and social context of post-revolutionary Europe that preceded the creation and publication of the pamphlet in Tsarist Russia; its popularization in countries outside Russia and European countries; or its relationship to Christian apocalypticism and messianism.⁸ However, a great deal of research still

⁴ LANDES and KATZ, “Introduction...”, p. 1. The issue of the influence of the *Protocols* on the political environment and conspiracism in some Middle Eastern countries is addressed, for example, in the contribution of Esther Webman, an Israeli scholar of Egyptian origin (1947–2020), or Israeli scholar Orly R. Rahimiyan. ESTHER WEBMAN, “Adoption of the Protocols in the Arab discourse on the Arab–Israeli conflict, Zionism, and the Jews”, in ESTHER WEBMAN (ed.), *The Global Impact of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Century-Old Myth*, London and New York: Routledge 2011, passim; ORLY R. RAHIMIYAN, “*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Iranian political and cultural discourse*”, ESTHER WEBMAN (ed.), *The Global Impact of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Century-Old Myth*, London and New York: Routledge 2011, passim. Russian historian and ethnologist Victor Shnirelman (*1949) comments on the notion of a Jewish conspiracy within the political-religious discourse of contemporary Russia in VICTOR SHNIRELMAN, “The Russian Orthodoxy and a Conspiracy Theory: A Contemporary Discourse”, *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 32 (1, 2019): p. 87–101.

⁵ In the United States, “*The Protocols* is second only to the Bible itself as a source of inspiration and enlightenment for the radical right.” JEFFREY KAPLAN, “America’s apocalyptic literature of the radical right”, *International Sociology* 33 (4, 2018): p. 506.

⁶ MARTIN PENGELLY, “Trump condemned by Anti-Defamation League chief for antisemitic tropes” [online], *The Guardian*, December 2021, accessed December 2021, available online at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/dec/18/donald-trump-antisemitic-tropes-anti-defamation-league>; “Corbyn found to have written foreword for book claiming Jews control banks” [online], *The Times of Israel*, May 2019, accessed December 2021, available online at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/corbyn-found-to-have-written-foreword-for-book-claiming-jews-control-banks/>.

⁷ LANDES and KATZ, “Introduction...”, p. 2–3.

⁸ Some works on this topic: COHN, *Warrant for Genocide*, passim; ESTHER WEBMAN, “Introduction – hate and absurdity: the impact of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, in ESTHER WEBMAN (ed.), *The Global Impact of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Century-Old Myth*, London, New York: Routledge 2011, p. 1–24; ROBERT SINGERMAN, “The American Career of the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’”, *American Jewish History* 71 (1, 1981): p. 48–78. NEIL BALDWIN, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The mass production of hate*, New York: PublicAffair 2001, passim; RICHARD LANDES and STEVEN T. KART (eds.), *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred-Year Retrospective on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, New York, London: New York University Press 2012, passim.

needs to be done. As the study of conspiracy theories reached non-western regions only recently, we also learned about the influence of the *Protocols* in unexpected or not-so-apparent contexts and scenarios. While scholars have found obvious historical connections between the *Protocols* and some anti-Jewish myths and stereotypes, no one, to my knowledge, has yet sorted its chaotic content into a coherent pattern that would subsequently be subjected to a systematic analysis as a form of religious or political myth or narrative. In this paper, I attempt to propose such an analysis. Initially, this analysis constitutes the second part of my master thesis originally published in Czech – “Konspirační narativ Protokolů sionských mudrců v kontextu židovsko-křesťanských vztahů”, in which I place the narrative of the *Protocols* in its appropriate historical context in comparison with preceding and similar anti-Jewish and conspiracy narratives. This analysis draws on the first Czech translation of the original Russian text attached to Sergei Nilus’s *Great in Small*, produced and published by František Komrška in Prague in 1927 (first published in 1926). There are two reasons for the choice of the Czech translation. First, I do not work primarily with the Russian original because I do not consider my knowledge of the Russian language sufficient for such analysis without the risk of possible errors. Secondly, since the original thesis was written in Czech and the passages cited would still need to be translated, I decided to work with an authentic conspiratorial piece of work in the Czech language in its original form rather than bring my own translation that would have to be based upon not the original Russian text, but one of the English versions.¹⁰

I believe that the text of the *Protocols*, or rather, the narrative it presents, shares its fundamental structure with other modern conspiracy theories, whether they are concerned with the Jewish conspiracy or not. Due to the specific nature of conspiracy narratives, which at first glance contain many contrasting motifs and often contradictory claims, I have chosen the method of structural analysis presented by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009).¹¹ I am certainly not striving to deliver a universal analysis. Instead, this paper is a proposal for interpreting conspiracy theories related to the Christian religious environment and reflecting the dynamics of Jewish-Christian relations. In formulating or extracting the “master myth”¹² from

⁹ KATEŘINA HLAVÁČOVÁ, *Konspirační narativ Protokolů sionských mudrců v kontextu židovsko-křesťanských vztahů*, MA thesis, Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Arts 2022, p. 34–52.

¹⁰ For the purpose of this text, I paralleled my translations of passages from the Czech version with the English translation published in Boston in 1920 by Small, Maynard & Company for comparison. However, I did not find any significant differences in the content and meaning of both translations that would alter the result of the analysis.

¹¹ I draw mainly on the text of Claude Lévi-Strauss (section „The Structural Study of Myth“): CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural anthropology*, Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (trans.), New York: Basic Books 1963, p. 206–231.; and studies by RADEK CHLUP: “Strukturální antropologie včera a dnes: Sto let Clauda Lévi-Strausse I”, *Religio* 17 (1, 2009): p. 3–35; “Strukturální antropologie včera a dnes: Sto let Clauda Lévi-Strausse II”, *Religio* 17 (2, 2009): p. 156–84; PATRICK J. GRAY: “Structural Analysis of Folktales: Techniques and Methodology”, *Asian Folklore Studies* 37 (1, 1978): p. 77–95.

¹² I am using an analytical tool by Gérard Bouchard, according to whom the *master myths* “take the form of fundamental symbolic arrangements that act as matrices, structure the culture of a society, and govern the formation of other myths.” A master myth is a kind of myth that has a close rela-

which I will subsequently isolate the dominant oppositions,¹³ I will draw primarily on the text of all twenty-four “protocols”. Due to the limited scope of this paper, I will refrain from any extensive comparative analysis of the predecessors or successors of the *Protocols* and use previous comparative studies and my own research. I also agree with those scholars who see the pamphlet as a) a condensed “summary” of previous anti-Jewish myths (e.g., a specific compendium of other versions), emphasizing elements that were relevant to European and Russian society at that time and b) believe that they simultaneously become one of the most basic or even the fundamental model for many subsequent conspiracy theories and pamphlets, which, in many cases, eventually abandoned the original anti-Jewish ethos, transforming their motifs to suit their own needs.

The text of the *Protocols* itself is not very extensive compared to some previous significant conspiratorial opuses. For example, one of the most successful predecessors of the *Protocols*, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire du jakobinisme* (published 1797 in France) by a Jesuit priest Abbé Barruel (1741–1820), consists of nearly a thousand pages in English translation. All twenty-four “protocols” are around hundred-plus pages in either Czech or English. A Russian manuscript introduced by Sergei Aleksandrovich Nilus (1862–1929), Russian writer and self-proclaimed mystic, published in Berlin in 1922, runs to one hundred and twenty-five pages.¹⁴ Altogether, the *Protocols* comprise one alleged speech by an unknown rabbi. The rabbi describes partial victories in the plan for world domination, further actions and operations, and a few

tionship to a society’s deepest paradigms, values, and fears. These almost “eternal” myths, which change very slowly, are, however, continually transformed, updated, and re-translated according to how the context changes and the society or culture that live them develops. Bouchard calls these myths *derivative* or *secondary*. The original version of the *Protocols*, as well as every other adapted and updated version, can be regarded as a derivative myth with its unique features and motifs. GÉRARD BOUCHARD, *Social Myths and Collective Imaginaries*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2017, p. 112–115.

¹³ CHLUP, „Strukturální antropologie včera a dnes: Sto let Clauda Lévi-Strausse I“, p. 18.

¹⁴ Nilus introduced all twenty-four protocols in one piece as a final chapter to the second edition of his book *The Great in the Small: The Antichrist as an Imminent Political Possibility* (first published in 1903). SERGEJ NILUS *Velikoe v malom i antikhrisť, kak blizkaia politicheskaia vozmožnost: Zapiski pravoslavnago*, Tsarskoe Selo: Tip. Tsarskoselskago Komiteta Krasnago Kresta [Russian romanized] 1905, 417 p. This edition of the *Protocols* is considered to be among the most influential, and the earliest translations are based on it. His book contains apocalyptic teachings inspired by the 18th-century mystic Serapfim of Sarov (1754 or 1759–1833). In the last expanded edition, published in 1917 with a new subtitle, “*It Is Near, Even at the Doors*”: *Concerning That Which People Do Not Wish to Believe and Which Is So Near*. SERGEJ NILUS, *Bliz est', pri dverekh. O tom, chemu ne zhelaiut verit' i chto tak blizko*, Sergijev Posad, Tip. Sv.-Tr. Sergijevoj Lavri [Russian romanized] 1917, 288 p. Nilus warns against the coming of the Antichrist into this world and the apocalypse initiated by the Jews, as revealed in the *Protocols*. Not only did Nilus bring the *Protocols* to a broader audience, but he set them into an apocalyptic framework that is still vital within the current Russian orthodox conspiratorial milieu. STEPHEN E. BRONNER, *A Rumor about the Jews: Conspiracy, Anti-Semitism, and the Protocols of Zion*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 62–63; BYFORD, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 50.; MICHAEL HAGEMEISTER, „The Antichrist as an Imminent Political Possibility“, in RICHARD LANDES and STEVEN T. KATZ (ed.), *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred-Year Retrospective on The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, New York, London: New York University Press 2012, p. 80–82.

potential obstacles to the plan. While every individual “protocol” has an overarching topic stated in its heading, the topics are repeated many times throughout the text without any apparent logical continuity. This is also the result of the process of the pamphlet’s composition. While the vision of conspiracy created by Barruel and other conspiratorial texts of the 18th and 19th centuries served as the primary ideological source, other texts (unwillingly) inspired the basic textual structure and composition.

Shortly after their publication, the *Protocols* were, for a while, popular or rather curiously discussed in the United Kingdom after mainstream press and some conservative parties took them as a serious document. The idea of the Jewish conspiracy was already established in England and also fitted into the situation of general distress after World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, as was the case in other European countries, where the *Protocols* gained their initial fame in the context of anti-Bolshevism and served as a proof of the Judeo-Bolshevik (outside Germany as Judeo-German-Bolshevik) conspiracy.¹⁵ It is also worth mentioning that the English translation under the title *The Jewish Peril* (London 1921) coincides with the work of a famous conspiracist Nesta Webster and the publication of her book *World Revolution: The Plot against Civilisation*, which helped root the content of the *Protocols* within a broader conspiratorial context.¹⁶ The British newspaper *The Times* was among those who initially published speculative articles about the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy and the *Protocols* in 1921. However, as early as in August of the same year, the newspaper published three more articles proving that the idea of the global Jewish plot was not only unsubstantiated but also that “the document is in the main a clumsy plagiarism”, a synthesis of a political satire *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu* (“Dialogue between Machiavelli and Montesquieu in Hell”) by the French publicist Maurice Joly (1829–1878), published in 1864, and a chapter taken from a novel *Biarritz* (1868) by an antisemitic author Hermann Goedsche (1815–1878).¹⁷ The chapter titled “Auf dem Judenkirchhof in Prag” (“In the Jewish cemetery in Prague”) describes a secret meeting of the representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel (the “sons of the Golden Calf” as the text refers to them) led by the Devil, who are discussing the final plans to take over the world. By the end of the 19th century, the chapter, taken from its original context of mere fiction, circulated as an independent document – an authentic record of the secret meeting of Jewish elders – and had become known as “Rabbi’s Speech”. Later, it also gave conspiracists another proof of the pamphlet’s authenticity.¹⁸ The *Protocols* draw their vision of conspiracy ideology from much older

¹⁵ GIRARD, “Conspiracy Theories”, p. 571; COHN, *Warrant*, p. 164–166, 171.

¹⁶ BYFORD, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 54.

¹⁷ Goedsche published most of his works under pseudonyms. The novel *Biarritz* was published under the name sir John Retcliffe. BRONNER, *A Rumor*, p. 67.; *The Truth About “the Protocols”: A Literary Forgery, From The Times of August 16, 17, and 18, 1921*, London: Printing House Square 1921, p. 3.

¹⁸ The chapter was published in Czech under the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939–1945) by Orbis in 1942 (and again in 1943) under the title *The Mystery of the Jewish Cemetery in Prague* (in Czech, *Tajemství židovského hřbitova v Praze*), also under the name sir John Retcliffe. “John Retcliffe: ‘Tajemství židovského hřbitova v Praze,’” *Holocaust.cz*, August 7, 2011, available online at

conspiratorial ideas while the textual structure is taken from the documents above, thus making the *Protocols* not only a defamatory enterprise but also an obvious forgery.¹⁹ Although the document was proven to be a fabrication, many believed and still believe it is authentic and such claims are only a part of a Jewish plot to maintain secrecy. A conclusion that also Adolf Hitler himself came to:

“How much the whole existence of this people is based on a permanent falsehood is proved in a unique way by ‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion’, which are so violently repudiated by the Jews [...] that these are forgeries. This alone is evidence in favour of their authenticity. What many Jews unconsciously wish to do is here clearly set forth [...] they [the *Protocols*] disclose, with an almost terrifying precision, the mentality and methods of action characteristic of the Jewish people and these writings expound in all their various directions the final aims towards which the Jews are striving. The study of real happenings, however, is the best way of judging the authenticity of those documents.”²⁰

Another critical component and characterization of different versions of the *Protocols* (or other conspiracy-exposing documents and pamphlets in general) are attached commentaries that set the text in its intended cultural context. This is very important for the text to be accepted locally, in its original or adapted and updated version (e.g., when Henry Ford’s newspaper *Dearborn Independent* “Americanized” the *Protocols* in *The International Jew* series),²¹ while at the same time, such an appendix may provide an impression of legitimacy given by the author’s authority. For example, in the Czech translation, a short foreword tells us about the historical background of the acquisition of the *Protocols* that is subsequently concluded by a famous quotation from Henry Ford’s book *The International Jew: The World Problem* – “It is too terribly real for fiction, too well-sustained for speculation, too deep in its knowledge of the secret springs of life for forgery.”²²

1.2 The (Master) Myth of the Protocols

The *Protocols* begin with an unflattering description of the nature and character of the man. The goyim are characterized as stupid and undisciplined animals that lose the world and freedom because of their ignorance and failure to live according to

<https://www.holocaust.cz/zdroje/dokumenty/antisemitismus/antisemitska-propaganda-v-protektoratu-cechy-a-morava/clanky-z-doboveho-tisku/john-retcliffe-tajemstvi-zidovskeho-hrbitova-v-praze/>; COHN, *Warrant*, p. 28, 38–42; BRONNER, *A Rumor*, p. 67–9.

¹⁹ BYFORD, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 50–5.

²⁰ ADOLF HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, James Vincent Murphy (trans.), London, New York, Melbourne: Hurst & Blackett Ltd 1939, p. 240.

²¹ JEFFREY, “America’s apocalyptic...”, p. 7.

²² KOMRSKA, “Preface”, in *Protokoly; The Protocols and World Revolution: Including a Translation and Analysis of the “Protocols of the Meetings of the Zionist Men of Wisdom”*, Boston: Small, Maynard & Company 1920, p. 39.

self-imposed laws and norms. They succumb to bodily urges and vanity. They are too lazy to think, and what they did understand, they have forgotten because, unlike the Jews, the goyim cannot effectively pass on the knowledge they have acquired from previous generations. Non-Jews do not understand the true nature of the world, and they also lack the knowledge of a deep, mystical character of the universe possessed only by Jews,²³ who legitimize their desire for world domination not only by their intellectual superiority but especially by the divine election of Israel that granted them the gifts of reason and perseverance. Indeed, they have been working on their plan to take over the world and destroy Christianity for two thousand years, and now they are “only a few steps from their goal.”²⁴

Since, according to the *Protocols*, there is no point in having a deep discussion with the goyim, the conspirators instead employ force and systematic manipulation. They have many tools at their disposal to lead the masses of goyim and their governments to their desired goal – to weaken them, destroy them, and disintegrate whole nations so they can eventually take over the power in all countries, ultimately taking control of the entire world. One of these tools is modern ideologies, especially the “poison” of liberalism: “the states became infected with a mortal disease, namely, the decomposition of the blood.”²⁵ The agents of the Jews spread false slogans among the nations (“Liberty – Equality – Fraternity”)²⁶ that disintegrate states, destroy peace and, above all, weaken respect for the law. By deceit, they turn brother against brother and add to mutual misunderstanding among people.²⁷ They control the press²⁸ and educational institutions, which help them spread false scientific theories and made-up ideologies and make the legal system tangled and hard to understand.²⁹ Due to the influence of Jews, the world has become so complicated that one can no longer comprehend it.

²³ “For it was by the word ‘progress’ that we have successfully turned the brains of the stupid GOYS. There are no brains among the GOYS to realize that this word is but a cover for digression from the truth, unless it is applied to material inventions, since there is but one truth and there is no room for progress. Progress, being a false conception, serves to conceal the truth so that nobody may know it except ourselves, God’s elect, who are its guardians.” *The Protocols*, p. 45.; Compare with *Protokoly*, p. 55.

²⁴ *Protokoly*, p. 16, 25, 59.

²⁵ *Protokoly*, p. 41; *The Protocols*, p. 35.

²⁶ *Protokoly*, p. 12; *The Protocols*, p. 15.

²⁷ “We have turned states into arenas in which storms and riots take place.” *Protokoly*, p. 17. Compare with *The Protocols*, p. 18.

²⁸ “We shall deal with the press in the following way [...] we shall saddle it and take it firmly by the bridle, and we shall do the same with other printed matter [...] no message will reach the people before it goes through our censorship [...] we have controlled the minds of the goyim that they look at world events through the colored glasses of the spectacles which we have placed before their eyes.” *Protokoly*, p. 47–48; Compare with *The Protocols*, p. 40.

²⁹ “the successes of Darwinism, Marxism, and Nietzscheism, engineered by us. The demoralizing effects of these doctrines upon the minds of the goyim should be already obvious to us. [...] The laws of scientific theories which we have induced them and to which we are still instilling blind confidence through our press. For this purpose, by means of our press, we increase their blind faith in these laws. The goyish intelligentsia will be proud of its education and verifying it logically, they will put into practice all scientific information compiled by our agents for the purpose of education in the direction which we require.” *Protokoly*, p. 14; Compare with *The Protocols*, p. 17.

By subverting states and orchestrating economic crises, they drive people into debt traps and cultivate poverty and hunger, leading desperate people to revolt against their current rulers. This rebellion will eventually eliminate the last remnants of the aristocracy that will be replaced with puppets from the ranks of conspirators – either Jews or corrupted goyim. One of the repeated themes of the *Protocols* is the fragmentation and disunity of nations – continual discord over political matters among countries, supported by partisan strife secretly designed by Jews. The weakness and fragmentation of humanity (the goyim) are the key premises for being manipulated by their enemies.³⁰

Other conspirator tools include modern inventions such as the right to vote, the idea of class equality, and individualism. The author (or authors) presents conspirators who see the freedom and equality of all people as an impossible idea, inevitably leading to anarchy and wars. This is because people (non-Jews) do not know how to enjoy freedom truly, and they can only distort it. The idea of freedom could only work if people followed “the principles of faith in God and human brotherhood.”³¹ However, because people had perverted God’s law and order, they fell into the hands of conspirators who took advantage of their weakness and led them to worship mammon in the form of money (the “cult of gold”) and subjected them to indulgences (alcoholism, infidelity, gambling).³² The only forces that pose a threat to the Jewish conspiracy are the Pope and the Russian Autocracy, which also claim divine legitimacy. Therefore, they have to destroy the reputation of the Christian priesthood and undermine their authority so that people will eventually turn away from Christianity and God.³³

In order to carry out their plan, they have created an undetectable network of agents and centres involving Masonic lodges, which are governed by strict rules from a location that “will always remain unknown to the people.”³⁴ The same rigour will also govern the world that will find itself under Jewish rule. The omnipresence of agents, working as extended tendrils of the conspirators, allows the conspiracy leaders to remain in the shadows while they stir up local political strife and revolutions and kill those who stand in their way. At the top of the hierarchy sits one Jewish king from the House of David – “a despot sovereign of Zionist blood, whom we are preparing for the world.”³⁵ When the world is completely torn apart, tired of hatred, wars, and anguish, people will cry out for one universal king that would lead them out of their misery and reunite divided humanity.³⁶ Despite the vicious nature of their plan, the conspirators claim that „from temporary evil [...] will emerge the good of

³⁰ “can they (the masses) defend themselves against external enemies? This is unthinkable, for a plan fragmented into many parts loses its coherent overview and thus becomes incomprehensible and unworkable.” *Protokoly*, p. 9, 61; Compare with *The Protocols*, p. 14.

³¹ *Protokoly*, p. 22–3.

³² *Protokoly*, p. 23.

³³ *Protokoly*, p. 72; *The Protocols*, p. 48.

³⁴ *The Protocols*, p. 22.

³⁵ *The Protocols*, p. 21.

³⁶ *Protokoly*, p. 44.

an unshakable government [...] The end justifies the means.”³⁷ In the end, there will be peace on earth, and people will enjoy freedom and abundance if they observe the laws established by the Jews.³⁸

It is evident that the document contains some quite specific motifs referring to the topics and fears of contemporary society. However, beyond that, we can already see some fundamental and persisting fears and questions, thematized in present-day conspiracy theories, regarding the nature of what is observable and hidden or even transcendental realities and their relation to the nature of man and society and their external and internal enemies.

1.3 The Fundamental Structure of the Conspiracy Myth of the Protocols as a System of Binary Oppositions

Now, I will subject the conspiracy narrative of the *Protocols* to a structural analysis using the methodological aid provided by Patrick J. Gray’s article with my own slight modification.³⁹ One of the techniques, which Gray formulates based on Lévi-Strauss’s concept, consists of identifying the essential elements of myth or “gross constituent units”⁴⁰ (or “mythemes” as Lévi-Strauss calls them) and then arranging these elements in binary oppositions on the level of one selected myth. In this case, that would be the text of the *Protocols*, which I understand as one of many variants of the anti-Jewish conspiracy myth. Optimally, this analysis method should ultimately show us that the isolated segments of the myth are variations of the same theme.⁴¹

(I.) The first step was extracting the syntagmatic sequences from their diachronic arrangement and classifying them. This classification consisted of comparing the individual sequences, which are no longer treated as temporal episodes but as separate elements of the myth, uncovering their common features. The individual elements of the myth distinguished according to the similarities we have found finally allow us to see the ahistorical, paradigmatic, structural level. The moment we break the story’s temporal or “narrative” line by rearranging the selected sequences, this completely new configuration, which is no longer conditioned by the order of the story, will show us their mutual, hitherto unrecognized relationships. From the perspective of structural analysis, the significance of the myth lies not in its plot or its individual sequences but in its deep, non-temporal structure that consists of the relations be-

³⁷ *The Protocols*, p. 13.

³⁸ “[W]e are benefactors, returning to the earth true good and personal freedom [...] subject to compliance with all of our laws [...] true freedom consists in personal safety, in the honest and exact compliance with the laws of cohabitation [...] our government will be the executor of the order in which the true happiness of mankind consists.” *Protokoly*, p. 90–91; The motif of law-keeping as a prerequisite for well-being is emphasized several times in the *Protocols*. It makes an impression of the critique of the Pharisees and scribes in the New Testament.

³⁹ LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural*, p. 206–231; GRAY, “Structural Analysis...”, p. 85–91.

⁴⁰ Which correspond to broader sets of episodes in the myth. LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural*, p. 211.

⁴¹ GRAY, “Structural Analysis...”, p. 79–80.

tween the identified groups of elements characterized by the opposition.⁴² Identifying shared features is not a straightforward or entirely “objective” process, but, to some extent, it is always a matter of subjective evaluation.⁴³

At the paradigmatic level, we can then look for what we might call the “meaning” or the “signification” of the myth. Or rather, it shows us the common feature of the individual identified elements that represents some recurring theme. Following Lévi-Strauss’s conception, the *Protocols* are a kind of a “supermyth” in the sense that a series of “episodes”, which recur many times in the text, describe intangible and recurring types of situations, which in some cases are formulated in almost identical words or sentences, rather than diachronic parts of a story.⁴⁴ Since it is impossible to list all the identified groups of sequences within the scope of this paper, I will illustrate the procedure with a concrete example. After carefully reading the text, one can notice that there are repeated “episodes” or, more precisely, situations in which the *Protocols* describe the alleged reality and ways in which Jews malevolently participate in the processes of the world economy. In this case, the identified syntagmatic sequences (mythemes) will be as follows: *Jews are rich, Jews control the economy, Jews cause the bankruptcy of nation-states*, etc. The common feature of this group may be *wealth* or *the power of money*. This group of sequences is then opposed by another group whose common feature is *poverty*. By repeating the same procedure, we find common features of other sorted groups, which are simultaneously in opposition to each other. For example: *adherence to the order of society given by God – non-adherence to the order of society given by God, centralization – decentralization, civilization – barbarism, strength, and potency – lack of strength and potency, technology, and ideology – primitive way of life*, etc. It was sometimes difficult to categorize some sequences, as they exhibited a common feature shared by two or more groups. In such cases, I intuitively assigned these sequences to the groups to which they were most similar in character. Again, this is a reminder that subjectivity plays a role in identifying common features and subsequent oppositions, and, at the same time, it may indicate that we have not yet reached the deepest level of the myth – the “essential” oppositions.⁴⁵ The result of the first step gives us several groups of mythemes (collectively denoted by the abbreviation *g*), characterized by a common feature of each mytheme in each group. We have simultaneously arranged these groups into oppositions. Table 1 finds these groups in the middle and right columns.

⁴² This relationship is based on a hypothesis “that the human mind works with pairs of opposites.” GRAY, “Structural Analysis...”, p. 80, 85; LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural*, p. 224–226; CHLUP, “Strukturální antropologie včera a dnes: Sto let Clauda Lévi-Strausse I”, p. 8, 18.

⁴³ The intuitive process of identifying oppositions should, at least partially, be guided by the general assumption about the presence of some fundamental oppositions, pointed out by Lévi-Strauss or other scholars. These are, for example, the oppositions good–evil, nature–culture, raw–cooked, etc. While sometimes it is possible to identify two direct opposites, at other times, elements of the myth may be in opposition according to their greater or lesser similarity. For example, the opposition between *the ideal order of God* and *the imperfect order of man*. GRAY, “Structural Analysis...”, p. 80, 85.

⁴⁴ CHLUP, “Strukturální antropologie včera a dnes: Sto let Clauda Lévi-Strausse I”, p. 15.

⁴⁵ GRAY, “Structural Analysis...”, p. 86.

Because of the large amount of material, I have chosen a gradual reduction of “meanings”, and so, at this stage, we have not yet learned much from the identified pairs. Organizing the sequences into groups characterized by “essential” oppositions in the first step of the analysis would certainly be possible, but not without the risk of missing some of the nuances of the elements’ meanings. For this reason, I have decided first to identify the more obvious common features and then repeat the process with the common features of the groups themselves, which I will henceforth refer to simply as “meanings”.

(II.) In the second step, we proceed the same as in step one, but in this phase, we are no longer working with syntagmatic sequences or mythemes (e.g., *Jews control banks*), but with the common features = meanings of the individual groups (*g*). In sum, while in the first step, we have analyzed the diachronic level of the myth, in the next step, we proceed in the same way, but only on the synchronic level. Thus, we get new groups consisting of the common meanings (collectively denoted by the abbreviation *G*) of the first groups of mythemes (*g*), which are again sorted according to their common features. Finally, we have, again, organized these new groups into the resulting fundamental oppositions. To illustrate with an example, if we have found the common features (now meanings) of *wealth*, *activity*, *omnipresence*, and perhaps *power* as a result of the analysis in the first step, the common feature of these relations may simply be *power*, which we find in an oppositional relation to another group of meanings whose common feature is *lack of power*. These new groups of meanings finally lead us to the resulting, deepest oppositions of the myth, through which we can then try to find its “significance”. Based on the procedure above, the following table emerges.

Now, all the identified oppositions need to be analyzed once more to get closer to their shared underlying significance. Not surprisingly, the first opposition of the conspiracy narrative of the *Protocols* appears to be (*G1*) *good* – (*G2*) *evil*. Quite frequently, conspiracy narratives give the impression that, above the level of a particular story, they speak about the battle between the forces of good and evil. Conspiracy theories that are part of the Christian discourse are often seen as reflections of the struggle of God against the Devil.⁴⁶

From the reader’s perspective, the conspirators are evil because their actions negate collectively accepted ethical norms and morality. At the same time, however, the conspirators and their plan oppose a system of values, relationships, and social arrangements facing disintegration or are perceived by society as under threat. Moreover, this current “world order” can even be regarded by its advocates as an *ius naturale* and thus untouchable. However, the conspirators admit to doing evil even on the level of the text itself when they say that evil must first be done for good to follow. Murders and deception have to take place in order to establish a perfect society under one Jewish king.

⁴⁶ CHIP BERLET, “Apocalypticism”, in PETER KNIGHT (ed.), *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO 2003, p. 86; BYFORD, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 71; LANDES, KATZ, “Introduction...”, p. 17; HAGEMEISTER, “The Antichrist...”, p. 82.

| Final oppositions | Oppositions in groups (g2) | |
|---|--|---|
| <i>G1 good – G2 evil</i> | peace / prosperity / freedom | murders, terror, and violence / misery / manipulation |
| <i>G3 ideal order of God (overstated organization) – G4 imperfect order of man (understated organization)</i> | adherence to the order of society given by God / compliance with laws / asceticism and religious life / strong order / hierarchy / centralization / unity and strong society | non-adherence to the order of society given by God / non-compliance with laws / secularism / weak and dysfunctional order / equality / decentralization / disunited society |
| <i>G5 knowledge – G6 ignorance</i> | awareness of mysteries / information / genius and wisdom / deceit and manipulation / complexity | absence of (awareness of) mysteries / lack of information / stupidity / disorientation / simplicity |
| <i>G7 culture – G8 nature</i> | civilization / absence of urges and emotions / fragile man living in civilization / technologies and ideologies | barbarism / succumbing to urges and emotions / predation / primitive way of life |
| <i>G9 non-autonomy effecting freedom – G10 autonomy effecting unfreedom</i> | despotism and non-autonomy / freedom under divine mandate | autonomy and arbitrariness / unfreedom under the dominion of sin |
| <i>G11 power – G12 lack of power</i> | strength and potency / wealth / activity / will / supremacy / omnipresence (globality) | lack of strength and potency / poverty / passivity / lack or weak will / subordination / limited field of action (locality) |
| <i>G13 life – G14 death</i> | immortality in community / continuity | breakdown of the traditional family / discontinuity |

The perfectly designed plan and the conspirators' organization mirror the *ideal order of God (G3)*, which is in opposition to the inherently dysfunctional and unstable order of the goyim – the *imperfect order of man (G4)*. The conspirators are setting up a mirror to a society incapable of functioning according to its own laws and rules, even according to the law established by God. The order of the conspirators, its very existence, brings about the decline of a lazy and passive society (it hastens what is inevitable), which, in the end, “voluntarily” falls into their hands. On the earthly level, then, we find an opposition that could be, in a way, perceived as a sub-opposition of the *ideal – imperfect order*, defined by the contrast of the organizational abilities of the conspirators, which, according to the *Protocols*, are also conditioned by God's will. While Jews can lead a worldwide network of secret agents and still maintain one coherent plan, the disunited goyim face organizational problems at the level of local governments. Whether the conspiratorial plan focuses on a particular government, coalition, or the entire world, political power is irrelevant to them and probably already interwoven with the secret networks of conspirators and distorted by corruption. The only real danger lies in the anointed institutions. Here specifically in the

papacy and the “Russian autocracy”.⁴⁷ Not only do the conspirators distribute their power and resources efficiently, but they also have a tight hierarchy with one strong leader. They are united in opinion and willing to do anything to achieve a shared goal. In this respect, the *organization* and network of relationships or hierarchy of the conspirators appear to be *overstated*, while the society of non-Jews and their leaders are unable to ensure the regular and solid functioning of their government and institutions. Their organization is, therefore, *understated*.⁴⁸ Within these oppositions, our world always appears to be in some non-ideal, distorted form, and in this state, it faces a perfectly ordered world of the conspirators. In contrast to this, however, we must consider the paradox, which is also mentioned in the *Protocols*, namely the actual reality of Jewish dispersion (the “gift of dispersion” as the text calls it) and the absence of a Jewish state at the time of the publication of the pamphlet.⁴⁹

Topics related to knowledge are crucial to any conspiracy narrative. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the *Protocols*, the opposition of *knowledge (G5) – ignorance (G6)* forms one of the main lines running through all twenty-four sections. In the world of conspiracy theories, effective work with information becomes a supreme virtue on which humankind’s fate depends. Knowledge is necessary to recognize the true nature of things, navigate the complex world run by conspirators, or even find truths of mystical proportions. At the same time, it becomes a weapon against the forces of conspiracy that uses people’s ignorance to manipulate them.

Just as the perfectly organized structure of the Jewish conspiracy and the imperfect, subverted goyish society stand in opposition to each other, so does the secret plan to establish one strictly defined world order stand in opposition to the organic nature of society, characterized by phases of development and collapse with humankind subjected to its natural tendencies and desires. In the *Protocols*, non-Jews are described as the fierce “beasts we call men”, “cattle [...] manifesting their barbarism”, and as beings who mutilate freedom in anarchy.⁵⁰ But we also see the ambivalent character of the conspirators, most notably their cruelty alternating with strategic calculation. In addition to sophisticated manipulation and deception, the Jews want to use force – to exercise the natural right of those who are stronger: “our motto is power and hypocrisy [...] (the goyim, A/N) did not notice that there is no equality in nature; that there can be no liberty, since nature herself has established inequality of mind, character, and ability, as well as subjection to her laws.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ “The main thing for the invulnerability of government is the consolidation of the aureole of power, and this is only achieved by the greatness and strength of a government which would show signs of untouchability from mystical causes – the divine election. Such a government, until lately, has been the Russian autocracy – alone in the whole world, our dangerous enemy, if we do not mention the papacy.” *Protokoly*, p. 59. Compare with *The Protocols*, p. 47–48.

⁴⁸ Understanding QAnon’s Connection to American Politics, Religion, and Media Consumption“ [online], *Public Religion Research Institute*, May 2021, accessed November 2021, available online at <https://www.prrri.org/research/qanon-conspiracy-american-politics-report/>.

⁴⁹ *Protokoly*, p. 46.

⁵⁰ *Protokoly*, p. 6, 10.

⁵¹ *Protokoly*, p. 11.

Moreover, the Christian symbolism of the serpent appears in the *Protocols*, and in one passage, it also identifies the Jews as the Devil's minions: "we are only a few steps away from our goal. We are only a short distance away, and the whole path we have travelled is ready to close the circle of the symbolic serpent which represents our nation. This closing circle will enclose all the European states in a tight bolt."⁵² Later in the 20th century, depicting conspirators (mostly the Jews) as chthonic beings became increasingly popular on propaganda posters. Most often, they are compared to snakes, octopuses, or spiders.⁵³

The opposition *nature* (G7) – *culture* (G8) is evident in a number of modern conspiracy theories that express suspicions about the hidden harmful effects of specific technological innovations, experiments (e.g., chemtrails, GMOs), the malpractice of modern medicine, and especially the pharmaceutical industry,⁵⁴ or the decline of the traditional and "natural" nuclear family. Glancing back on those conspirators who act as agents of dark forces, in the imagination of conspiracists, such figures are symbolically or even literally stripped of human features and emotions: "in laying our plans we must turn our attention not so much to the good and moral as to the necessary and useful."⁵⁵ In addition to the chthonic monsters, usually representing conspiracy as a whole, this type of plotter is portrayed as an army of anonymous secret agents, later embodied by, for example, men in black.

In a world ruled by conspirators, everyone will have a determined or even designed place at the expense of their personal freedom and *autonomy* (G9). The question of lack of freedom and *non-autonomy* (G10) may extend not only to the physical but also to the psychological and spiritual levels. In medieval times, there were ideas about the union of witches, Jews, or lepers with the Devil, and the motif of unfreedom was associated with demonic possession or giving up the soul to the Devil. Concurrently, we often encounter the motif of "brainwashing" in the sense of unconscious unfreedom implemented by the manipulation of conspirators. This raises the question – can we still trust what we see and think or how we "want" to live?⁵⁶ As in the case of G1 and G2, the religious context has to be considered. From the point of view of Christian doctrine, we find a difference in meaning between the oppositions of *autonomy* –

⁵² *Protokoly*, p. 16. In this case, however, the "symbolism of the serpent", could refer more to the rapture from the initial "natural" state in the garden that man lost as a result of his sin. However, there are also interpretations according to which the Devil, who disguised himself as a serpent to seduce Eve, is to blame (fully or partially) for the expulsion from Eden, and since the Jews are the Devil's helpers, this transfers his guilt to them as well. BRONNER, p. 30.

⁵³ Also, many editions of the *Protocols* in various languages depict a snake or an octopus gripping the world on their covers. BRONNER, *A Rumor*, p. 58.

⁵⁴ See: JAMES NIGEL, "Contraails", in PETER KNIGHT (ed.), *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO 2003, p. 197–199; MARGIT STANGE, „Health Scares“, in PETER KNIGHT (ed.), *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO 2003, p. 306–311; Even the *Protocols* makes a remark about the "vaccination of diseases." *Protokoly*, p. 44. See also in *The Protocols*, p. 35.

⁵⁵ *Protokoly*, p. 8; In some contemporary conspiracy theories, conspiracists are described as cold-blooded alien lizards or heartless robots driven only by their mission.

⁵⁶ FRAN MASON, "Mind Control", in PETER KNIGHT (ed.), *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO 2003, p. 480–89.

non-autonomy and *freedom – unfreedom*. The concept of Christian freedom is different from physical, political, or legal freedom. This notion of freedom is not explicitly mentioned in the *Protocols* themselves, but traces of it can be seen in the criticism of non-Jews. They have turned away from God, and that has distorted their character, meaning they cannot draw on the benefits of true freedom, which is mediated only by faith in God and the life-giving and liberating sacrifice of Jesus Christ. At the same time, they fall into the clutches of the conspirators, who, in this case, are in real life perceived as damned by God because they rejected true freedom (and therefore life) and seek to attain it by the shallow observance of the commandments. In this sense, they represent wrong modern and secular values that, according to the *Protocols*, they are trying to install among the goyim. In contrast, contemporary conspiracy theories often rethink this opposition. For if the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was still characterized by a struggle between dying monarchism and rising liberalism, concurrently, the notion of individual civil liberty, liberalism, and democracy would prevail over the desire to restore sanctified monarchical absolutism.

The position and achievements of the conspirators imply that they possess almost unlimited power, conditioned by God's will, giving them a unique supreme nature and, at the same time, secured by a worldwide network of agents, solid organization, and immense wealth. Thus, the common theme of previous mythemes could be the relationship between *power* and its *lack – lack of power*. However, in the context of this analysis, I will dare to go one step further. In searching for the underlying meaning of all the identified mythemes, I find a common theme of life and death.⁵⁷ The pairs *G1* and *G2* clearly imply life under the rule of good and death under the rule of evil. *G3* and *G4* express the danger of death due to the insufficient organization and weak order of the gentile society, which is responsible for the domination of conspirators who bring death to their opponents and life to those who submit. At the same time, we can ask whether the gentile society can sustain life in its disintegrated state. The pairs *G5* and *G6* express death due to the lack of knowledge and the ability to see through the conspirators' traps. In this case, culture (*G7*) causes life in contrast to nature (*G8*), emphasizing its primitive, aggressive, and predatory side. The chthonic character of the conspirators then may enhance the theme of death. However, the situation is different in the case of some modern conspiracy theories (chemtrails, GMOs, anti-vax). The myth is transformed, and the relationship is reversed. The culture causes death because it represses the life-giving nature. The pair *G9* and *G10* represents a paradox, where despotism and non-autonomy cause life, preventing anarchy and arbitrariness, which cause death. Reflecting the Christian ethos in the text, there is the ultimate gift of eternal life under God's mandate. Life and freedom are thus conditioned by the renunciation of personal autonomy, which will always lead to death (living in sin). The *Protocols* also briefly mentions a topic that is still very relevant to those contemporary conspiracy theories that express concern about the controlled breakdown of the traditional family. In this sense, autonomy,

⁵⁷ GRAY, "Structural Analysis...", p. 88.

freedom, and individualism threaten the stability of the traditional family as a means for reproduction and, thus, for the maintenance of life. In the last pair (*G11*, *G12*), life is linked to power and strength (physical, spiritual, organizational), while death is associated with its lack. The fundamental opposition between life and death could thus be better represented by the following table, which, however, only describes one (in this case, the “monarchical” and “conservative”) of several possible transformations of the myth:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>G13</i> life – <i>G14</i> death | good / ideal order of God (overstated organization) / knowledge / culture / non-autonomy effecting freedom / power / immortality in community / continuity | evil / imperfect order of man (understated organization) / ignorance / nature / autonomy effecting unfreedom / lack of power / breakdown of the traditional family / discontinuity |
|------------------------------------|--|--|

1.4 Conclusion

Through the method of structural analysis, we were able to explore or reconsider one of the basic premises of the study of anti-Jewish conspiracy narratives and especially the *Protocols*, which are considered a concentrate of anti-Jewish conspiracy ideas with universal applicability. The analysis has shown us that, on the one hand, the narrative of the *Protocols* is undoubtedly a product of its time and reflects the contradiction between the individual and self-given freedom of human life and the Christian doctrine of freedom given by the grace of God, which stood as two opposing paradigms at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. In the context of Western Christianity, however, this conclusion simultaneously becomes a hypothesis for further investigation that requires a deep dive into the theological concept of Christian freedom and its modern transformation in order to get closer to the way it might have been perceived not only by the authors but also the readers and supporters of the *Protocols* and other conspiracy narratives from the early 20th century to the present.

While some contemporary transformations and updates of the anti-Jewish conspiracy myth of the *Protocols* have again taken place within the Christian world (Russian Orthodoxy, for example), we can trace its continuing success outside the explicitly religious environment. The dynamics and ambiguity of the various oppositions have shown us the moulding nature of this conspiracy theory, while they all relate to themes and anxieties that society in modern times still has to confront at the most fundamental level of its existence. The enormous influence that the *Protocols* have achieved goes beyond unmediated experience with the text. The narrative became a kind of Esperanto for conspiracy theorists. Whether or not they know of it, they embrace the patterns that long predate modern conspiracy theories of the secret global cabal.

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