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Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World. By Peter Schäfer. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997. xii + 306 pp. \$35.00 cloth.

Few cultural ideas and social patterns from antiquity have as immediate and dreadful a resonance in our own century as does anti-Semitism. Professor Peter Schäfer, born in Germany shortly before the end of World War II, currently director of the Institute for Jewish Studies at the Free University of Berlin, acknowledges this forthrightly. His sensitivity to the complex context of modern scholarship on the question of anti-Jewish hostility prompted him to compose the current study in English ("We are [much] influenced in our thinking by the language in which we write. Had I written in German, a different book would surely have emerged" [vii]; cf. his articulate animadversions on translating *genos/ethnos* as "race" [217 n. 37]). But once past the introduction--a concise sketch of modern historiography on the question of ancient Gentile-Jewish relations from Mommsen (1884) to Gager (1983) and Feldman (1993)-- Schäfer plunges us into a foreign world thick with legendary myths of origin; with rumored forbidden offerings, animal and human; with well-tended ethnic resentments and fantasies of huge destruction. We are in the ancient Mediterranean, in pursuit of the origins of anti-Semitism.

Schäfer lays out his evidence in three blocks. Part 1, "Who are the Jews?" (15-118), presents major themes retailed by gentile authors when commenting on Jews and Judaism: the Exodus (transmuted from the more familiar biblical story of flight to freedom to a derogatory tale of leprosy and expulsion); the Jewish God (unnerving, mysterious, aniconic); abstinence from pork (odd and ancestral); Sabbath (mistaken for a fast day); circumcision (a gold mine particularly for Latin satirists); and proselytism, the reception of gentile converts. As the author reviews each of these topics, the dislikes and prejudices of certain ancient writers (Manetho, Apion, Juvenal, Tacitus) emerge with startling clarity.

Part 2, "Two Key Historical Incidents" (121-60), analyzes oddly twin events in Egypt, three centuries apart, whose salient features--political, social, religious--closely resemble each other: the anti-Jewish outburst at Elephantine ca. 410 B.C.E., and the well-known eruption of violence in Alexandria in 38 and 41 C.E. In both cases, the resident Jewish population identified itself, and was resentfully associated by the natives, with a well-hated foreign power: the Persians, who conquered Egypt in 525 B.C.E., and the Romans of the early imperial period. In both cases, the gentile population worked through co-opting the local representative of the distant imperial power (the Persian Vidranga; the Roman Flaccus) in order to attack with impunity the Jews in their midst. And in both cases, the situation stabilized only once greater external authority intervened. Schäfer's writing in this section is excellent, a vigorous combination of narrative and analysis. And the material he relates serves him in making an important point, namely, that for the ancient world one cannot reasonably or usefully distinguish between political (understand "secular") and religious motivations: the two are intertwined, inseparable, indeed most often indistinguishable.

Part 3, "Centers of Conflict" (163-96), surveys the three geographical matrices of major traditions of anti-Semitism: Egypt, Syria-Palestine, and Rome. This section reprises the themes of Part 1 now refracted through the powerful analysis of Part 2. Here Schäfer builds clearly and strongly to his thesis. Egyptian anti-Jewish sentiment was based upon deep ethnic resentments, caused in part by clashes in the religions of the respective groups. Later Hellenistic "ethnography" picked up and developed the originally Egyptian charges of impiety, xenophobia, and misanthropy--boosted, perhaps, by the Jewish-Greek tensions of the Maccabean revolt, which comes too late, however, to serve as the origin of such

sentiments (against Bickerman, Hengel, and Habicht, esp. 178-79). Hellenism's own grandiose sense of itself served as a kind of step-up transformer to the very particular hatreds transferred from Egypt: if things Greek represented the very best in universal human culture, then perceived Jewish rejection of that culture revealed a supposed Jewish animosity to humanity itself--a conviction that also shapes hostile characterizations of early Christians as driven by an odium generis humani.

Finally, the contribution of Roman attitudes cut two ways. On the one hand, Jew-haters such as Cicero, Juvenal, and Tacitus would characterize Judaism as the quintessential *barbara superstitio*, intrinsically inimical to Roman "religio, the latter being the essence of the political, cultural, and religious ideals of ancient Rome" (181). But, on the other, Judaism obviously exerted a powerful appeal. "Proselytism is a subject only in Roman, not in Greek literature" (193)--enough Romans were attracted to conversion, if Schäfer's reconstruction of Domitian's motives for prosecuting the *fiscus iudaicus* is correct, that forcing them onto the tax roll might have significantly increased government revenues (183, cf. 106-118). Conversion to Judaism alone (as opposed to adherence to any of the other cults of antiquity, until Christianity) meant betrayal of one's own *patria nomima* and literally joining another people in the worship of its god, the God of Israel: it was in this sense seen as *maiestas*, high treason. This double emotional response of dislike and (because of Judaism's attractions) fear is what particularly marks Roman anti-Jewish traditions, for which reason Schäfer proposes the term that entitles the work: *Judeophobia*.

Schäfer's final chapter, "Anti-Semitism" (197-211) draws together his arguments through a comparison with Gavin Langmuir's taxonomy of types and degrees of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. Langmuir, a medievalist, while acknowledging earlier anti-Judaism, sees the origins of fully developed anti-Semitism only in the mid-twelfth century. Schäfer's evidence and arguments belie this position, and in his counterargument he presses further to analyze various historians' explanations for anti-Semitism. He dismisses the position that the Jews' insistence on keeping their own ancestral customs and laws, their voluntary and renown separateness, was itself the fundamental reason for gentile hatred. "It is true that the allegation of Jewish 'separateness' and 'strangeness' does have a fundamentum in re, but to argue that it is the reason for pagan anti-Semitism is to confuse cause with pretext, to hold the Jews themselves responsible for what others do to them.... To what degree the Jews were separate is not important.... The only crucial question is what the Graeco-Roman and Greek authors made out of it. They turned Jewish separateness into a monstrous conspiracy against humankind and the values shared by all civilized human beings, and it is therefore their attitude which determines anti-Semitism."

In its clarity of presentation, in its broad consideration both of ancient evidence and modern historiography, Schäfer's book marks an important contribution to the study of the origins and history of anti-Semitism. All students of antiquity--classicists, intellectual and social historians, religionists--stand to benefit from his work. I would hope that particularly my colleagues in Pauline studies acquaint themselves with Schäfer's arguments. Perhaps then they will be able to hear in their own reconstruction of the reasons for Paul's persecution of the *ekklesiai* and his own later "persecution" by synagogue communities--both routinely "explained" by an appeal to supposed Jewish hostility toward Gentiles also claiming "membership in the people of God"--the echoing strains of these ancient Graeco-Roman charges of Jewish unsociability, misanthropy, and hatred of strangers. Plus ca change...

ADDED MATERIAL

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