

ANTI-JEWISH THEMES AND TEXTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

New Testament scholar Norman A. Beck, in his book "Removing Anti-Jewish Polemic from our Christian Lectionaries: A Proposal", counts 450 explicitly anti-Jewish verses in the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles alone.

There are **ten themes in the New Testament** that have triggered anti-Judaism and antisemitism:

- 1) The Jews are guilty of Jesus' crucifixion, and as such, they are guilty of *deicide* (God-murder).
- 2) The hardships of the Jewish people throughout history are the result of God's punishment for them for killing Jesus.
- 3) Jesus came originally to preach only to the Jews, but when they rejected him, he abandoned them for Gentiles instead.
- 4) The Children of Israel were God's original chosen people under an ancient covenant, but by rejecting Jesus they forfeited their chosenness. Now, under a New Covenant (or "testament"), Christians have replaced the Jews as God's chosen people. The Church has become the new "People of God."
- 5) The Jewish Bible (the "Old Testament") repeatedly portrays the stubbornness of the Jewish people and their disloyalty to God.
- 6) The Jewish Bible contains many predictions of the coming of Jesus as the Messiah (or "Christ"), but the Jews are blind to the meaning of their own Bible.
- 7) By the time of Jesus, Judaism had ceased to be a living faith.
- 8) Judaism is little more than a restrictive and burdensome legalism.
- 9) Christianity emphasizes love, while Judaism stands for justice and a God of wrath.
- 10) Judaism's oppressive nature reflects the same disposition of Jesus' opponents, who were called the "Pharisees" (the predecessors of the "rabbis"), who were hypocrites in their teachings and behavior.

1) The Gospel of Matthew

Matthew progressively moves from initially favoring Jews towards more anti-Jewish towards the end. The detrimental "blood-guilt" verse (Matthew 27:25; see below) is mentioned in no other Gospel.

Matthew 10:

⁵ Jesus sent out his twelve disciples and instructed them:

"Do not go to the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans.

⁶ But instead, **go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

Matthew 15:

²¹ Then Jesus went (...) into the regions of Tyre and Sidon (Lebanon).

²² There, a Canaanite woman who was from the same area cried out to him and said:

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely possessed by a demon."

²³ But he did not answer her at all. His disciples came and begged him:

"Send her away, for she cries out after us."

²⁴ He answered: **"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."**

²⁵ Then she came and honored him, and said: "Lord, help me."

²⁶ But he answered: "It is not fair to take the children's bread and to throw it to dogs."

²⁷ She said: "Yes, Lord, but even dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

²⁸ Then Jesus answered her: "O woman, great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Matthew 21:

⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

'The stone which the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing,

and it is marvelous in our eyes'?

⁴³ "Therefore I tell you, **the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation that does produce fruits.**

Matthew 23:

¹⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel sea and land to make one convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

²³ **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** You tithe mint and dill and cumin, but you neglect the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you should do without leaving the others undone.

²⁴ You blind guides! You strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **You are like whitewashed tombs**, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

²⁸ So you outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

²⁹ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You build the tombs of the prophets, and adorn the memorials of the righteous,

³⁰ and say, 'If we lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have partaken with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'

³¹ Therefore **you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.**

³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt! ³³ **"You serpents! You generation of vipers! How can you escape the judgment of hell?"**

³⁷ "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you, how often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not! ³⁸ Your house is left to you desolate.

Matthew 27:

²² [Pontius] Pilate (the Roman governor of Judea) said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!"

²³ The governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?"

But they cried out all the more, "Let Him be crucified!"

²⁴ When Pilate saw that he could not prevail, but rather that unrest was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, and said: "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous Man. See to it yourselves!"

²⁵ Then all the people answered: **"His blood be on us and on our children!"**

Matthew 28:

¹² When the chief priests were assembled with the elders and had taken counsel, they gave much money to the soldiers (who had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus).

¹³ They told them: "Just say: 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were sleeping.'

¹⁴ If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you secure."

¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were instructed. This story is widely circulated among the Jews to this day.

2) The Gospel of Mark (The oldest Gospel)

Mark is not explicitly anti-Jewish

3) The Gospel of Luke

Luke is often quite parallel to Matthew

4) The Gospel of John

John is the latest of the four Gospels and the most anti-Jewish.

The word 'Jews' occurs 63 times in John, half of which (31 times) in a hostile sense.

John 7: 1

After these things Jesus traveled in Galilee. He would not travel in Judea, because **the Jews were seeking to kill him.**

John 8: 37-47

³⁷ I know that you are Abraham's seed. But you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you.

³⁸ I am telling what I have seen with My Father, and you are doing what you have seen with your father."

³⁹ They answered him: "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them: "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.

⁴⁰ But now you seek to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.

⁴¹ You are doing the works of your father." Then they said to him: "We were not born of sexual immorality...! We have one Father: God!"

⁴² Jesus said to them: "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and proceeded into the world. I did not come of my own authority, but He sent me.

⁴³ Why do you not understand my speaking? Because you cannot bear to hear my word.

⁴⁴ **You are of your father the devil**, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

⁴⁶ Which of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak the truth, why do you not believe me?

⁴⁷ If someone is of God, he hears God's words. That is why you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

5) Paul's Epistle to the Romans

Romans 7: 25-26

²⁵ I want you to understand this mystery, brothers (...): **A hardening has come upon part of Israel** until the full number of the Gentiles has been gathered.

²⁶ And then, all Israel will be saved...

6) Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians

2 Corinthians 3: 12-16

¹² Seeing then that we have such hope, we speak with great boldness,

¹³ not as Moses, who put a veil over his face, so that the children of Israel could not look intently at the end of what was fading away.

¹⁴ Instead, their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the old covenant, the veil which was done away with in Christ.

¹⁵ Yes, **even to this day, when Moses [the Torah] is read, the veil is in their hearts.** ¹⁶ Nevertheless when anyone turns to the Lord [Jesus], the veil is removed.

7) Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 2: 14-16

¹⁴ For you, brothers and sisters, have become imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. **For you have suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews,**

¹⁵ **who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets and have driven us out. They displease God and oppose everything,**

¹⁶ by forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles and to save them. In this way **they have constantly been piling up their sins. But God's wrath has overtaken them at last.**

8) The Book of Revelation

Revelation 2: 9

I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich). And I know the blasphemy of **those who say they are Jews and are not, but who are a synagogue of Satan.**

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH NOW

During the **Second Vatican Council (1963-1965)**, the Roman Catholic Church prepared and announced a radical change in its teachings, preaching, liturgy, and beliefs about Jews and Judaism, as well as about other non-Christian religions.

The final declaration of this Council is called "Nostra Aetate."

Two important paragraphs read:

About the Jews

As this Sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

With a grateful heart, the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election were already among the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ—Abraham's sons according to faith—were included in the same patriarch's call, likewise that her salvation is mystically foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage.

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament from the people with whom God in His ineffable mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she feeds upon the root of that cultivated olive tree into which the wild shoots of the Gentiles have been grafted. Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ our Peace reconciled the Jews and Gentiles, making both one.

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "Theirs is the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and of them is the Christ according to the flesh," the Son of Mary the Virgin (Rom. 9, 4–5). No less does she recall that the Apostles, the Church's foundation stones and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

Even though a large part of the Jews did not accept the Gospel, they remain most dear to God, according to the Apostle, for the sake of the patriarchs, since God's gifts and call are irrevocable (cf. Rom. 11, 28 f.). In company with the prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve Him shoulder to shoulder".

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is of such magnitude, this Sacred Synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual knowledge and respect that are, above all, the fruit of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues. Moreover, this Synod, in her rejection of injustices of whatever kind and wherever inflicted upon people, and

recalling our common patrimony, deplores and condemns hatred and persecutions of Jews, whether they arose in former or in our own days.

May all, then, see to it that in their catechetical work or in their preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that could give rise to hatred or contempt of Jews in the hearts of Christians. May they never present the Jewish people as one rejected, cursed, or guilty of deicide. All that happened to Christ in His passion cannot be attributed to the whole people then alive, much less to that of today. Besides, the Church has always held and holds now that Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of all people and out of infinite love. Therefore, Christian preaching is to proclaim the Cross of Christ as a sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

About the Muslims

The Church regards Muslims with esteem: they adore the one God, Living and Enduring, the All-Powerful Creator of heaven and earth who has spoken to people; they strive to obey wholeheartedly His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham did, to whose faith they happily link their own.

Though Muslims do not acknowledge the divinity of Jesus, they revere Him as a Prophet. They also honor Mary, His Virgin-Mother; at times they call on her with devotion. Furthermore, they await the day of judgment when God will reward all those who have risen.

Furthermore, as they worship God through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting, so they seek to make the moral life—be it that of the individual or that of the family and society—conform to His Will.

In the course of centuries, however, not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims. Hence this Sacred Synod urges all not only to forget the past but also to work honestly for mutual understanding and to further as well as guard together social justice, all moral goods, especially peace and freedom, so that all of humanity may benefit from their endeavor.