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The origins of Christian anti-Semitism beyond the New Testament

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a study of anti-Semitism in Christianity from the first to the fourth centuries and the resulting relationship between Jews and Christians.

The focus of the thesis is to examine the degree to which Ruether's contention, that virulent anti-Semitism appeared only as Christianity became powerful enough to rival the status and respect given to the Jewish people throughout the Roman Empire, may be substantiated. This contention is examined in both the historical and contemporary settings.

The thesis contains five sections which explore the appearance and development of what may be termed 'anti-Semitism in Christianity'.

The first addresses the origins of anti-Semitism within Christianity in the first century, primarily from the perspective of Jules Isaac, and details some contemporary reactions to his work.

The second section details the early history of anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire and the work of the classical scholars Philo and Josephus who used their considerable skill to oppose it.

The third section explores such historical factors as the significance of the two Jewish revolts against Rome, the effect of the Council of Jerusalem on the development of Christianity, the impact of the new Rabbinic Judaism and the developing rivalry between the two religions.

The fourth section outlines the development of anti-Semitism as a theological imperative within the writings of the early church, and offers a historical survey of the relationship between Church and Synagogue.

The fifth section tenders the conclusions of the thesis.

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