

Luther's Antagonism towards Jews: Some Lessons for Religious Conflict with Special reference to Sri Lanka

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Historically Luther had a cordial friendship with Jewish scholars as he pursued their knowledge base on the Hebrew text in which he translated into German. He attempted conversion of Jews into Christianity through the relationship he maintained which he failed and there commenced his ideological battle with the Jews. He deployed his knowledge of the First Testament to take a position that his contemporary Jews are not really Jews and that they cannot be the chosen people of God. This position was further aggravated by the use of the crucifixion of Jesus and he instigated German royalty and people against the Jews which also had a social background and the regular practice of the Jewish masses, caricaturing them as money lending Jews and accusing them for poisoning the wells to kill German people. These acts led to an overall displeasure towards the Jews, and many Jews left Germany expanding its Diaspora. The second phase of Anti Jewish sentiments can be identified with the rise of German Nationalism under Hitler who seemed to have admired Luther.

It is in this background I wish explore the religious conflicts in Sri Lanka. Obviously there are inter religious and intra religious suspicions among all religious communities in Sri Lanka, they love and hate each other for various reasons. Some of that can be described to be historical, socio-political, about space and majority- minority dispositions and their implications. The complex confrontations are among the communities, they come alive and recede depending on the issues that float across the country among Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims also other groups that campaign for each of the above traditions.

This paper will draw some of the ideas that Luther maintained on Jews and to focus particularly on the early Lutheran ideological positioning and determine some parallels in order to propose some lessons that Sri Lanka could learn from such hegemonic ideological explanations that could have devastating influence such as on the Third Reich and German Nationalism. Ethnic nationalism once woken unjustifiably, then it is proven beyond that its reciprocal responses are equally antagonistic.

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