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## NEW BOOKS IN H

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### Jerry Muller, "Capitalism and the Jews"

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Jerry Muller

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#### Abstract

I confess I was attracted to this book by the title: *Capitalism and the Jews* (Princeton, 2010). Capitalism is a touchy subject; Jews are a touchy subject. But capitalism and the Jews, that's a disaster waiting to happen. I don't suggest you try this, but just imagine what would happen if you started a water-cooler chat with "Hey, what do you think of capitalism and the Jews?" Not pretty. So, being a bit curious, I wanted to know who would write a book with said title and what they could possibly say that wouldn't get people calling for their head. Well, here's what I found out. The book was written by Jerry Muller who, I can tell you with all earnestness, is a very bright fellow, an excellent (and witty) writer, and someone with a load of interesting things to say about capitalism and Jews. Don't worry, it's not what you think. Muller's book is no spittle-encrusted



diatribe against greedy, hook-nosed, money-lenders. But neither is it the kind of book that ignores the (too often considered embarrassing or offensive) facts, the central one here being that Jews are, as Muller well puts it, good at capitalism. There is no Judeophobia or Judeophilia to be found in these pages. Rather, there is a fascinating, meditative, and enlightening account of the historical relationship of capitalism and the Jews, predominately in Europe over the last thousand or so years. This book is full of cool-headed, convincing arguments about controversial, oft-asked historical questions: Why are Jews good at capitalism? What made European Jews different from other diaspora communities? What role did the Jews play in the evolution of capitalism? What attracted some Jews to socialism? Why do we think—wrongly as it turns out—that there was an affinity between Jews and communism? How did Jews themselves react to the strong association between capitalism and their faith? How did Christians react to the same association?

If you read this book, and I hope you do, you will be able to sensibly answer all these question. And really, you have no reason not to read it because it is a model of brevity. It's rare that you find so much packed into so few pages. But that's what you'd expect, I suppose, out of a very bright fellow, excellent writer, and someone with a load of interesting things to say...

### Keywords

Anti-Semitism, Assimilation, Capitalism, Christendom, Christianity, Conspiracy Theories, Early Modern Europe, Enlightenment, Ethnic Cleansing, Exile, Intellectuals, Jews, Middle Ages, Modernity, National Identity, Nationalism, Religion, Renaissance

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Jerry Muller, Capitalism and the Jews, the release stretches the multifaceted phylogeny.

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