

JEWISH/CHRISTIAN: ANTISEMITISM, ROOT OF

Suppose a people scattered among a people and maintaining their primordial ways. Will not the people of that place have to explain to their children why the differences in the ways of life? And will these parents--and, indeed, the diaspora parents--be tempted to moralize the differences, "our" practices and beliefs good and "theirs" bad? Suppose further that the people of that place have lost confidence in their own ways--their gods, their customs and manners, than ancestral hopes. Will that degeneracy and root-alienation not add the poison of anxiety to pedagogy, so that the children will pick up the hate signal?

That, in my opinion, is the psychosocial root of antisemitism, which was so vitriolic in the Roman empire that the Jews were expelled from Rome in AD 40, almost before the first Christian arrived in that city. Antisemitism is no Christian invention, but a "Christian" inheritance, i.e. a pagan motif the pagans did not surrender when they converted to Christianity. And, while it can easily be shown that antisemitism is antichristian, it has not been easy for Christianity, up against Judaism, its dominant parent [Jewish mother!], to free itself from that self-canceling vitriol, Jew-hating.

----10 Dec 75----Chaim: The first few minutes after you let me out at the seminary this morning, I dashed off this note for my assistant to slip into the "Jewish/Christian" folder. I'd no intention of making you a Xerox of it--but I do so as illustrative of how a thinksheet grows, and in the light of your suggestion in our livingroom this morning that "Maybe you and I should do a book together on...."