

A MAJOR ROOT OF CHRISTIAN ANTI-SEMITISM

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The Council Of Nicaea - A Major Root of Christian Antisemitism



Constantine the Great

Since the massacre of 1,200 innocent Israelis in October 7th, 2023, there has been an alarming increase in global antisemitism. Violent rallies and acts against

Jews and Israel have multiplied throughout the world.

Israel's legal retaliation against Hamas (which sadly resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of the people of Gaza) has aroused a wave of antisemitism, unprecedented since the days of Nazi Germany. Whole nations such as Spain, Ireland, South Africa and Norway have jumped in to take the side of Hamas who are mere surrogates of Iran which openly calls for the annihilation of Israel.

How is it that nations with a strong Christian heritage can be so quick to accuse the Jews and to take the side of those who call for the death of Israel and the annihilation of the Jews? The fact is that antisemitism is deeply rooted in Christian tradition and theology for many centuries. It cannot be removed from our culture theology and consciousness simply by expressing regret for the holocaust or making bland statements of recognizing the special place of the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. A fundamental and OPEN

acknowledgment that antisemitism is entirely at odds with scripture and the teachings of Jesus is needed.

This year marks the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea a pivotal event in Christian history. Although many Christians may not be aware of the Council of Nicaea, its resolutions have shaped Christian doctrine for nearly two millennia. At Nicaea (near modern-day Constantinople) in 325 AD the Emperor Constantine convened approximately 300 bishops requesting them to come produce a unified statement of faith for the Christian churches throughout the empire.

The delegates at the council composed a statement of faith - called the Nicene creed - which through the centuries to this day is recited during the liturgies of the Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Orthodox churches. Consequently the Council of Nicaea and The Nicene Creed (its statement of faith) have had an enormous influence on global Christianity.

While the Council successfully reached a consensus on specific doctrinal controversies, it also created significant negative consequences through its omissions. By excluding any reference to God's saving activity from the creation to the virgin birth of Jesus it effectively

airbrushed Israel and the Jewish people from the consciousness of Christian believers. This tragically laid the foundation for centuries of Christian antisemitism and ignorance of the importance of Israel to the Christian faith.. It made no mention of the eternal promises God gave to the Jewish people and to Israel through the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets. These decisions of The Council of Nicaea have had lasting implications, creating a disconnect between the Christian faith and its Jewish heritage, and distorted the Christian message.

The Negative Legacy Of Nicaea For The Jews of Europe & Russia

Through these actions, the Council of Nicaea effectively turned its back on the Jewish people and cemented the rift between Christians, Israel and the Jewish people. Consequently, after the Council of Nicaea much of Christianity became systemically antisemitic. The Jewish people were perceived as infidels, pagans and enemies of the faith. This had horrific consequences, making possible inquisitions, pogroms, and ultimately contributing to the climate that enabled the Holocaust, and the antisemitism so prevalent in the West today.

For the next 1,700 years "Christian" Europe, became the epicenter of antisemitism. To this day many Christians in the churches that base their beliefs on the Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed have little understanding of the place of Israel and are frequently at the forefront of antisemitic and anti-Israel movements.

The legacy of Nicaea made possible a Christianity cut off from its roots in Israel. It has left us with a Christian population, largely unaware of its ties to Israel, and almost no understanding of Jesus' special relationship with His own Jewish people. His last words to His disciples were ones in which He promised to come back to establish David's throne in Jerusalem and in His prophecy from the Mount of Olives before His death He foretold the regathering of the Jewish people to Jerusalem. (Luke 21.24) His central mission to be *their* Messiah and ours, *their* Good Shepherd and ours who laid down His life for them and for us, saving them from their enemies and confirming the promises given to the patriarchs of Israel.

Conclusion

The 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed instead of being an occasion of ecclesiastical triumphalism, if handled correctly, could become a breakthrough moment of repentance, renewal and reformation. By recognizing the legacy of antisemitism many Christians have inherited from the Council of Nicaea and openly renouncing it, this commemoration can become an occasion for the global church to recognize and remove this major root of Christian antisemitism and reconcile fully with the Jewish people and with Israel.