



*Hostile Environment:
Understanding and Responding
to Anti-Christian Bias*
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The Reality of Christianophobia

The term *Christianophobia* is controversial. Some individuals may see those who use the term as a bunch of Christians whining about not getting their way. The actions of some Christians justify this contempt. But hatred and fear of Christians are phenomena with real consequences, even in a democracy such as ours. As I considered how to label this phenomenon, I decided that *Christianophobia* is the best term devised to date to describe much of the anti-Christian perspective in the United States.

This is not a word that I made up. *Christianophobia* is defined by *Macmillan Dictionary* as “an irrational animosity towards or hatred of Christians, or Christianity in general.” In this sense, it is not unlike the way we use *Islamophobia* or *homophobia* in that we are not addressing simply fear of a group of individuals; we are referring to the negative emotions directed at those individuals. While it is inaccurate to make the assumption that *Christianophobia* is exactly like other types of intolerances, the basic concept that certain individuals target a given group with hatred and negativity is fairly similar in this definition of *Christianophobia*. Thus, the *Macmillan* definition is the one to keep in mind as I discuss this concept.

I anticipate that some will argue that *Christianophobia* is either a myth or that it really does not matter. “Where is the evidence that Christians are put at a disadvantage in our society due to *Christianophobia*?” they may ask. Consider the fact that my research, as well as other research, indicates that there is a notable anti-Christian bias in academia. This bias means that one should not expect the level of academic documentation of anti-Christian prejudice that we would expect for other types of prejudice. It is realistic to assert that Christians likely face prejudice in institutions other than academia, institutions that also have highly educated and culturally progressive individuals, and that a lack of curiosity about such religious prejudice among academics keeps it hidden from the general public.

Let’s play a thought experiment. If there were research showing that almost half of all academics are less willing to give a person a job simply because that person is Jewish, then would we say that anti-Semitism impacts the lives of Jews in our society? After all, they would face an unfair barrier to academia, which is an important source of culture creation. What if those who hate Jews are more likely to be wealthy and well educated? Would we not be concerned about how such individuals would express animosity toward Jews? We know these things about *Christianophobia*, despite the anti-Christian academic bias that discourages such research, and so it is hard to argue that *Christianophobia* has no effect on Christians. As I will discuss later, it is a mistake to argue that *Christianophobia* is exactly like anti-Semitism or racism, but if we had the evidence of educational prejudice toward Christians for another racial or religious group, then few, if any, people would argue that such prejudice does not matter.

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BOOK EXCERPT

Even such evidence will not be enough to convince some individuals that Christianophobia is a problem. They will require a level of proof I cannot supply. Beyond a few exceptional cases, I cannot absolutely prove that Christians are unfairly treated. In contemporary society such proof is indeed difficult to obtain, but not just for conservative Christians. Today scholars of racial attitudes talk of microaggressions and subtle forms of racism at least in part because surveys no longer reveal large percentages of people who directly insult or show a willingness to explicitly discriminate against African Americans. To a lesser degree the same can probably be said of sexism and homophobia, although I do not have the expertise in those areas to definitively make that statement. We do not demand absolute proof of overt systematic discrimination based on race, sex, sexual preference or minority religious status before addressing potential prejudices. Those who demand such a criterion for Christians but no other social groups need to explain why such a double standard is acceptable.

Not all Christians are equally likely to be victimized by Christianophobia. Christians who do not challenge the ideals of those with Christianophobia are less likely to experience this hatred and prejudice. Generally, theologically or politically conservative Christians, who do challenge progressive social and political attitudes, are the ones who draw the ire of those with anti-Christian hostility. There are aspects of Christianophobia that may also threaten progressive Christians, and this seems especially the case in other countries. However, for the most part it is the irrational hatred and fear directed toward conservative Christians that we observe in the United States.

– Taken from the introduction