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**The Wandering Jew as a synecdoche of anti-Jewish construction:
A psychoanalytic perspective**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Theology
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Abstract

The Wandering Jew as a synecdoche of anti-Jewish construction: A psychoanalytic perspective

After around half a century of progress, Jewish-Christian relations seem to have reached a plateau. Among many possible reasons, it appears that good intentions at “official” church levels continue to be subverted by traditional Christian supersessionism, especially as manifest in the “performed” life of the church, and in relation to Jews and Judaism.

The research generates a psychoanalytical understanding of Christian anti-Jewishness complementary to those from other fields, to try to understand more comprehensively its aetiology and why it manifests in such particular ways. The theoretical approach begins with Freud and the British Object Relations school, but includes perspectives from other streams of psychoanalysis, and from contemporary cognitive theory.

Utilising an “applied” psychoanalytic reading of The Wandering Jew as a synecdoche of Christian anti-Jewishness, the research argues that performance of the church’s sacred texts (traditionally interpreted in anti-Jewish ways) connects, via unconscious association, with latent primal fears and anxieties of worshippers. It is this regular, uncritical performance of such texts that keeps a largely unconscious, affect-laden, contemporary anti-Jewishness alive.

Understanding that “bodies” can bear powerful meanings, the research investigates the person of The Wandering Jew as a Christian anti-Jewish construction, and uncovers a number of psychoanalytically significant themes which closely relate to issues of human development. All of this, taken together, helps explain why Christian anti-Jewishness is often so passionately irrational, palpably incarnate, deep-rooted and difficult to educate against.

The research concludes with two theoretical reflections. The first explores whether the idea of the analytic third might help towards a better understanding of the potency of Christian anti-Jewish fantasy. The second is a discussion of whether it is helpful, given anti-Jewishness is no longer generally understood as “psychopathological”, to think instead of Christian anti-Jewish construction as taking place on neurotic islands having cultures of narcissism and paranoia.

The main implication of the research is that the church needs to take responsibility for its own anti-Jewishness which is what, in essence, is currently subverting better Jewish-Christian relations.

*The aim of man is to search
for the cause and meaning of things*
* Rabbi Moses Isserles-Lazarus
(the Rema)

*Heaven is the state where
we see each other face to face*
* Saint Anthony

Dedication

In memory of Rev Dr J.J. Lewis, late Fellow and Principal of Trinity Methodist Theological College (Auckland) who opened a door for me to a Jewish world I hardly knew existed. *Shalom.*

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