

The Attributes Of A Saint

There may well have been a Jewish preacher in the first century CE called something like Yeshu, later known as Jesus Christ, whose life formed the basis of the myths related in the Christian Gospels. If there was, then it is unlikely that he was antisemitic.

There may well have been a person called Matthew who wrote the Gospel of that name a few decades later and who has since become known as Saint Matthew. Whoever wrote that Gospel probably intended to appeal to antisemitism in his readers when he wrote of the Jews cursing their own descendants with the guilt of deicide:

His blood be upon us, and upon our children.

But whether Matthew intended it or not, the overwhelming majority of Christians throughout the ages never doubted that the Gospel story, especially the story of the death of Jesus, is virulently antisemitic and that this was right and proper.

In the early nineteenth century, a German nun called Anne Catherine Emmerich claimed to have witnessed the death of Jesus and the preceding events via a series of miraculous visions, which were written down in a book called **The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ**. This absurd claim was believed by most Catholics and remains recognised by the Catholic Church to this day.

Emmerich was of course obsessed by The Jews and their guilt. Among the things she saw in her visions was the eternal torture of all Jews, for which she blamed only – The Jews:

Whenever, during my meditations on the Passion of our Lord, I imagine I hear that frightful cry of the Jews, '*His blood be upon us, and upon our children,*' visions of a wonderful and terrible description display before my eyes at the same moment the effect of that solemn curse. I fancy I see a gloomy sky covered with clouds, of the colour of blood, from which issue fiery swords and darts, lowering over the vociferating multitude; and this curse, which they have entailed upon themselves, appears to me to penetrate even to the very marrow of their bones, – even to the unborn infants. They appear to me encompassed on all sides by darkness; the words they utter take, in my eyes, the form of black flames, which

recoil upon them, penetrating the bodies of some, and only playing around others.

In the early twenty-first century, an actor called Mel Gibson read Emmerich's book and was inspired to produce a Passion Play (if you're not aware of the history of Passion Plays, please read [this](#)), in the form of a **movie**, based on Emmerich's visions.

Pope John-Paul II saw the movie and allegedly authenticated it, saying 'it is as it was'. Since John-Paul no more has the supernatural ability to witness historical events than Emmerich or anyone else, this was taken as a *moral* endorsement of the content of the movie. Later, the Vatican denied the endorsement and the quotation.

Now John-Paul has **beatified** Anne Catherine Emmerich. Beatification is the step just short of sainthood, and is often followed by it.

What are the attributes of a saint?

Fri, 06/04/2004 - 01:52 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

saint = exceptionally good/mo

saint = exceptionally good/moral person

or am i missing something?

by this criterion, Anne isn't one.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Fri, 06/04/2004 - 06:56 | [reply](#)

It is just an interpretation

It looks like the main point you were trying to bring is that Christianity is, deeply in its heart, antisemitic because of these words that Matthew added. Christianity is antisemitic in the same way and to the same extent as any religion or ideology is responsible for any hatred against other religions/ideologies. Up to a certain extent! It just happens every so often that whenever you stand for any moral value you would necessarily denounce any "immorality" and people who stand for different values. Judaists would say that being christian is bad - will we call them anti-european after that?

Whether certain people choose some words as the target or as an argument has nothing to do with the real meaning of the words (whatever it is). In the same way as you cannot blame a person who is falling on you from the stairs just because you never know who pushed that person first and why. If a woman pronounced these or similar words once and Matthew put them down or heard these words from someone else it still doesn't prove that he was anti-semitic. And if it does, it doesn't prove that passion plays are

all anti-semitic. And, in turn, it doesn't signify that mentioning a crucifixion is anything to do with anti-semitism. Even if one says that judaism is evil religion (and this IS the main point of Gospels) it is still not "jews are all evil". You cannot say that all Saudi Arabians are bad people just because Islam is their main religion.

As you said earlier, everyone is entitled to a freedom of speech unless one gives orders to kill. I wouldn't be sure about Matthew being inciting violence against jews and neither I would say about Mel Gibson. And even a weaker link leads to the Pope.

Hitler himself was only responsible for Holocaust, not Matthew.

As for possible interpretations, one might say that the words meant "I know what I am doing and it is right and my children should be proud of it because we fought devil in this case" - isn't it what Bush and Blair say about themselves all the time?

by a reader on Fri, 06/04/2004 - 08:49 | [reply](#)

Pogo

I read the same Gospel and saw the same movie you write of, and came away feeling compassion for, not hatred against, the Jews.

I can understand how you might interpret otherwise, given the vile anti-Semitism of the Church's past. But I don't think this is the operative mode today. The idea that Jews put Jesus to death is as interesting as saying Americans killed Lincoln and Kennedy. Jesus was Jewish, lived among a Jewish population, and died at the hands of his people. This same sad story can be told in every part of the world.

I agree however, that attention to language and actions are essential. just be careful of alienating all who support Israel by painting with too broad of a brush.

It's motive, not religion, that mattered.

by a reader on Fri, 06/04/2004 - 12:35 | [reply](#)

But...

Who cares? Who should?

by a reader on Fri, 06/04/2004 - 20:33 | [reply](#)

Call me simple but seems to m

Call me simple but seems to me that the attributes of a saint are no more or less than: having been declared a "saint" by whatever church you're talking about. Historically it would seem that good or bad people can be and have been declared "saints" by this or that church for good or bad reasons. Sounds like this Emmerich lady had

her problems and should she be made a Catholic saint it would

probably be safe to call it a shame.

Meanwhile, while it's appropriate enough to complain about historical anti-Semitic passion plays, and to place Emmerich's sentiments, vision and writing in that dishonorable tradition, the modern (and, American) understanding of "his blood be upon us" as exemplified in the recent movie by Mel Gibson (in fact the line was excised from the film IIRC) need not necessarily have much of anything to do with all that. Of course I remain open to evidence to the contrary, in the form of e.g. pogroms committed by recent *The Passion of the Christ* moviegoers. However, the actual historical record of that movie's release and its showings, in the US at least (I make no claims as to how it is being received in Arabia.. or France..), would seem to suggest that you can relax to some extent.

--Blix

by a reader on Fri, 06/04/2004 - 22:31 | [reply](#)

The Pope's mistake

The Pope, in deciding to beatify Emmerich, must regard her as an exemplary person.

Everyone in this thread so far seems to agree that the Pope is mistaken in this judgement.

by [David Deutsch](#) on Sat, 06/05/2004 - 00:38 | [reply](#)

Sometimes people get beatified

Sometimes people get beatified for being mystics rather than being martyrs or people whose actions were particularly meritorious.

The beatification implies papal endorsement of the visions experienced (Hildegard of Bingen, with her notoriously wacky visions got papal endorsement while still alive, which meant that she was safe to go on recording what she saw without being accused of heresy, which had been a real possibility).

I also consider the Pope to be mistaken in his judgement of the orthodoxy of Emmerich's visions.

Emma

by a reader on Sat, 06/05/2004 - 09:04 | [reply](#)

Exclusivity

The facts of the matter are:

None of us are very likely to ever be declared either beatified or a saint. Nor are any of us very likely to become Pope. One of the attributes of a saint is usually that they are no longer living so we

can make up stories about who they were and they have little

possibility of objecting. All in all a saint is just an example of the more visible traits of humanity, with a little sanctification and mystery thrown in. Most saints don't bother me. I imagine that they put on their coulottes one leg at a time like anybody else. Maybe they just gave more thought to it.

by a reader on Sat, 06/05/2004 - 14:41 | [reply](#)

The Pope's mistake

This 'mistake' has a name, doesn't it?

by a reader on Sun, 06/06/2004 - 14:49 | [reply](#)