



Anti-Christian Bigotry and the Charge of “Anti-Semitism”

I recently received an email from a Jewish reader charging me with “anti-Semitism.” Since, being a mere Christian, I lack those unique insights into the dark recesses of the Gentile psyche with which many Jews are apparently gifted, I can only speculate as to what it was I said that compelled my critic to arrive at his verdict concerning my feelings.

Since my article had nothing at all to do with [Judaism](#), I suspect that it was my proclivity for the name “Old Testament” to describe the better part of the Christian Bible that revealed my “anti-Semitism.” The reader was clear and to the point: “The *correct* term,” he insisted, “is [the Hebrew Bible](#).” To make sure that his diagnosis of my “anti-Semitism” wasn’t lost upon me, he concluded his perceptive analysis by telling me to send my regards to “your good friend, Mel Gibson.”



This episode got me to thinking about “anti-Semitism.”

First of all, like “[racism](#),” “[sexism](#),” “[homophobia](#),” and every other transgression in the catalogue of “[Politically-Correct](#)” sins, “anti-Semitism” is a term mired in ambiguity. In fact, it may very well even be *meaningless*. After all, when someone like myself, a Christian with the audacity to actually refer to the first part of my tradition’s Sacred Scriptures as the “Old Testament,” is branded with the same pejorative term as are the architects of [the Holocaust](#), it should be obvious to anyone with the slightest familiarity with either rudimentary logic or moral sensibility that this is a term that, at a minimum, warrants inspection.

Second, if, for argument’s sake, we are just going to accept that the “anti-Semite” is one who dislikes Jews, what is supposed to follow from this? Three observations are here in order.

(1) Feelings are *not* action-specifying. Hatred and love, indifference and partiality, anger and calm, belief in a group’s superiority and belief in that group’s inferiority can all lead to one and the same kinds of action. The Humanitarian no less (and usually more often) than the misanthrope has resorted to murder and genocide.

(2) Feelings are irrelevant to whether the propositions from which they arise are true or not. For example, for as ridiculous as I believe it is, let us just assume for the moment that Mel Gibson hated with every fiber of his being every Jew who rejects Christ. Whether his depiction of the passion of Christ is historically or biblically accurate, or whether it is an aesthetic masterpiece, or even whether it inspires or reinforces an animus toward Jews are questions that can and should be addressed independently of whether he personally dislikes Jews.



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on June 3, 2011

(3) The charge of “anti-Semitism,” like the charge that one is “racist,” should be the beginning, not the end, of a conversation. As it currently stands, it is a conversation-stopper. That one dislikes this person or group invites an inquiry into *the reasons* behind the feelings that one has. Outside of these Politically-Correct thought crimes, we seem to instinctively know this. If you invite me to a party at so-and-so’s house and I refuse because I dislike that person, chances are your curiosity will be piqued as to why I feel as I do. If we are close enough to one another, you may even indulge your curiosity by questioning me. And when it comes to the issue of the animus that members of non-white groups have toward whites, the search for “root causes” is given top priority.

There is another thought that this allegation of “anti-Semitism” provoked in me. While I would no more think to deny that Christians have committed violence against Jews than I would think to deny that Jews have committed violence against Christians, and while I am the first to admit that both Jews and Christians have been known to be all too forgetful of [Christianity’s](#) origins, the fact of the matter is that the Christian is the last person to be confused with one who hates all things Jewish. The reason for this is obvious: it is the Christian alone who regards *a Jew* as his *God*. Far from deifying a Jew and accepting their Sacred Scriptures as one’s own, one would think that a person who truly hated Jews and Judaism would, quite literally, *demonize* them.

Finally, the ease and frequency with which Christians are branded as “anti-Semites” leads me to conclude two things about the charge. First, given its proven capacity to ruin reputations and professional lives, it is a weapon wielded to intimidate and suppress. Second, it is for the most part a smokescreen intended to disguise what fundamentally amounts to the anti-Christian hostilities of the anti-“anti-Semite.”

It is my hope that in the future, those Christians who find themselves on the receiving end of this allegation bear in mind these considerations.



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