

I return now, for a couple of posts, to my thoughts on the rise of anti-Judaism in the early Christian tradition, and my thesis that it was largely driven by a different way of reading the Bible, that the Christians insisted the Jewish scriptures were looking forward to Jesus as a suffering messiah who would die for sins, and in doing so fulfilled all sorts of prophecies, and most Jews thought this entire view was nonsense, if not blasphemous.

Here is where my thoughts move on from what I said in the last post on the matter. Should you need to refresh your memory, it is here:

<https://ehrmanblog.org/why-christians-needed-an-old-testament-pagan-attacks-on-the-faith/>

An important point to stress is that Christians recognized that if their own interpretations of the Jewish Bible were correct, the Jews' own interpretations were necessarily invalid. As I argued in *Triumph of Christianity*, the distinctive feature of early Christianity vis-à-vis all the other religions of the Roman world - including Judaism - was that Christians argued their views provided the way of salvation and the only way of salvation. Christians introduced into the world or religion the sense of exclusivism: if we are right, you are wrong. The implications for the battle over the Jewish Scriptures were that Jews could not claim any right to them, since they predicted the Christian message and the Christian religion, not the Jewish one. It was these implications that led to the rhetorical violence that we see in the Christian opposition to Jews in the first four centuries, opposition driven almost entirely by an appeal to the Bible as Christian rather than Jewish.

We can see this polemic already in the earliest stages of the early Christian tradition within the pages of the New Testament itself. And it is easy to trace its increasing severity and animosity with the passing of time. In my book I will spend considerable space discussing the key texts, most of them completely unknown to the reading public at large. As examples (the first being the exception):

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