

***Mein Kampf*, Censorship, and Freedom**

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

Adolf Hitler's infamous book *Mein Kampf* was first published in two volumes in 1925 and 1927. A new edition is now gaining international attention. The Institute of Contemporary History in Munich has published the latest edition, complete with an introduction and much critical commentary.

Bavaria held the copyright to the book for 70 years – until December 31st. That is why the book has been recently published. Not surprisingly, not everyone is happy with the publication, to say the very least.

Many Jews are afraid that anti-Jewish bigots will rally around it, and that it will encourage those that are not already hostile toward Jews to become so. Far-right populist political parties are coming to the fore in Europe. Moreover, anti-immigrant, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments are becoming increasingly prevalent throughout the continent.

Institute director Andreas Wirsching said "...there is widespread agreement on a decisive point. It would be completely irresponsible to allow this jumble of inhumanity to be released into the public domain without commentary, without countering it through critical references that put the text and the author in their place." (*The Buffalo News*, "Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' back in Germany, January 9, 2016, p. A7.)

This might be so in Germany. However, I read *Mein Kampf* cover-to-cover, without the commentary. I received two surprises. First, history teachers had always taught me and my fellow students that Hitler fooled people into believing that he was an honorable person. However, I was surprised to learn that Hitler made it clear in his story that he did not like Blacks, and had it in for Jews, communists and others. There was nothing sneaky about his bad intentions. It just seems that many of his former followers, with the benefit of hindsight, deceived themselves into believing that they were duped.

Second, I had always known that there were one or two passages in *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler appealed to Christianity. In fact, whenever I came across such a passage, I would immediately make note of it. However, I was surprised to learn

that all throughout the book, Hitler put forth the opinion that he was doing the will of God. A belief in the Christian God was central to his ideology if *Mein Kampf* is to be taken seriously. Like the First (Old) Testament mass murderers Aaron, Gideon, Samuel, and others, he was absolutely convinced that he was doing the will of the biblical God.

Of course, he was not the first influential German Christian to promote anti-Jewish hatred. Martin Luther wrote the tract *On the Jews and Their Lies*. He wrote that the Jews should have their holy books confiscated, that their synagogues should be burned, and that they should be driven from Europe.

Where would Christians get such inhumane ideas? Why, from the Bible, of course. In 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16, the Jews are demonized as troublesome Christ killers leading people away from goodness. The Bible even refers to the “Synagogue of Satan.”

When Mel Gibson came out with his anti-Jewish film, *The Passion of the Christ*, Christians all over the U.S. tried to rationalize the bigotry in the film. Later, however, Gibson was caught making blatantly anti-Jewish comments. He was also filmed verbally abusing a policewoman and referring to her as “sugar tits.” After that, those defending *The Passion of the Christ* against charges of anti-Semitism became deafeningly silent on the issue.

It is understandable that a lot of people are worried about the re-publication of *Mein Kampf*. However, it is history, and history, no matter how ugly, should not be buried or hidden.

Many people disagree. For example, some Blacks believe that the enslavement of Africans centuries ago should be forgotten. They believe that the Confederate battle flag should be destroyed and that racist items such as lawn jockeys should be permanently removed from memory.

But how can we human beings understand where we are and where we are headed if we do not know from whence we came? How can we learn how to stop future genocides if we do not understand how and why they occurred in the past? History is one of the most important yet underrated subjects there is. We try to bury it at our own peril.

Yet, if it is important to banish a book like *Mein Kampf* because it has influenced people in negative ways, it makes even more sense to banish the Bible. The Bible is much more explicit in its calls for mass murder than is *Mein Kampf* (Numbers 31:17-18, and 1 Samuel 15:2-3, for example.) It condones slavery, patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia and other crimes against humanity. Why, then, does no one say that *it* should be banished or censored?

Just as people should have the right to read the Bible, they should have the right to read *Mein Kampf*. It is up to those that oppose these books and the negative ideas they promote to do their best to educate their fellow human beings and persuade them to act humanely and intelligently. That is what true democracy is all about.