



Who Killed Jesus?: Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus

John Dominic Crossan

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"Anti-Semitism means six-million Jews on Hitler's list but only twelve-hundred Jews on Schindler's list. This book is about anti-Semitism, not, however, in its latest European obscenity, but in its earliest Christian latency. It is about the historicity of the passion of the narratives, those terribly well-known stories about Jesus arrest and trial, abuse and crucifixion, burial and resurrection. It is about the accuracy and honesty of Christian Scholarship in its best reconstruction of those ancient yet ever-present events...Why should ordinary people care about discussions and debates among scholars?...the historicity of the passion narratives is not a question just for scholars and experts but for anyone with a heart and a conscience." from the preface

The death of Jesus is one of the most hotly debated questions in Christianity today. In his massive and highly publicized *The Death of the Messiah*, Raymond Brown while clearly rejecting anti-Semitism never questions the essential historicity of the passion stories. Yet it is these stories, in which the Jews decide Jesus' execution, that have fueled centuries of Christian anti-Semitism.

Now, in his most controversial book, John Dominic Crossan shows that this traditional understanding of the Gospels as historical fact is not only wrong but dangerous. Drawing on the best of biblical, anthropological, sociological and historical research, he demonstrates definitively that it was the Roman government that tried and executed Jesus as a social agitator. Crossan also candidly addresses such key theological questions as "Did Jesus die for our sins?" and "Is our faith in vain if there was no bodily resurrection?"

Ultimately, however, Crossan's radical reexamination shows that the belief that the Jews killed Jesus is an early Christian myth (directed against rival Jewish groups) that must be eradicated from authentic Christian faith.

"As long as Christians were the marginalized and disenfranchised ones," Crossan writes, "such passion fiction about Jewish responsibility and Roman innocence did nobody much harm. But, once the Roman Empire became Christian, that fiction turned lethal....Think, now, of those passion-resurrection stories as heard in a predominantly Christian world. Did those stories of ours send certain people out to kill?"

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