

Thrown Under the Bus

by Dr. Mark Eckel

The term “scapegoat” derived its name from an animal that bore the guilt for others. So, the consequences of one’s actions could be avoided by placing blame on someone else. Today we use additional metaphors. We say someone had to “fall on his sword,” taking responsibility for bad results. Paying the price of another’s failure by being “thrown under the bus” is also popular. Power brokers sacrifice others to keep their position intact. Politicians practice this policy of finger pointing by telling subordinates to accept responsibility for the leader’s poor judgment. Business tycoons will jettison personnel and programs to salvage moral or financial standing. Any person in a position of power may refuse to account for their own decisions. “Thrown under the bus” means that we have become expendable. We become the scapegoat, conveniently taking the blame for others based on trumped up charges.

When I received my December 2009 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* the cover confronted me with the question “Did Christianity Cause the Crash?” It struck me immediately that *The Atlantic* is considering Christians as possible scapegoats for our current economic downturn. The economic downturn—or “crash”—this past year surely had multiple causes. But an editorial decision by *The Atlantic Monthly* suggests the blame rests solely on the shoulders of one religion. Yet, Hanna Rosin’s article in the magazine is about *some* who believe wealth is guaranteed by The Bible. To pillory a whole faith based on one reporter’s perspective on one Christian community is disingenuous. It is sad that *The Atlantic* chose “Did Christianity Cause the Crash?” as its cover question.

Blaming ethnic or religious groups for economic problems is nothing new. After the Nazis took control of Germany in 1933 efforts to shame the Jews began. Hitler blamed any economic problem on the Jews. Before World War II, Jewish businesses were boycotted then ransacked. Even school children were taught through propaganda that money was God to the Jews. Elementary schools taught that Jews made their money through crime. Inevitably, Jewish people themselves had to wear a mark of shame: the yellow Star of David.

In a similar way, it is becoming acceptable to criticize Christianity. Christians are stereotyped as hypocritical, money-hungry, uncaring people. Books are published with titles such as “American Fascists: The Christian Right and War on America.” HBO’s Bill Maher’s documentary “Religious” rants against religion, saving its greatest disdain for Christians. CNN produces a news special called “God’s Warriors” likening Christian groups to terrorists who bomb innocents. And in the Illinois State Capitol Building a sign was placed in front of this year’s Christmas symbol stating, “Religion is just myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds.”

Interestingly enough, in the same *Atlantic* issue there is an article about a Christian seminar which discourages debt. One must question why the front cover did not read “How Christianity Can Save Us from Debt.” Not 80 years ago Jews were scapegoats for German economic distress. I have asked myself since receiving *The Atlantic* in the mail how long it might be before Christians are required to identify themselves, wearing a yellow cross identifying myself as a Christian. For Prime Time America, this is Dr. Mark Eckel, seeking truth wherever it’s found.