

SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLE:

THE FOUNDATIONS OF ANTI-JUDAISM IN CHRISTIANITY

by

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The relation of Christianity to Jewry has generally been a negative one, and this has meant serious consequences for Jewry throughout history. Since this negative relationship remains in existence, secularised but effective up to the present day, e.g. in 'New Left' circles, it is worthwhile to examine the background of this hatred.

The development is an unbroken chain, beginning with the earliest Epistle of Paul, the first letter to the Thessalonians, going further with Ignatius at the beginning of the second century and continuing up to the Epistle of Barnabas: by this time Jewry has been abandoned. The promise applies to the 'New People of God', the Christians. After becoming a political power, Christianity oppressed Jewry even more than pagan Rome had done.

The 'Golden Tongued' Chrysostomos speaks of the synagogue as a breeding place of the devil. Augustine, although himself moderate in his attitude to the Jews, became the father of the future classical basis for Christian behaviour towards Jewry. He interpreted Ps. 59:12 as saying that the Jews have to be the negative witnesses of Christian faith. Though they are not to be killed, they are to be kept in a subordinate position. This principle, rather intensified by the Church in later years, lasted in its secularised version through the English Deism, the French Age of Enlightenment, the leftist Hegelianism from Feuerbach to Marx, and appeared again in the 'New Left'. It penetrated even into Emancipation Jewry, which tried to be acceptable to the Christian world, and into the State of Israel itself, which is to a great extent an heir of Emancipation.

Since this development had already begun to appear in the New Testament, it is of interest to analyse it. In the NT, Jesus certainly seems to be a law-abiding Jew, tending towards the Pharisees, though rejecting the way they behaved. Jesus differs from the Pharisaic tradition in some of his own revolutionary thoughts, e.g. in his conception of marriage (Matt. 19:8). His concept of the Messiah corresponds with that of Judaism, and if Jesus ever considered himself to be the Messiah, then it was only as the 'coming'

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son of Man (according to Dan. 7:1). Only between Easter and Pentecost, as related in the Acts of the Apostles, did he begin to be regarded by the Apostles as the 'One who has come'. According to G. Scholem, one can divide Jewish expectations of the Messiah into two groups: one restorative, hoping for the reestablishment of the kingdom of David; the other utopian, creating a completely new state of mind. Jesus and Sabbatai Zevi belong to the latter, and Bar Kochba to the first group. If he failed, the national, restorative Messiah was abandoned as a pseudo-Messiah. This is not true for the utopian Messiah, whose failure results in the division of the People. The utopian concept, being Jewish like the restorative one, thus provides for a breaking open of the national bounds of the people of Israel. The character of mission has changed completely. Whereas previously Jewish proselytism brought pagans into the Jewish people, now after the coming of the Messiah pagans became Christians and participants of salvation without first being admitted to the body of Jewry.

Universal Messianism had thus arrived at a truly antinomistic position, precluding an association with Jewry. A disposition towards antinomianism had, however, previously developed in Judaism itself; there existed certain streams which maintained that the messianic era would bring about a depreciation of the Law. The 'Torah of the Messiah' was seen as clearly different from the 'Torah of today'. This phenomenon is also confirmed by Sabbatai Zevi, who consciously sought to transgress. Jesus becomes the Redeemer through his death and resurrection, which become an occurrence of the cosmic 'salvation process'. The true believer participating in the faith and sacraments will be connected to this cosmic fulfilment. Thus the Torah has no value as a guide to life. The path of the church, especially the Gentile church, and the concept of Jewry are not compatible.

These ideas were not accepted by the Palestinian Jewish-Christian community, but here also there was no contact with 'unfaithful' Jewry. In particular the Gospel of Matthew, developed by these communities, is extremely anti-Pharisaic. The external separation took place during the Roman siege of Jerusalem when Christians left the town before 70.

The Gentile church after Paul withdrew even further from Jewry, the result of which was growth of an irreconcilable hostility. The Jewish rejection of Jesus is not considered as being simply disloyal, but as a lapse in their 'salvation history', in their very destiny. The whole Bible is pointing to this Messiah who is supposed to join the pagans with the people of God. Because of this lapse by Jewry, their destiny is wasted and removed. When the prophets predicted the Messiah, they also foretold the stubbornness of Israel. In continuing to attempt to fulfil the Torah, in opposition to its true destiny, Israel thus becomes an executor of the 'work of the devil' in the eyes of second century Christianity. The continued existence of Jewry, or rather of the Jewish people, after its affirmed end not later than A.D. 70,

became a provocation which has remained in existence, with undiminished importance, right up to the secular anti-Zionism of today. Since the causes of Christian hostility towards Jewry are rooted in the Christian message itself, the road towards Christian-Jewish understanding must be a thorny one.

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