

Is the Bible Anti-Semitic?

Nazi forces carried out one of the most evil pogroms in human history, systematically murdering Jews in Europe with horrifying efficiency during the Holocaust. The sickening images of mournful Jewish prisoners looking like living skeletons, pits into which the dead were unceremoniously dumped, and children orphaned by the powers of evil are enough to move the coldest of hearts. What was the cause for the Holocaust? According to the new atheists, the Bible made the Nazis do it.

Human beings have a tendency to draw tight circles around those they want to include in their individual groups. The world has seen many kinds of discrimination for nearly as long as humans have occupied the earth. Ethnic discrimination is one of the most obvious, and America has had its fair share of racism. It is an inescapable part of the nation's history. It was present in the colonies and persists today in varying forms and attitudes. Anti-Semitism is one form of this kind of discrimination.

It goes without saying that the Nazis were anti-Semitic. It is one of their best-known features. Critics of the Christian faith link this anti-Jewish sentiment solidly not only with the Church, but with the Bible. This point is brought out most forcefully by Sam Harris, who is himself Jewish. In his book, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, he argues anti-Semitism is "as integral to Church doctrine as a flying buttress is to a Gothic cathedral." Elsewhere he says that Jesus "demonizes the Jews." The Holocaust, according to Harris, was due to an anti-Semitic mindset inherited from the medieval church. He says,

Consider the Holocaust: the anti-Semitism that built the Nazi death camps was a direct inheritance from medieval Christianity. For centuries, Christian Europeans had viewed the Jews as the worst species of heretics and attributed every societal ill to their continued presence among the faithful. While the hatred of Jews in Germany expressed itself in a predominantly secular way, its roots were religious, and the explicitly religious demonization of the Jews of Europe continued throughout the period (pg. 42).

Harris and others go to great lengths to absolve Hitler of his anti-Semitic crimes. Some will say that Hitler was Christian, since he was raised in the Roman Catholic faith as a child, but it is painfully obvious that his lifestyle, behavior, and blatant megalomania were anything but Christ-like. Others will claim that he was a madman whose anti-Semitism came from medieval Christianity. Again, this runs into problems. There was already a great deal of anti-Semitism in Europe at the time when the continent was mostly post-Christian. Additionally, Hitler solidly connected the Nazi extermination of the Jews to evolutionary thought. The Jewish race was, in his opinion, inferior to his own. Humanity needed to be purified and rid of the Jews' supposed genetic pollution. The Nazi justification for the solution to their 'Jewish problem' was Darwinian, not Christian.

It is a well-known fact from European history that anti-Semitism was widely present. Roman Catholics and Protestants alike labeled Jews as "Christ-killers," frequently persecuting the Jewish population of Europe. Jobs became scarce, and many professions did not admit Jews. But can the charge of anti-Semitism be laid at the feet of the Church? It is one thing for a person to be racist. It is quite another for that racism to be sanctioned by God.

While the anti-Semitic line of criticism is commonplace in antitheistic circles, it is an odd fit with the evidence. The New Testament features a Jewish Messiah who teaches that salvation comes from the Jews (John 4:22). Paul echoes that sentiment in teaching that salvation is first for the Jew, then secondarily for the Gentile (Romans 1:16). All of the New Testament authors except one are Jewish, including three of Christ's four biographers, in addition to His disciples. Virtually all the authors of the Old Testament are Jewish. It is baffling to think that dozens of self-hating Jews got together to create a religion of violence against themselves, then managed to get their kinsfolk to buy into it.

If one is to argue that Christianity is anti-Semitic, then one must prove that the Bible itself is against Jews. Since it actually exalts the Jewish race, then the only other option available is that fallible human beings are to blame for this terrible discrimination. In that case, it is humanity's failure to live Biblically that is the root of the problem. Militant atheists point fingers at the Bible, but they should try reading it sometime. It will be the greatest book they've never read. ▲